

Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

To: Chair and Members
Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

From: Sandra Datars Bere, City Manager

Subject: 2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework – Annual Report

Date: March 24, 2026

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the City Manager, the 2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework – Annual Report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the implementation of the [2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework](#), which guides the City of London's advocacy in support of Council's Strategic Plan. The report includes an overview of government relations and advocacy activities over the last year and a preview of planned advocacy work for 2026.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The City of London Strategic Advocacy Framework responds directly to Council's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan outcome that "the City of London's regional and community relationships support the delivery of exceptional and valued service," and the related strategy to "Implement the Strategic Advocacy Framework."

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- [2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework – Annual Update](#) (SPPC, March 25, 2025)
- [2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework](#) (CSC, June 12, 2023)

1.2 About Government Relations and the Strategic Advocacy Framework

Decisions made by other orders of government have a direct impact on London's social, economic, and environmental well-being. The Government Relations (GR) team works to position London as a leader in municipal policy and service delivery, ensuring the

City's priorities help shape policies at the provincial and federal levels. GR also focuses on building strategic partnerships, influencing key policy decisions, and attracting investment to London, leveraging the City's role as a major centre in Southwestern Ontario.

City Council sets the City's strategic advocacy direction through the Strategic Advocacy Framework 2023–2027. The Framework integrates the City's strategic priorities and ensures GR efforts are aligned with the broader Strategic Plan. The GR team leads implementation of the advocacy agenda, supported by Service Areas through subject-matter expertise, communications support, and coordination of events that strengthen advocacy efforts.

The 2023–2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework identifies seven outcomes - desired end states - from the Strategic Plan that rely on strong community and intergovernmental partnerships. Rather than outlining a fixed list of advocacy initiatives, the Framework provides guidance and flexibility, enabling the GR team to respond to emerging priorities. The team reports annually to Council on progress in implementing the Framework.

1.3 Strategic Advocacy Framework Implementation Update

To implement the 2023-2027 Strategic Advocacy Framework, the GR team identifies advocacy projects that align with the Framework and develops an advocacy plan for the year that maximizes opportunities to engage with provincial and federal decision-makers (see 2026 Advocacy Plan below), working in collaboration with Service Areas.

Key 2025 Advocacy Activities

Delegations & Meetings

- Supported our regional partners in securing two delegation meetings with the provincial government at the 2025 Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA) Conference (Transportation; Health)
- Coordinated delegation meeting with Solicitor General at the 2025 Good Roads Conference
- Coordinated eight delegation meetings with the provincial government at the 2025 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) Conference (Municipal Affairs and Housing; Solicitor General; Education; Children, Community and Social Services; Economic Development; Infrastructure; Health; Mental Health and Addictions; Energy)
- Supported the Mayor, Councillors and Senior Leadership Team with pre-briefs, meeting coordination at conferences, and standing in for London at regular meetings for AMO, ROMA, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Big City Mayors Caucus (BCMC), Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM), Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO) and Regional and Single-Tier CAOs

Correspondence & Submissions

- Developed AMO, ROMA and Good Roads Delegation follow-up correspondence to Ministers
- Coordinated the submission of advocacy letters to Provincial and Federal Ministers related to speeding up development approvals, updating the Dog Owners' Liability Act, advancing London's priority infrastructure projects, supporting TVDSB and LDCSB capital priorities, and supporting Fanshawe College's Skills Development Fund application
- Coordinated the collection of 26 support letters from regional municipalities and partners for the London Emergency Services Campus that was shared with Ontario's Solicitor General, Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Premier Ford, and Canada's Minister of Housing and Infrastructure
- Coordinated the submission of Federal and Provincial Pre-Budget Submissions
- Provided Councillors with a local advocacy package for provincial and federal election outreach to local candidates and coordinated letters of congratulations from the Mayor to provincial and federal elected officials

Partnerships & Funding

- Met with local and regional partners to discuss alignment in advocacy efforts, including organizing a Regional Leaders meeting with area Mayors, Wardens and local MPs, coordinating the County and City Liaison Committee Meeting with Middlesex County, coordinating London's annual community meeting with TVDSB, and hosting Young London's visit to City Hall
- Supported six funding announcements in London with provincial and federal officials
- Supported Service Areas and regional partners with the completion of grant funding applications
- Coordinated the call out for community proposals for the Trade Impacted Community Program (TICP) and managed the completion of the provincial funding application on behalf of project partners
- Achieved clarity from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, confirming that Ontario municipalities are not required to fund mandatory statutory Development Charge (DC) exemptions. London will continue to advocate - both directly and indirectly through AMO - for more predictable, permanent, and long-term infrastructure funding from the province to ensure that the City is able to fund current and long-term infrastructure projects

Key 2025 Advocacy Impacts

In 2025, the GR team translated a high volume of advocacy activity into tangible funding, policy influence, and strengthened intergovernmental positioning for the City of London.

Secured and Protected Critical Funding

GR efforts directly contributed to securing and advancing significant provincial and federal investments in London. Most notably, advocacy through the ROMA delegation with the Minister of Transportation helped advance Middlesex County's successful Ontario Transit Investment Fund (OTIF) application, resulting in \$3.4M for Middlesex County Connect. Additional funding wins and approvals supported by GR included:

- \$11.9M in Building Faster Fund (BFF) funding
- \$18M for Sunningdale Rd W renewal through the Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Fund (HECS)
- \$6M annually for the Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hub
- \$1M Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund (CSRIF) funding for Silverwoods Retrofit

Advanced Strategic City-Building Projects

Through targeted delegations (ROMA, Good Roads, AMO, FCM) and follow-up engagement, GR increased ministerial awareness and support for London's priority projects. This included:

- Elevating the London Emergency Services Campus (LESC) profile, generating ministerial interest in joint training and emergency preparedness facilities and ongoing discussions around investment
- Securing direct engagement with the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism to support development projects requiring heritage approvals
- Delivering federal and provincial pre-budget submissions and responding to direct requests from government to position London's infrastructure and housing priorities ahead of fiscal decisions

These efforts ensured London's top infrastructure and housing priorities were consistently reinforced across multiple ministries and orders of government.

Strengthened London's Regional and National Influence

GR deepened regional alignment and amplified London's leadership profile by:

- Coordinating a Regional Leaders Meeting with area Mayors, Wardens, and MPs
- Coordinating the County and City Liaison Committee Meeting with Middlesex County
- Supporting OBCM, MARCO, AMO, and FCM engagements to ensure London's priorities shaped broader municipal advocacy agendas
 - GR was able to amplify London's influence on national advocacy engagements by supporting the Mayor in his role as Chair of FCM's Big City Mayors Caucus (BCMC)

- Coordinating a national webinar hosted by the City of London, Ivey and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities related to tariff impacts

As a result of the combined advocacy efforts of City Council, staff, and our local and regional partners, London continues to be recognized as a leader in policy development and problem solving. During the 2025 Provincial election, party leaders referred to London as “innovation-oriented” and a “housing-forward municipality.”

1.4 2026 Planned Advocacy Activities

The 2026 Advocacy Plan outlined below will build on London’s successful advocacy work in 2025 to advance London’s strategic advocacy priorities.

Pre-Budget Submissions

GR will coordinate the City of London’s provincial and federal pre-budget submissions, highlighting the City’s strategic priorities. The provincial pre-budget submission was already delivered in January, and the federal pre-budget submission will likely be delivered in the fall, unless a federal election is called beforehand.

Delegations

GR will leverage the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Municipalities Association (ROMA), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM), and Good Roads (OGRA) platforms to promote London’s projects through delegations with Ministers.

- London already supported our regional partners at the 2026 ROMA Conference through a delegation with the Ministry of Transportation
- The City of London also recently joined the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, providing the opportunity to participate in cross-border advocacy with member Canadian and American municipalities. GR will support the City of London’s participation at the organization’s annual conference in May
- GR will support the Mayor and Councillors attending these annual conferences and participating in delegations by providing pre-briefs and on-site backup. GR will also coordinate follow-up correspondence with Ministers

Direct Advocacy

GR will facilitate direct correspondence with provincial and federal MPs, MPPs and Ministers as needed to promote emerging advocacy priorities.

- GR will continue to collaborate with influential organizations such as AMO, FCM, BCMC, OBCM and MARCO to amplify London’s advocacy
 - New this year, GR will support OBCM’s first lobbying day in Queen’s Park, providing Ontario’s Big City Mayors with the opportunity to advance collective municipal priorities

- GR will work closely with the Mayor, Council, London Economic Response Team (LERT), and municipal associations to support provincial and federal governments responding to trade-related concerns
 - As renegotiation of the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) gets underway, GR will support efforts to gather insights from local businesses and community organizations to understand potential impacts to trade and supply chain disruption and feed this information up to provincial and federal trade officials. This work falls under the Strategic Advocacy Framework's outcome: *London encourages equitable economic growth and diversification.*

Regional Partnerships

GR will help coordinate meetings with regional partners such as Western University, Fanshawe College, London Chamber of Commerce, Middlesex London Health Unit, local hospitals, school boards, Middlesex County, Conservation Authorities, and neighbouring municipalities to align advocacy efforts and share insights.

GR Tool Implementation

In 2024, London's GR team was re-established as part of the Strategy, Innovation, and Economic Development (SIED) division in the City Manager's Office. In 2025, new GR and advocacy processes were created to support the GR team and clarify roles and responsibilities. In 2026, a new GR tool will be implemented to replace manual tracking of advocacy campaigns and government interactions with a comprehensive automated GR intelligence CRM. A unified, web-based repository for GR intelligence will enhance the City's advocacy campaigns by automating the collection of important provincial and federal legislative changes and enabling the timely sharing of important information across relevant teams. A web-based GR CRM will also protect the continuity of service delivery over time.

Conclusion

Strong partnerships across all orders of government are essential to advancing the City of London's priorities. Guided by the Strategic Advocacy Framework, Civic Administration will continue to strengthen outcomes for London through coordinated, enterprise-wide efforts that support the City's 2023–2027 Strategic Plan.

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