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**NEWS RELEASE**

## **Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Weighs in on Provincial Infrastructure Consultations**

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) submitted a comprehensive brief last Friday, September 18 to the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure in response to the Province's infrastructure consultations, entitled "*Moving Ontario Forward – Outside the GTHA Consultations.*"

The Province of Ontario is seeking input from various stakeholders regarding the allocation of approximately \$15.5 billion in provincial funds for infrastructure outside the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA). The EOWC represents approximately 750,000 people across the 13 County and Single Tier Municipalities of rural Eastern Ontario, and manages roughly \$10 billion in municipal infrastructure.

The 50-page brief submitted last week continues the EOWC tradition of conducting extensive research prior to expressing its view. The submission also supports past positions taken by the EOWC on infrastructure, which have been presented to the Province through a series of White Papers developed over the last few years, in addition to three regional analyses on transportation, economic development, and a digital strategy (undertaken in conjunction with other regionally-minded organizations).

The focus of the consultation document is multi-faceted – namely, that regions are best positioned to determine their own needs, that rural areas carry a heavy infrastructure load, that a new, integrated and strategic approach to infrastructure investments is warranted, and that stable, permanent and predictable and stable funding is essential to success.

“Infrastructure is vital to our communities, and I’m very pleased that the province has sought extensive input into the allocation of infrastructure dollars outside of the GTHA. The EOWC has put forth a very well thought out and researched document, with a view to assisting the Province develop guidelines for the disbursement of funds,” stated Eric Duncan, Chair of the EOWC and Warden of the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

“We are proud of the document, and look forward to continued productive dialogue to ensure that infrastructure dollars are invested strategically and wisely throughout our region. We also want to ensure a fair allocation of funds throughout the Province,” continued Chair Duncan.

The infrastructure consultation brief is available in its entirety on the EOWC website.

The EOWC is comprised of the Heads of Council of the 13 County and Single Tier municipalities of Eastern Ontario. It focuses its advocacy efforts on rural Eastern Ontario, developing positions based on research and the interests of its taxpayers. Priority issues for the EOWC in 2015 are equitable infrastructure funding, closing existing cellular coverage gaps (broadband coverage to facilitate better business and emergency response communication), and access to natural gas for rural residents.

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