AORS
PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE. PURSUING EXCELLENCE.

Minister Lisa Thompson
Ministry of Rural Affairs
28th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J4

January 28, 2026

Dear Minister Thompson,

On behalf of the Association of Ontario Road Supervisors (AORS), thank you for taking the time to meet with us at the 2026 ROMA Conference to discuss rural road safety alongside the Township of Oro-Medonte. We appreciate your openness to hearing directly from municipal public works professionals who are on the front lines of maintaining and operating Ontario's rural road networks.

As discussed, rural road safety remains a critical and growing concern. In 2019, Ontario recorded 428 traffic fatalities on municipal roads, with 205 of those occurring in rural municipalities. While rural Ontario represents just 13.3% of the province's population, these communities accounted for 48% of all municipal road fatalities. This disproportionate impact highlights the urgent need for targeted, rural-focused solutions.

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

AORS fully 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 in the province, and once audits are completed, municipalities must still find the funding to act on recommendations. Essential improvements such as line painting, speed signage, warning signs, and other engineering-based safety measures often remain out of reach for rural communities.

The societal cost of traffic fatalities in rural Ontario has been estimated at $2.28 billion (Vodden et al., 2007), a burden that extends well beyond healthcare and insurance systems. Municipalities absorb significant costs related to property damage, emergency response, and roadway cleanup, yet the responsibility for implementing preventative safety measures falls disproportionately on the approximately 12% of Ontarians living in rural areas.

While continued attention to urban road safety is important, many existing programs—such as Vision Zero initiatives, Road Safety Audits, and traffic calming measures—are financially inaccessible for rural municipalities. Funding streams introduced following the removal of automated speed enforcement have largely supported urban-focused projects, leaving rural communities with limited options to address their unique safety challenges.

Rural municipalities require provincial support to implement essential traffic safety standards, including line painting, upgraded signage, hazard markers, and radar speed signs. These basic tools are critical to applying consistent traffic management principles and improving safety outcomes on rural roads.

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 resources. For small municipalities, a single major claim can be economically devastating. Internal traffic studies at 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 underscoring the urgency of proactive safety investment.

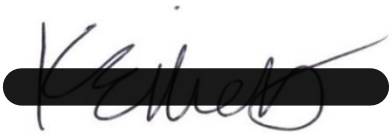
Good Roads has long emphasized that prevention is the most effective approach to traffic safety, and as the boots on the ground, AORS knows this to be true. We strongly advocate for expanding investments under the Road Safety Fund to include essential traffic safety measures for rural municipalities. This should encompass fundamental principles such as line painting, curve analysis, signage upgrades, and engineering design standards necessary to improve safety across rural Ontario, including communities such as Oro-Medonte.

Additionally, we were also encouraged by the Ministry of Rural Affairs’ interest in hosting rural summits across the province in 2026. AORS would welcome the opportunity to be a partner in these summits—both to help gather insights from municipal practitioners and to advocate for meaningful, practical improvements to rural road safety.

As always, AORS stands ready to work collaboratively with your ministry. If there are opportunities to advance rural road safety together, we would be pleased to participate and contribute our expertise.

Thank you again for your time and leadership on issues that matter deeply to rural communities across Ontario.

Sincerely,



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