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Regional Municipality of Peel
Office of the Regional Chair

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ONTARIO GOOD ROADS ASSOCIATION

Working for Municipalities

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March 9, 2010

Members and Head of Council

Almost five years ago when Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) embarked on the Municipal DataWorks (MDW) project, we knew that it would be met with scepticism and resistance. Organizations of all types have been trying for years to get a handle on the extent of the infrastructure deficit, not only in Ontario but across Canada and the world.

OGRA knew that getting appropriate funding would be a challenge and getting the attention of the appropriate politicians and bureaucrats at Queen's Park would also require significant energy. Despite these challenges, the OGRA Board of Directors persevered. They conveyed their support time and time again not only at the board table but within their own municipalities and communities. After all, that's what MDW represents ... the collection of key infrastructure data on a community by community basis enabling organizations like OGRA to present the case for an "appropriate" level of infrastructure funding.

OGRA is well aware that MDW itself does not solve the problem of sustainable infrastructure funding; however, it does provide a basis on which to move the conversation away from studying the problem to actually proposing and implementing solutions. OGRA also understands that infrastructure funding decisions are political decisions and OGRA's role is to influence those decisions based on sound, practical and defensible information ... information that will be gleaned from the MDW knowledge base.

At OGRA, we believe this to be a sound, reliable and transparent means of conveying the requirements that our municipal members have with respect to infrastructure funding needs. We believe that MDW represents an opportunity to put all of our members on the same channel with respects to their responsibilities to manage their capital assets in an efficient and transparent manner. OGRA represents all municipalities equally through the membership process and prides itself on our past partnership successes with the Government of Ontario, primarily through the Ministry of Transportation.

The recent funding agreement with the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Transportation confirms OGRA's role in the process and demonstrates the confidence that the Province has in OGRA as a partner. OGRA believes that acting as the "trusted partner" and delivering key information through the MDW initiative, meets the test of our responsibilities to both our members and the Provincial government as the key provider for infrastructure funding.

MDW was built in an open technology environment allowing private sector service providers to participate in the success of MDW. We are pleased with the third party participation to date and note that more service providers are gearing up to integrate their solutions and services with MDW. OGRA has also engaged a new MDW delivery partner, The Altus Group, who will provide for our growth into the future.

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The success of a province-wide database lies in your hands, our partners, stakeholders, corporate members and those with an interest in the management of our infrastructure in a sustainable manner. We cannot do this without the data. OGRA realizes that this objective has different angles for each, but we all agree that targeting infrastructure investment in an efficient and effective manner is a priority. MDW provides the framework and with data, the strategic business intelligence to decision-makers represented in a common language, so that we are all interpreting data the same way. Please send your data to OGRA to import into MDW.

We ask for your support of the MDW initiative, your ideas on improving MDW and making it more transparent and accessible. Over 300 Ontario municipalities are participating so far and over the next year we plan to increase that number. With your support, we can do this and we can report that we have moved beyond studying the issue, moved beyond funding another project that results in a report and that we have created a product that begins to address the challenge of infrastructure funding. Investment in our critical infrastructure is not an option, it is simply a question of how we go about it and go about selecting priorities. OGRA believes that MDW fills this need on behalf of our membership, as well as, our stakeholders and partners.

We appreciate your support and endorsement of Municipal DataWorks and we want to work with you as we take it to the next level.

Yours truly,

J. W. Tiernay,
Executive Director