

Thank you for the kind introduction Doug.

And thank you to AMO's membership – to each and every one of you ... for the honor of serving as your President.

I am joined today by some very special guests for my first address as your president – my father Peter and my wife Ann Marie are in the audience. I tried to get my 9 year old daughter Helen to come but she bluntly told me that I'm not as interesting as golf camp.

My biggest political supporter, my mom, isn't here today – I lost her to cancer last year. I don't think that 17 years ago – as we knocked on doors – she ever imagined that I would lead Ontario's municipalities as your President.

Not only was mom a great campaigner – she was shrewd judge of character and she would have looked at Doug and said, “Peter you’ve got big shoes to fill.”

Doug’s work over the past two years has been more than exceptional... it has been down-right brilliant.

In addition to all the hours Doug put in at AMO – and by all accounts there were many – he also maintained all his duties as Mayor of Southwest Middlesex and as a Councillor for Middlesex County. (He never missed a Council Meeting)

He is also very active in his local Lion’s Club. And, incredibly, he did all that while still managing to get out on the ice for dozens of hockey games this year.

For those who don't know, Doug is a goalie... and a pretty good one from what I hear. (At least that's what HE tells me!)

One of the great things about living in Ottawa is the fact that it is home to Ontario's best hockey team – the Ottawa Senators – an NHL powerhouse.

When I told them that I knew a great politician who is solid between the pipes, they asked me if he'd be up for a try-out.

I told them he might – provided that he'd look the part.

Doug... on behalf of the Ottawa Senators, and your colleagues at AMO, I'd like to give you this authentic Senators' jersey.

(Present the sweater to Doug. Picture taken by Conference Photographer)

Doug has been very generous with his advice and support as we make this transition.

And I'm pleased to say that he isn't going far. As Immediate Past President he will still hold a prominent position on the board... but more importantly, I am pleased to announce that Doug has agreed to continue to lead AMO's negotiating team on the Fiscal Review.

His experience, gained in the thick of things over the past two years, will continue to serve us all well.

Thank you Doug.

One of the first things Doug said to me when I expressed interest in succeeding him as president was, “why?”

A lot of people have asked me that question, including my 9-year-old daughter, Helen.

After leaving the house very early one morning, on my way to the NOMA conference, Helen asked my wife why I was going to Thunder Bay.

Ann Marie responded that I was running for President.

Helen asked my wife if it meant we were going to get a black SUV?

“No,” my wife explained.

“Will we get a security team?” asked my daughter.

“No... there won't be anything like that.”

“Does daddy get an airplane?”

“No.”

“Does he get a boat?”

“No.”

“How about more money?”

“No. He’s not going to be that kind of President,” explained my wife.

My daughter looked back at her and said, “That doesn’t sound like much fun to me...”

When I look ahead at what AMO wants to accomplish in the next two years I know that I’m in for some moments that won’t be fun at all.

But I relish the ability to work with a Board of Directors that has tremendous depth, insight and commitment to serve all municipalities.

I am looking forward to my term... to the challenges that we will face together... and the successes we will accomplish along the way.

Given all the time and energy Doug has put into the job some of my colleagues have asked why you would want to lead AMO.

The answer is simple. Some of the best minds in Ontario are involved in municipal government and many contribute to AMO's initiatives.

We have representation from every corner of the province.

We all know how much happens at the municipal order of government. We don't fight wars in foreign lands, or decide provincial policy... but we do provide the services that people use every day.

We are the reason children can drink their tap water. We're responsible for the emergency services that keep families safe. We run the buses people depend on to get to work, and we maintain the roads they drive on.

We plan communities; create them; and nurture them.

We are responsible for parks and playgrounds for people of all ages.

We innovate... to provide quality social and community services that safeguard vulnerable people.

We build the libraries and cultural facilities that keep our communities vibrant and foster new generations of leadership.

And yes... we take out the trash... and we know what happens after you flush. We take care of that too, because that's what keeps Ontario's land and water clean and green.

If there is any doubt about how broad our reach is, ask yourself how many associations in other sectors can assemble representatives from 15 ministries to take questions from the floor. Who else needs to?

Delegation meetings are a tremendous benefit of this conference – and the Province accommodated more than 200 of them during the past three days.

From my 12 years on the Board, I can tell you that at any given time, AMO has dozens of policy files on the go... and they touch almost every ministry the Province has.

When it comes to serving Ontarians and affecting their lives, we are on the front line. This is where the action is.

And AMO is a vehicle that allows us to change lives & communities for the better.

Doug Reycraft said it clearly on Monday when he said “AMO is stronger than ever.”

What is the source of that strength? We have been around for more than a century. So what is it about this point in time that stands out?

First of all, we have earned respect.

The powers that be know that we aren't partisan or self-interested. We advocate policy positions that are more practical and necessary than radical.

Take housing for example. It is becoming a major focus for AMO because it has to be.

The current demand for affordable housing in Ontario is shameful.

In total, it's estimated that 124,000 people are on social housing waiting lists throughout all of Ontario. That total includes 48,000 families.

In Cochrane and the Bruce peninsula it's 2 to 3 years.

In Parry Sound and Peterborough it's 3 to 5 years.

The most extreme wait-lists are in Peel Region, where it can take 21 years!

And yet our Federal Minister of Housing refuses to have substantial discussions with his provincial counterparts.

He won't even respond to requests from Minister Watson to match the \$100 million allocated for housing in the last Provincial budget. That's outrageous and unacceptable.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has called for meaningful Federal action and AMO supports them.

Minister Watson has asked for our support and I will stand with him.

Make no mistake housing cost municipal taxpayers \$1.2 B each and every year.

Delivery of this important service at the municipal level makes good sense but funding housing through property taxes does not.

The Federal Government is poised to withdraw from the housing field altogether leaving municipalities to shoulder the burden.

We cannot let that happen and AMO, I can guarantee you, will lead a call to action.

However, we can go further.

On Monday, Doug outlined the success that we have had influencing waste management policy. We worked with other associations, did our homework, made suggestions the public would endorse, and laid out a practical roadmap to get it done.

We need to apply that sophistication and talent to the obvious need for improvements on housing policy.

AMO has demonstrated that when we have consensus on an issue, we can affect change, provided that we deliver a clear message and stand shoulder to shoulder.

Personally, I would like to take a page from NOMA's playbook and expand our support network.

On my most recent trip to Northern Ontario I was struck by how their Associations had strong relationships with local business, industry and community groups – a common voice.

And they also understood that they must not only identify the problems but also propose the solutions – solutions that work for their unique circumstances.

AMO is on the same path.

Our relationship with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is an example.

Doug spoke at their annual general meeting this spring... and his remarks about the fiscal gap were well-received. When the Premier announced \$1.1 Billion in infrastructure funding – the Chamber supported this much needed investment – noting AMO by name.

AMO's leading-edge waste management policy papers were solution-oriented... and they have started bringing the change we need.

AMO needs to use our influence to continue advance solution-oriented public policy so get ready for some action.

(Pause)

Before I conclude, I want to thank, once again, AMO's staff and the many volunteers from the City of Ottawa for putting on such a great conference. And I want to thank to Maureen McCaully, AMO's conference coordinator, for her remarkable behind-the-scenes coordination.

We've been in Ottawa for the last 5 years and every August the Ottawa Congress Centre has been our home.

This conference is the very last event that will take place in this hall. Change is inevitable, and the Congress Centre is being redesigned and rebuilt.

Please join me in thanking the great staff here at the Congress Centre for their warm hospitality and excellent service.

(pause for applause)

Each year the AMO Conference gets bigger and better. Plans for the 2009 Conference are already in the works and I know it will be our best yet.

In the meantime I look forward to working with as many of you as I can.

Once again, I am humbled by the opportunity to serve you as your President. I appreciate the size of the shoes I have to fill and I promise to work as hard as I can to ensure AMO is a strong champion for positive change in your municipality.

Thank you.