



Rideau Lakes

2024 AMO DELEGATION MEETING BRIEF

Minister Todd McCarthy

**Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and
Procurement**



Minister McCarthy:

By way of background, the Township of Rideau Lakes is a lower-tier municipality situated within the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville in Eastern Ontario along the Rideau Canal Waterway, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Rideau Lakes has a population of over 10,000 residents which almost doubles in the summer months due to our seasonal visitors and seasonal property owners.

PURPOSE:

The requirement for municipalities to take over and maintain abandoned cemeteries when volunteers and owners can no longer manage them causes a financial and operational burden for small rural municipalities.

CONTEXT:

The Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2022 and Ontario Regulation 30/11, include the requirement for municipalities to take possession of and maintain closed and abandoned cemeteries. This requirement is causing increased financial and operational pressures for all municipalities, including Rideau Lakes.

Rideau Lakes is home to 56 cemeteries, 13 of which are currently maintained by the Municipality. Of the 13 maintained by Rideau Lakes, 8 of those are owned by the Municipality. The other 5 are currently at a high risk of being abandoned/relinquished to the municipality in the very near future.

When municipalities take over the management of abandoned, closed or neglected cemeteries, there are several issues that must be dealt with:

- The transfer of lands to the municipality: The Municipality bears the cost of transferring ownership of the cemetery lands (legal costs, surveys, staff time). These costs could be quite substantial depending on the size of the property for surveying costs.
- Clean up/Maintenance: When a cemetery is transferred, the condition of the lands and the monuments are often not in the best condition. Municipalities then have to bear the costs for cleaning up the property by using existing staff or contracting the services. Whether the cemetery is still open or closed, costs transferred from the cemetery care and maintenance fund to the municipality are very minimal or nonexistent. Annual costs to maintain a cemetery include grass cutting and trimming, weed maintenance, brushing the grave sites, tree removal, fencing and monument preservation. Costs to maintain these cemeteries, when there is no financial revenue or saving to offset these costs, are added to annual budgets and passed on to the taxpayers.

If the Township of Rideau Lakes takes over another cemetery, the costs are likely to range between \$10,000 to \$15,000. Multiply that by the additional 44 more cemeteries

in the Municipality not owned by the Municipality, and that is a huge burden to taxpayers. This is just for taking ownership and not the annual maintenance and care of the monuments or any archeological fees required.

The Township has been fortunate in previous years, to have a volunteer base that has taken on the tasks of cleaning up the abandoned cemeteries and monuments within the Municipality. These volunteers have now come to an age where they can no longer maintain (monument cleaning/repairing) our cemeteries and these expenses are now being transferred to the taxpayer in order to pay for monument repairs where family members are no longer living.

This request is not new to the Ministry through AMO Delegations. Rideau Lakes is aware of the West Lincoln and Niagara-on-the-Lake Delegation at AMO in 2022 regarding this very issue. North Grenville also provided a Delegation at AMO in 2022 regarding the same issue.

Municipalities across Ontario have been passing Resolutions for years, requesting that the province address this issue.

Rideau Lakes initiated a call out for support when our Council passed a resolution in 2021 for the Province to look at providing funding sources for municipalities for the ongoing maintenance and preservation of abandoned cemeteries.

And again in 2024, Municipalities are passing resolutions for the same thing and receiving no consideration or response from the Province on how they can help Municipalities.

The Township of Rideau Lakes is respectfully requesting the Province to listen to the 444 municipalities and:

1. Provide for a Change in Legislation to relieve rural Township's from the overwhelming costs of maintaining cemetery properties, and
2. Establish a program to provide Municipalities with seed funding to help cover initial costs when transferring cemeteries and to cover ongoing maintenance and care costs of these cemeteries so that the burden is not put on the taxpayers.

Please see photos of cemetery improvements with the costs absorbed by the taxpayer:

Royal Sappers & Miners Cemetery, Newboro Ontario

PRE-Volunteer Work in 2005



Progress-Volunteer Work in 2018



Wight Plot Restoration: \$20,000 Township/Taxpayer commitment to restore

This did not include hiring an archaeological firm to complete assessments as required by the BAO. This work is still in process.



Polk Cemetery, Portland Ontario

Pre-Township ownership 2012



Pre-Township Contracted work 2022



Post-Township Contracted work 2022

