

SUBJECT: Government Relations annual report & funding updates

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Corporate Affairs
Government Relations

Report Number: CAF-01-25

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: April 7, 2025

Date to Council: April 15, 2025

Recommendation

Receive for information corporate affairs report CAF-01-25, providing an update on the funding, advocacy, monitoring and reporting work of government relations (GR) at the City of Burlington; and

Endorse the staff recommendation to jointly pursue select funding opportunities alongside community stakeholder Mohawk College where strategic priorities align for both organizations.

Executive Summary

Purpose of report:

- The purpose of this report is to present Committee of the Whole with updates on the activities of the City of Burlington GR staff team, with a particular emphasis on reporting successful funding applications submitted and grants received in 2024.
- Secondly, this report provides a recommendation to Committee of the Whole to endorse joint pursuit of select funding opportunities alongside community stakeholder Mohawk College.

Key findings:

- The City of Burlington successfully received \$16,097,440.95 in senior levels of government funding for 2024.

- The City of Burlington is well positioned for grant readiness, submitting over a dozen funding applications in 2024.
- The City of Burlington is already seeing results in 2025 under various funding applications.

Implications:

- Financial
 - The City of Burlington seeks to gain financial resources through the pursuit of various funding opportunities to help offset project costs, thereby reducing the financial burden of project completion on local ratepayers.
 - The City of Burlington successfully received \$16,09,440.95 in funding from senior levels of government in 2024. To date, the City has already secured over \$2M in funding from senior levels of government in 2025.
- Legal
 - As the City of Burlington is successful in its funding pursuits, legal agreements need to be reviewed and signed, binding the city to various terms and conditions of the funding and transfer payment agreements.
 - The staffing impacts in reviewing and signing agreements are minimal and are requisite to release various funds to the City of Burlington.
- Communications
 - When the City of Burlington is successful in its funding pursuits, there are oftentimes communications opportunities to share the positive news.
 - These may take the form of on-site announcements alongside representatives from the funding sources, or rather, support news releases regarding funding awards in the form of media releases, social media communications, and other promotional communications as required under various funding agreements.
 - The staffing impacts in supporting successful funding announcements and/or rewards already factors into existing workflows for the Corporate Affairs Division, whereby communications and GR frequently support each other in sharing timely updates with City of Burlington residents, businesses and stakeholders.

Recommendation Report

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide members of committee with an update on the status of senior government funding applications, any pending applications (applications that have been submitted and decisions have not yet been made) and any funding programs that are open and being considered by staff.

This report also provides a summary on various activities that the GR team is engaged with to support the strategic goals of the City of Burlington, including recent engagement during the 2025 Ontario General Election.

The report will outline the work that has been done in the following areas:

- Identifying and helping secure funding for identified strategic priorities and projects;
- Advocating to senior levels of government to help advance identified City priorities, strategic goals and issues impacting residents, businesses, and City operations;
- Monitoring, reporting, and providing feedback on proposed legislative, regulatory and policy changes, senior government budgets, and other issues that impact the City's strategic goals and operations.
- Collaborating with municipal associations – including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) – to advance shared priorities and influence change at the Provincial and Federal levels of government.
- Supporting the Mayor, City Council and the Executive Leadership Team in advocating for the City's needs and creating opportunities for intergovernmental dialogue and collaboration on key issues.

The latter portion of this report seeks an endorsement from Committee of the Whole to have city staff explore opportunities to jointly pursue funding opportunities alongside community stakeholder Mohawk College, where strategic alignment exists.

Analysis

Funding Opportunities

The GR team remains diligently tuned-in to any funding opportunities from senior levels of government or other third-party organizations that municipalities may be eligible for. GR stays informed through active media monitoring across media channels, municipal participation in

various industry associations/information sharing networks, and through informal interpersonal channels.

As opportunities are identified, GR cascades funding opportunities to relevant divisions with staff having the subject matter expertise to evaluate and recommend whether the City of Burlington proceed with a given funding application. From there, all necessary application documentation is downloaded and shared with relevant departments to collaboratively complete application requirements.

Upon completion and final review, on behalf of the City of Burlington, GR then submits funding applications through the various portals and maintains contact with the funding party until a decision is rendered. Where successful, all supporting agreements and documentation are flowed through to applicable divisions and then submitted to the funding source for dispersal. In the event that funding applications are unsuccessful, GR and applicable staff teams liaise with funding provider to evaluate where our application may have come up short, however, these follow-up requests are not always responded to or discussed at length with the funder.

Successful Applications 2024

Below, and attached in Appendix A, is a high-level summary of each successful funding envelope that the City of Burlington received in 2024.

Federal

- **Canada Community Building Fund: \$5,968,239**
- **Housing Accelerator Fund: \$5,2390,071**
- **Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program: \$361,608**
- **Trans Canada Trail: \$13,760**
- **Celebrate Canada Grant: \$12,000**
- **Canada Summer Jobs Grant: \$51,199**
- **Youth Programs: \$12,180**
- **Canada Parks and Recreation Association: \$4,928**
- **Green Municipal Fund: \$71,735**

Provincial

- **Provincial Gas Tax: \$2,006,085**
- **Next Generation 9-1-1, Phase 2: \$2,256,633**
- **Seniors Active Living Centres Program: \$50,000**

Successful & Pending Applications 2025

Please see Appendix A for a summary of funding applications submitted to date in 2025, as well as existing opportunities currently being evaluated by city staff.

Federal

- **Canada Public Transit Fund, Baseline Funding: \$1,397,811**
- **Short-Term Rental Enforcement Fund: \$379,860**
- **Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Fund: \$1,000,000**
- **Canada Public Transit Fund, Metro-Region Agreement: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Canada Public Transit Fund: Active Transportation Fund: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Canada Summer Jobs 2025: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Growing Canada's Community Canopies: Pending Funding Determination**

Provincial

- **2025 Fire Protection Grant: \$65,843**
- **Invasive Species Action Fund: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Seniors Active Living Centres Grant: Pending Funding Determination**
- **Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund: Pending Funding Determination**

Advocacy Efforts

While GR is frequently engaged in supporting divisions with funding applications as detailed above, staff also play a critical role in communicating advocacy priorities with senior levels of government and facilitating relationship-building between the municipality and key stakeholders. These responsibilities ensure GR takes a whole-of-enterprise approach to advancing municipal priorities and those of the broader community, identifying opportunities for strategic alignment and joint participation in advancing a given priority.

Below is a summary of a few of the main organizations GR meets with regularly to champion City of Burlington goals and objectives.

- **Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) & Municipal Government Relations Network**
 - AMO works to make municipal governments stronger and more effective. Through AMO, Ontario's 444 municipalities work together to achieve shared goals and meet common challenges.
 - The mandate of the organization is to support and enhance strong and effective municipal government in Ontario. AMO promotes the value of the municipal level

- of government as a vital and essential component of Ontario and Canada's political system.
- The Mandate is delivered in a variety of ways. Of particular importance is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AMO and the Province. The MOU provides the opportunity for municipal input and reaction to provincial policy ideas (pre-consultation) so that they are fully informed as part of any provincial policy making process. The MOU also includes a Protocol that obligates the Province to consult with AMO and municipalities on matters that are of a federal-provincial nature that could affect municipal services and finances. The Protocol also sets out the Province's commitment to pursue a federal-provincial-municipal framework where municipalities have a 'seat at the federal-provincial table.'
 - **Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)**
 - FCM has been the national voice of municipal government since 1901. Its members include more than 2,100 municipalities of all sizes, from Canada's cities and rural communities to northern communities, and 20 provincial and territorial municipal associations. Together, FCM represents more than 92 percent of all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Municipal leaders from across Canada assemble each year to set FCM policy on key issues.
 - FCM advocates for municipalities to ensure their citizens' needs are reflected in federal policies and programs. The work of the Federation benefits every municipal government and taxpayer in Canada, and their programming delivers tools that help municipalities tackle local challenges.
 - **Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM) & Chief Administrative Officers Working Group**
 - Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) is comprised of mayors of Ontario cities with populations of 100,000 or more. Collectively, Ontario's Big City Mayors represent nearly 70% of Ontario's population.
 - OBCM provides a voice for big city mayors in policy debates that impact Ontario cities. Through policy development, advocacy, discussion and partnerships, Ontario's Big City Mayors support strong and effective cities.
 - OBCM achieves this by:
 - Forging relationships with the federal and provincial governments, municipal organizations such as AMO and FCM, and other stakeholders.
 - Meeting with government ministers and representatives to voice the perspective of big cities and work together to achieve shared goals.
 - Taking public positions on key issues and opportunities that affect big cities.
 - Sharing information, data, research, and resources among members and with other governments, stakeholders, and organizations.
 - Participating in government policy consultation processes as the voice of Ontario's big cities.
 - **Local Members of Parliament (M.P.) & Members of Provincial Parliament (M.P.P.)**
 - GR meets on a scheduled annual basis with all three area M.P.'s and all three area M.P.P.'s to discuss matters of strategic alignment and opportunity for the City of Burlington.

- Ad hoc conversations take place regularly as issues arise that require coordination between the municipality and a given senior level of government.
- City Staff notify senior levels of government as funding applications are submitted for awareness and support on the back end with any leverage to endorse a given application.
- GR staff share periodic updates with local M.P.'s and M.P.P.'s and also suggest opportunities for collaboration and participation in municipal projects and events, including funding announcements.

Elections

Another unique opportunity for GR to promote and advance City of Burlington policy priorities comes during election periods. Earlier this year, the 2025 Ontario General Election was held, and the City of Burlington compiled and shared its provincial election priorities with M.P.P. candidates in Burlington's Electoral Districts during the writ period to inform their platforms, provide briefings on key issues of municipal importance, and to facilitate relationship building.

Our municipal policy priorities are informed by several sources, including but not limited to:

- Burlington's Plan From Vision to Focus 2022-26;
- Burlington's 2025 Budget
- Council Resolutions & Motions;
- Contributions from Members of Council & City Staff.

These resources are stored on the City of Burlington website under our "Elections" webpage (see References) to provide relevant information to voters on how and where to vote, in addition to containing pertinent advocacy materials for public consumption. This webpage is repurposed for each election that happens – federal, provincial, municipal – and receives updates on a periodic basis.

Legislative Monitoring

GR is constantly monitoring and reviewing legislative and regulatory affairs at both the federal and provincial levels of government, as well as consuming media and academic reports detailing implications of a given policy proposal and anticipating potential impacts to municipalities, and more specifically, the City of Burlington. This monitoring function has recently been extended to include U.S. legislation in the context of ongoing tariff impacts.

Moreover, through the City of Burlington's membership in various advocacy organizations such as AMO and FCM, information is regularly flowed through rapid policy and public affairs updates that further inform the work of GR.

These findings are incorporated into GR's advocacy work and are regularly communicated with Members of Council and the Executive Leadership Team to inform the City of policy changes and proposals in a timely manner.

Through frequent interaction and touchpoints with Commissioners and their staff teams, GR has the ability to specifically tailor information updates for a given audience while maintaining a

dataset of key advocacy priorities across the organization. This information is utilized to inform strategic advocacy activities as well as prioritizing projects for funding opportunities.

Recommendation to Jointly Pursue Funding Opportunities with Mohawk College

The City of Burlington and Mohawk College signed a Letter of Understanding in July 2024 to establish new learning hubs and campuses in Burlington, as well as to explore additional partnership opportunities to advance the objectives of both Mohawk College and the City of Burlington.

While the work of the proposed expansion continues, the City of Burlington and Mohawk College are interested in jointly pursuing funding to execute a project(s) of shared priority, advance the relationship, and demonstrate the organization's commitment to collaboration in serving the interests of Burlington and surrounding area businesses and residents.

GR recommends that Committee of the Whole endorse, in principle, the joint pursuit of various funding initiatives that simultaneously advance the priorities and ambitions of both organizations. Top priorities at this time include advancing digital twinning initiatives and adopting flood mitigation best practices.

There are several anticipated benefits in adopting this approach, including:

- *Expanding eligibility for various funding opportunities* – e.g., some funding opportunities require a municipality to apply on behalf of a given project, whereas other funding programs bar municipalities from being a lead applicant and require non-governmental organizations or NGOs to lead the application;
- *Expanding internal capacity and expertise* – e.g., together, the City of Burlington and Mohawk College have more combined capacity and skillsets to mitigate project risks (financial, staffing, etc.) and to assist with the execution of a given funding agreement and its ensuing project; and
- *Demonstrating the commitment under the existing Letter of Understanding* - e.g., while Mohawk College continues to advance its expansion priorities into Burlington, there remain other opportunities for the college and municipality to demonstrate each party's commitment to advancing community objectives through joint participation on completing a strategic funding opportunity.

Depending on the eligibility criteria of any given funding opportunity, either the City of Burlington would apply as the lead applicant, with Mohawk College agreeing to be a supporting organization for various purposes under a given funding agreement, or vice versa. It is important to underscore that any funding commitments towards advancing the construction of a capital project, such as a new college campus, would be led by Mohawk College and supported by the City of Burlington.

Recommendation Details

- The City of Burlington and Mohawk College signed a Letter of Understanding to establish new learning hubs and campuses in Burlington.
- While the work of the proposed expansion continues, the City of Burlington and Mohawk College are interested in jointly pursuing funding to execute a project(s) of shared priority to advance the relationship and demonstrate the organization's commitment to collaboration in serving the interests of Burlington and surrounding area businesses and residents.
- GR recommends that Committee of the Whole endorse, in principle, the joint pursuit of various funding initiatives that simultaneously advance the priorities and ambitions of both organizations. Top priorities at this time include advancing digital twinning initiatives and adopting flood mitigation best practices.
- Depending on the eligibility criteria of any given funding opportunity, either the City of Burlington would apply as the lead applicant, with Mohawk College agreeing to be a supporting organization for various purposes under a given funding agreement, or vice versa. It is important to underscore that any funding commitments towards advancing the construction of a capital project, such as a new college campus, would be led by Mohawk College and supported by the City of Burlington.

Key Dates & Milestones

List significant dates and milestones related to the project/issue. Include:

Start and end dates for major phases,

Important deadlines

Any critical dates for decision points or deliverables.

Implications

Financial

The City of Burlington seeks to gain financial resources through the pursuit of various funding opportunities that offset project costs thereby reducing the financial burden of project completion on local ratepayers. Moreover, participation with Mohawk College may result in a wider pool of potential funding opportunities that the City of Burlington may be otherwise ineligible for.

The City of Burlington successfully received \$16,09,440.95 in senior levels of government funding for 2024 and has already successfully secured over \$2M in senior levels of

government funding for 2025.

Legal

As the City of Burlington is successful in its funding pursuits, legal agreements need to be reviewed and signed binding the city to various terms and conditions of the funding and transfer payment agreements.

The staffing impacts in reviewing and signing agreements are minimal and are requisite to release various funds to the City of Burlington.

Communications

When the City of Burlington is successful in its funding pursuits, there are oftentimes communications opportunities to share the positive news.

These may take the form of on-site announcements alongside representatives from the funding sources, or rather, support paper releases of funding awards in the form of media releases, social media communications, and other promotional communications as required under various funding agreements.

The staffing impacts in supporting successful funding announcements and/or rewards already factors into existing workflows for the Corporate Affairs Division, whereby communications and GR frequently support each other in sharing timely updates with City of Burlington residents and stakeholders.

References

- City of Burlington. (2025). *2025 Ontario Provincial Election: Top Priorities for Our City*. Retrieved from: <https://www.burlington.ca/en/council-and-city-administration/2025-election-municipal-policy-priorities.aspx>

Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

A. Senior Government Funding Approved & Pending as of March 2025

Draft By-laws for Approval at Council:

- None

Notifications:

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Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.