

Mike Schreiner
MPP, Guelph
Leader of Green Party of Ontario
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February 16, 2022

Dear MPP Schreiner,

When Ontarians chose their municipal and provincial representatives in 2018, no one was expecting a global pandemic to disrupt our progress. Now, as we prepare for elections in 2022, the electorate will judge us on how we responded to the pandemic and our plans for the future.

Ontario is one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family. Ontario cities benefit from good health care, strong public education systems and a healthy environment. Ontario's Big City Mayors represent the 29 largest communities in Ontario. Together, we have worked in partnership with the Ontario and Federal governments, our business leaders, and our community organizations to keep our residents safe throughout the pandemic.

Below are five areas that OBCM believes are essential to ensuring a strong post-pandemic recovery for Ontario. OBCM is committed to working together with the Ontario Government to continue making progress in these priority areas.

Housing

Housing prices are rising rapidly across the province. Supply has fallen behind the demand created by our growing economy, our growing population, and the demand for a variety of housing options. Rents and prices have risen so quickly that the only way to make significant progress is by the provincial and federal governments using their full range of powers to make housing more affordable. We believe this requires the Federal and Provincial governments to use economic tools – such as taxing and spending powers – to make a material difference in the cost of housing, and to support the construction of more attainable housing types, such as purpose-built rental housing.

Further, the housing crisis is felt disproportionately by lower income Ontarians and is making homelessness worse. We owe it to those in our communities who need help to make much larger investments in social and supportive housing. We look forward to discussing how to create more affordable housing and build sustainable communities.

Mental Health

OBCM recently developed a policy paper encouraging the province to ramp up implementation efforts of its [Roadmap to Wellness](#) plan. To date, the plan is largely unfunded. Without a comprehensive mental health regime, Ontario municipalities will continue to face increased emergency service costs that put pressure on first responders and other front line community services. OBCM is also seeking provincial support in its efforts to encourage the federal government to decriminalize the possession of certain controlled substances. The criminalization of mental health and addictions exacerbates the challenges our communities face, we need a public health rather than enforcement response in our communities to succeed.

Climate Change

Ontario is a leader in emission reductions. The province and municipalities are well placed to transition to net-zero and many cities have developed and need assistance to deliver community energy plans. With an increasing federal carbon tax, Ontario can champion the transition to net-zero for municipal transit operators, home heating and industry. As we move deeper into decarbonization, a shared approach to reducing emissions in the building, energy, and transportation sectors will be essential.

OBCM pledges to be a partner in championing the transition to net-zero to help grow our economy. OBCM will have a more detailed climate change policy paper released later this Spring.

Supporting Municipal Services

Municipal services are relied upon by residents and businesses. They form a base for our prosperity and well-being. OBCM municipalities have benefited from uploads, support to make services more efficient and infrastructure investments from provincial governments over the last decade. Safe Restart Funding has allowed municipalities to continue to deliver essential services such as public transit despite the revenue challenges of COVID. Nevertheless, reforming federalism to ensure sustainable funding for municipalities to address today's challenges remains both a necessity and an opportunity.

Building Back from COVID

The support provided to small businesses and municipalities helped protect the municipal property tax base and municipal budgets that would have otherwise faced drastic cuts from reduced transit and recreation revenues. The pre-COVID status quo should not be the measurement for success. OBCM encourages the province to maintain policy flexibility for pandemic-era initiatives such as restaurant sales, tourism support, and public space improvements that will help small businesses increase revenues into the future. Further, it's clear that labour shortages are limiting the Ontario economy. Reducing barriers to employment, through investments such as subsidized childcare, needs to be a key priority.

OBCM Mayors have brought forward policy proposals throughout the last year that will help advance provincial government priorities. From Indigenous partnership best practices to support to make childcare more affordable for Ontario families, OBCM is ready to work with our provincial partners to make an impact in the lives of all Ontarians.



We look forward to hearing from you and working with you as you develop and communicate your plans to Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Jeff Lehman
Mayor of Barrie
Chair of Ontario's Big City Mayors

See Appendix Below

Appendix: OBCM Policy Motions

Affordable Broadband internet

Ontario's Big City Mayors call on the Federal Cabinet, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and ISED Minister Francois-Phillippe Champagne to overrule the CRTC's reversal and immediately implement the evidence-based 2019 Rates Order.

That OBCM write letters to the Premier of Ontario, the Ontario Minister of Industry, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities asking for their support in this matter.

Childcare Plan

OBCM also passed a motion calling on the provincial government to reach an agreement on the \$10 per day federal childcare plan to support the economy and reduce household expenses for Ontarians.

Ontario's strong fiscal management throughout the pandemic creates the opportunity to implement this economy strengthening social program. The OBCM caucus urges the provincial government to join the seven other provinces who have reached agreements in providing quality affordable childcare to families.

Childcare has been unaffordable and inaccessible to families across the province long before the pandemic began. The pandemic compounded this equity issue and resulted in more women exiting the workforce to care for their children.

Ensuring Ontarians have access to affordable childcare will remove a financial burden from families and help kick start economic recovery.

Municipal Code of Conduct

Whereas currently the Municipal Act 2001, provides limited actions towards Members of Council who have violated their respective Council Codes of Conduct; and

Whereas there have been several examples in Ontario of Members of Council acting with deliberate and total disregard for any of the principles and values outlined in their respective Council Code of Conduct and the workplace policies proclaimed by Council; and

Whereas AMO has adopted a four-point position that includes allowing a judicial removal of a Member of Council at the recommendation of a municipal Integrity Commissioner in instances of egregious or repeated violations of a Council Code of a Conduct;

Therefore, be it resolved that OBCM takes the position that there be stronger consequences for flagrant violations of a Council Code of Conduct by a Member of Council, including but not limited to removal of office; and

Be it further resolved that OBCM write to the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Honourable Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues seeking revisions to the Municipal Act, 2001 that would provide for the vacating of the seat of a member of council who has been found on clear and

convincing evidence to have committed serious misconduct, including any definitions necessary for the implementation of such a provision; and

Be it further resolved that these revisions consider allowing a Council or a municipal Integrity Commissioner to refer a Code of Conduct Violator to the court for a judicial hearing or an arm's length, non-political third party to address the potential removal from office of a Member of Council, similar to the current process with respect to attest relating to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

Provincial Offences Act - Unpaid Fines

The caucus agreed to work together to share information on the status of unpaid POA fines in their respective communities and continue working to advocate for improved tools for collection of unpaid fines for discussion at the next OBCM meeting.

Provincial/Federal Subsidy for Summer Day Camps

OBCM endorsed the idea of a federal/provincial subsidy for day camps if public health conditions allow and indicated their willingness to collaborate on a program to ensure its success.