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December 6, 2024

The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria
Minister of Transportation
Ministry of Transportation
5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Subject: Support for Good Roads' Rural Road Safety Program

Dear Minister Sarkaria,

On behalf of the Association of Ontario Road Supervisors (AORS), I am writing to express our strong support for the advocacy efforts being led by Good Roads to address the pressing crisis of road safety in rural Ontario.

The statistics are staggering and paint a clear picture of the urgent need for action. In 2023 alone, 616 lives were lost, and 36,090 people were injured on Ontario's roads—a nearly 20% increase in fatalities over the last decade. In 2021, 561 road fatalities were recorded, with 426 occurring on municipal roads. Alarmingly, while rural Ontario accounts for only 17% of the province's population, it suffers 55% of these fatalities, underscoring the disproportionately high danger of rural roadways.

For AORS, road safety is not just a professional concern but a core part of our mission to promote excellence in municipal public works. Our members are on the front lines of road maintenance and construction, tasked with ensuring that roads are safe and accessible for all users. Each tragedy on our roads is a stark reminder of the responsibility our members carry and the importance of equipping them with the tools, resources, and programs needed to mitigate risks and save lives.

This crisis has far-reaching implications for rural municipalities. In addition to the devastating human toll, the financial burden of roadway collisions has compounded challenges for municipalities already grappling with rising insurance premiums and an unsustainable joint and several liability framework. These costs further strain municipalities' ability to maintain and improve their road networks, leaving them with few options to mitigate risks.

Good Roads has developed a multifaceted rural road safety program designed to address these issues head-on. The proposed five-year, $183-million program would focus on:

- Identifying the most dangerous roads in rural municipalities;
- Conducting thorough road safety audits; and
- Installing modern safety infrastructure to prevent serious injuries and save lives.

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This program leverages Good Roads' 131 years of expertise in municipal road safety and its extensive industry partnerships, including with AORS, to deliver impactful solutions efficiently and cost-effectively. Implementing such a program would provide municipalities with the tools to address risks and enhance safety on their roads, preventing tragedies and easing pressures on Ontario's rural healthcare system.

AORS encourages the Government of Ontario to support Good Roads' proposal to fund and administer this critical program that would allow rural municipalities to access funding to enhance road safety and to repair/upgrade targeted sections of rural roads deemed unsafe. Investing in rural road safety is not just a fiscal necessity—it is a moral imperative. We trust that the Ministry of Transportation will recognize the urgency of this issue and partner with Good Roads to address preventable road tragedies.

Together, we can make Ontario's rural roads safer for all.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. AORS remains committed to collaborating with your Ministry and stakeholders, including Good Roads, to improve road safety across the province.

Sincerely,

Joseph Reid, CMO, CRS-S, CET
President, AORS

John Maheu
Executive Director, AORS

Kelly Elliott
Marketing and Communications Specialist, AORS

cc (via email):
Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Honourable Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure
Honourable Rob Flack, Minister of Agriculture
Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs
Honourable Trevor Jones, Associate Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Response
Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
Scott Butler, Executive Director, Good Roads
Thomas Barakat, Manager, Public Policy and Government Relations, Good Roads

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