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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus pleased with 2016 ROMA/OGRA Conference**

Members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) attended the annual combined conference of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) and the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA), held in Toronto from February 21 to 24. This event is the largest annual gathering of municipal and provincial representatives from across the province.

Highlights of the conference included dedicated meetings with several elected Provincial officials, including a large Multi-Ministerial meeting attended by Minister of Municipal Affairs Ted McMeekin; Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Jeff Leal; and Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, Brad Duguid.

The EOWC used this panel as a forum to advance its priority issues with key cabinet members, such as equitable infrastructure funding; policing costs; closing the existing cellular coverage and mobile broadband gaps; increased access to natural gas; the proposed growth plan for Eastern Ontario; the urgent need for expansion of the region's hydroelectricity supply; and the forthcoming Bill 151, the *Waste-Free Ontario Act*.

On the subject on infrastructure funding, the EOWC welcomed last week's announcement from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne that the formula-based funding component for the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) will be doubled next year from \$50 million to \$100 million – and ultimately increased to \$300 million within three years. Premier Wynne also announced increases to the OCIF's application portion as well as the Connecting Links program.

“This is a prime example of the effective advocacy work being put forward by the EOWC, as our Wardens have long advocated for such improvements to municipal infrastructure funding – just as we will continue to do on a number of other issues,” stated Warden Peter Emon, EOWC Chair.

“On behalf of the EOWC, I would also like to recognize the important investments for the municipal sector that were included in the 2016 Ontario Budget. It is precisely by working together that the Province and our municipalities will continue to find solutions that grow our local economies and reduce costs to our communities. The EOWC is grateful for this partnership and is eager to build on this success.”

While at the conference, EOWC members also met with members of both the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and Ontario New Democratic Party caucuses. Discussion was again focused on the priorities of the EOWC, and how to best advance the interests of rural Eastern Ontario.

The EOWC is comprised of the Heads of Council of the 13 County and Single Tier municipalities of Eastern Ontario. The EOWC focuses its efforts on advocacy for the 750,000 residents of rural Eastern Ontario, developing positions based on research and the interests of its taxpayers.

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