



Deputy Mayor  
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CHAIR, GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE  
CHAIR, SCARBOROUGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
CHAIR, BOARD OF MANAGEMENT OF THE TORONTO ZOO  
CHAIR, FEDERATION OF ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
NIGHT ECONOMY CHAMPION, CITY OF TORONTO

Date: April 21, 2026

To: Mayor Olivia Chow, Chair and Executive Committee

Re: Report on Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO) meetings in January and March 2026

**Recommendation:**

1. Toronto City Council receive the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO) January 16, 2026, and March 13, 2026, meeting updates for information.

**Background**

I am pleased to provide this update following my attendance at the recent meetings on behalf of Mayor Olivia Chow, summarizing the proceedings and strategic advocacy alignment resulting from the January 16 and March 13, 2026, meetings of the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario (MARCO). The sessions focused on municipal pressures, specifically the escalating homelessness crisis, the financial sustainability of transit, and the operational transition of the provincial Blue Box program.

**1. Escalation of the Provincial Homelessness Crisis:** Updated research from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) was provided revealing that nearly 85,000 Ontarians were known to be homeless in 2025, representing an 8% increase over the previous year and a 50% increase since 2021. More than half of this population is considered chronically homeless. While urban centers remain heavily impacted, the crisis is expanding rapidly in rural and Northern communities (growing by 30% and 37% respectively). MARCO is calling for a fundamental new approach that prioritizes long-term housing solutions over temporary emergency measures, estimating that an \$11 billion investment over 10 years is required to create 75,000 new affordable and supportive housing units.

**2. Transit Sustainability and Infrastructure Funding:** Municipalities continue to face significant fiscal challenges regarding transit operations. Ridership has not fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels, with approximately 110 million fewer riders in 2025 compared to 2019. In Toronto, transit has now surpassed police services as the largest line item on the property tax bill. MARCO's 2026 advocacy priorities include securing a permanent federal infrastructure transfer indexed to inflation and establishing a sustainable provincial operating funding model to relieve the burden on municipal property taxes.

**3. Blue Box Transition to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** As of January 1, 2026, Circular Materials assumed full operational and financial responsibility for residential recycling in Ontario. Following the conclusion of Toronto's transition agreement on December 31, 2025, the City no longer manages residential Blue Box materials. Staff have observed inconsistent supplemental collection and delayed customer service response times from the new provider. MARCO members discussed aligned advocacy to ensure Circular Materials meets service standards, particularly for residents requiring side-door collection and those impacted by recent collection schedule changes.

**4. Public Safety and Community Infrastructure:** Engagement with the Solicitor General highlighted the rising costs of community safety. To protect residents, Toronto recently amended Municipal Code Chapter 743 to establish "Access Areas" around social infrastructure—such as schools and community centers—to ensure safe

access without intimidation. Additionally, the City has launched a \$2.5 million Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) Grant, offering up to \$100,000 to non-profits and faith-based organizations at risk of hate-motivated incidents to install protective physical measures.

The proceedings of MARCO continue to serve as a critical platform for municipal leaders to coordinate requests for provincial and federal support, ensuring that local priorities across Toronto are integrated into broader regional and national advocacy strategies.

[Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PAUL W. AINSLIE', written in a cursive style.

Paul W. Ainslie  
Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto, Councillor  
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