



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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NEWS RELEASE

EOWC elects new Chair and Vice-Chair, sets its 2014 Priorities

NEWS

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), at its annual inaugural meeting held in Kingston this past Friday, January 17, elected Warden Jean Paul St. Pierre from the United Counties of Prescott and Russell as its Chair for 2014. Northumberland County Warden Linda Thompson was elected as Vice-Chair of the Caucus.

The EOWC also set its key priorities for the coming year.

BACKGROUND

Chair & Vice-Chair

Each year, the EOWC meets to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair whose job is to provide the main point of focus and contact for the Caucus and ensure the established priorities are moved forward.

Chair St. Pierre is also the Mayor of the Township of Russell. Vice-Chair Thompson is the Mayor of the Municipality of Port Hope.

2014 Priorities

Three key priorities were established for the Caucus in the coming year:

- 1. Completing a new Economic Development Strategy for Eastern Ontario and working with its partners, including the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Committee, to finalize a plan for its implementation.*
- 2. Continuing its research and advocacy work on matters related to the financial sustainability of municipal government in Eastern Ontario. This will include the writing and publication of three new 'white papers'.*

3. Working to stop the spiraling costs of policing that are crippling municipal budgets.

For more details see the attached Backgrounder Report.

QUOTES

“I am truly thrilled to have been elected to the Chair’s position,” stated EOWC Chair and Warden Jean Paul St. Pierre. “The Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus is working very hard to support all property taxpayers in the 103 member municipalities across the EOWC region and I look forward to lending my help to such efforts. The EOWC takes pride in doing its homework and coming up with new ideas that contribute to positive change in our municipalities.”

“One of our major concerns is the spiraling cost of policing. The EOWC is lending its support and its voice to the efforts to reduce those costs because they are simply unsustainable. Municipalities already have to consider spending reductions on critical infrastructure such as roads and bridges because of escalating police budgets,” added St. Pierre.

“The EOWC is prepared to look at any strategy, including working with all eastern municipalities on negotiating a single, region-wide contract. Simply changing the distribution of existing costs between municipalities is akin to shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic,” concluded Chair St. Pierre.

“The economic development of our region has been recognized as a priority, and for that reason I welcome the release and implementation of the forthcoming regional economic strategy for Eastern Ontario. I’m eager to see the results of this year-long collaboration, whose distribution next month will represent a significant step forward for the EOWC and its many partners,” said Linda Thompson, EOWC Vice-Chair.

“Municipalities across the region continue to face significant financial shortfalls, and one way to curb this tide is to promote economic development and encourage permanent, sustainable funding,” said Chair St. Pierre. “We have a lot of work to do this year and we have taken the first important steps by setting our priorities and we will stay focused on them. Without a doubt, 2014 will be another busy year.”

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For more information, please contact:

Jean Paul St. Pierre, Chair
(613) 443-3066, ext. 2307

or Linda Thompson, Vice-Chair
(905) 753-2230



2014 Priorities

Backgrounder

Each January, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus meets to set its priorities for the coming year. Last week the EOWC, in addition to electing its Chair and Vice-Chair, established its key objectives which will guide its work through the course of 2014.

Priority #1

The EOWC's first priority in 2014, in tandem with our partners, will be to approve, distribute, advocate and take other necessary steps to assist in the implementation of the new regional economic strategy for Eastern Ontario.

The economic development plan will be the result of a year-long collaboration between the Eastern Ontario Mayors Committee (EOMC), the business and academic communities, and supported financially by the provincial and federal governments. The Plan will be released in mid-February.

Priority #2

The EOWC's second priority in 2014 will be to continue its research and advocacy efforts on the issue of the financial sustainability of municipalities in the EOWC region.

The EOWC has undertaken extensive studies to assess issues affecting the continued financial sustainability of local governments across Eastern Ontario. Last year, it released two white papers; one that deals with the state of municipal infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, and the amount of money that should be spent on maintaining it. The study showed that municipalities are facing a \$3.4-billion shortfall. The second white paper identified that neither using existing reserves nor issuing more debt would solve the problem.

A long-term provincial infrastructure program is needed and the EOWC will continue its advocacy for permanent infrastructure funding.

The EOWC has committed itself to completing and distributing three more white papers in 2014 to further assist its advocacy efforts on the financial sustainability of municipal government. They are:

- Ratepayer Affordability
- Social Housing
- Environmental Services

Priority #3

The EOWC expresses its strong concern over the unsustainable and escalating costs of policing and will – along with AMO and other interested parties – develop strategies to deal with this critical issue.

The EOWC will lend its voice and assistance to the efforts of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and other municipal groups in the fight to bring policing costs under control.

The EOWC is prepared to assess any option that leads to reducing the cost of policing, including the possibility of negotiating a single contract for the 103 member municipalities in the EOWC region.