AORS
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Parliamentary Assistant Ric Bresee
Ministry of Transportation
Room 263, Main Legislative Building
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A5

January 22, 2026

Dear Mr. Bresee,

On behalf of the Association of Ontario Road Supervisors (AORS), thank you for taking the time to meet with us at the 2025 ROMA Conference to discuss rural road safety. We appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with you about the realities facing municipalities responsible for operating and maintaining Ontario's extensive rural road network.

As discussed, rural road safety continues to present serious and disproportionate challenges. In 2019, Ontario recorded 428 traffic fatalities on municipal roads, with 205 of those occurring in rural municipalities. Although rural Ontario represents just 13.3% of the province's population, these communities accounted for 48% of all municipal road fatalities. This imbalance underscores the need for transportation safety policies and funding programs that reflect rural conditions.

Rural municipalities are responsible for a significant share of Ontario's transportation infrastructure, including more than 305,000 lane kilometres of roadway and over 30,000 bridges and culverts. The scale of these networks—combined with aging infrastructure and varying design standards, particularly in northern and rural areas—creates substantial cost pressures. Even basic safety work, such as centreline and spot edge line painting, can cost a small municipality close to $300,000 annually.

AORS strongly supports Vision Zero principles and the Good Roads Road Safety Audit Program. However, implementation remains a challenge. There are currently only 93 certified road safety auditors across the province, and once audits are completed, municipalities must still secure funding to act on recommendations. For many rural communities, essential improvements such as line painting, speed signage, warning signs, and other engineering-based safety measures are financially unattainable under current funding models.

The societal cost of traffic fatalities in rural Ontario is estimated at $2.28 billion (Vodden et al., 2007). These costs extend far beyond provincial healthcare and insurance systems. Municipalities absorb significant expenses related to emergency response, roadway cleanup, infrastructure damage, and legal exposure, yet the responsibility for implementing preventative safety measures falls disproportionately on the approximately 12% of Ontarians who live in rural communities.

While urban road safety appropriately receives ongoing attention, many existing programs—including Vision Zero initiatives, Road Safety Audits, and traffic calming measures—are structured around urban road environments. Funding streams introduced following the removal of automated speed enforcement have largely supported urban-focused projects, leaving rural municipalities with limited access to resources that address their specific safety risks.

For this reason, AORS is asking for a clear policy shift to expand the intent and eligibility of the Road Safety Fund so it explicitly supports rural communities with solutions that are both feasible and effective in rural environments.

Specifically, we recommend that the Road Safety Fund be expanded to include eligible funding for:

- Centreline, edge line, and intersection line painting
- Enhanced and upgraded regulatory and warning signage
- Curve identification, chevrons, and hazard markers
- Radar speed signs and other speed-awareness tools
- Low-cost, engineering-based safety improvements identified through Road Safety Audits
- Rural-specific traffic safety treatments that improve consistency and driver expectancy on high-speed roads

These measures represent the most practical and impactful safety tools available to rural municipalities. They are foundational, preventative, and aligned with how rural road networks function—yet they are often excluded or deprioritized under current funding criteria.

In addition to operational costs, municipalities face significant financial exposure through joint and several liability under tort law when serious collisions occur. As more urban drivers relocate to rural and rural-adjacent communities, expectations for urban-level traffic controls increase. When serious incidents happen, rural municipalities are often viewed as the "deep pockets," despite limited fiscal capacity. For small municipalities, even a single major claim can be economically devastating. Internal traffic studies completed through the Township of Oro-Medonte have identified extreme speeding behaviours, including vehicles travelling 80 km/h in 40 km/h zones and 110 km/h in 60 km/h zones—further highlighting the need for proactive, preventative investment.

Good Roads has long emphasized that prevention is the most effective approach to traffic safety, and as the boots on the ground, AORS knows this to be true. Expanding the Road Safety Fund to better reflect rural realities would provide municipalities with the tools they need to reduce fatalities, manage liability, and protect residents without placing unsustainable financial pressure on small communities.

We appreciate your engagement on this issue and your leadership in advancing transportation safety across Ontario. AORS would welcome continued dialogue with the Ministry of Transportation and stands ready to provide practical insight from municipal road supervisors who manage these networks every day.

Thank you again for your time and attention to the unique road safety challenges facing rural Ontario.

Sincerely,

Karla Musso-Garcia, CRS-I
President, Association of Ontario Road Supervisors
Operations Manager, Township of Oro-Medonte

Kelly Elliott
Interim Executive Director
Association of Ontario Road Supervisors

Cc (via e-mail)
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