



EOWC
**2024 ONTARIO
PRE-BUDGET
CONSULTATION**

JANUARY 31, 2024

EOWC
Eastern Ontario
Wardens' Caucus

The EOWC's Recommendations

Undertake a Social and Economic Prosperity Review

The EOWC joins the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario \(AMO\)](#) to request that the Ontario Government work with municipal governments to undertake a [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#).

This includes a detailed and objective analysis of the current fiscal arrangements for services and infrastructure investment that is affordable for both orders of government and for taxpayers.

The Province has recognized the unsustainable nature of current arrangements with its New Deal for Toronto. But these structural challenges extend well beyond Toronto's borders and impact every municipality – big and small – across the province including the 103 EOWC member municipalities.

Invest in housing across the continuum



- That the Province commits to providing annual direct financial investments toward the construction of new affordable/attainable rental housing and new community housing sufficient to support projects like the [EOWC's 7 in 7+ Regional Housing Plan](#)
- That the Province provides programs, funding and policies that support rural municipalities with innovative housing and infrastructure development to build more housing faster. All municipalities, including upper-tiers, need to be eligible to enable projects to move forward

Ontario municipalities are legislated to operate community housing and require funding to maintain and build new supply. Our counties / Service Managers (CMSMs) across Eastern Ontario currently own and manage 14,800 community housing units. It only makes sense that these municipalities be able to access any provincial or federal funding programs.

The lack of housing has become a fundamental systemic barrier to the economic and social well-being of residents in our region, across Ontario, and in Canada as a whole.

Increasing the supply of all types of housing across Eastern Ontario requires all three orders of government, government agencies, Indigenous communities, private and not-for-profit builders, and financial institutions to come together to tackle this priority. The need is so great that some say it requires an all-in 'war-time' effort.

If governments can resume direct investment, we the EOWC is confident that people in partnership among members of the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors will solve the housing supply challenge.

Organizations that have indicated support for funding of the 7 in 7+ Regional Housing Plan in the 2024 Ontario Budget:



**United Way
Centraide**
East Ontario
Est de l'Ontario



**Eastern Ontario
Mayors' Caucus**



**Ontario
Home Builders'
Association**

Invest in next generation infrastructure to build rural Ontario

- That the Province develop infrastructure programs and funding eligibility with a rural perspective
- That the Province earmark existing program funds for rural projects because small investments can go a long way
- That the Province fund municipal governments accordingly ahead of the July 2024 asset management plan deadlines — these plans cannot be based on property taxpayer dollars alone
- That the Province work with the Federal Government to reach an agreement to reinstate a grant-based, multi-year funding program so municipalities can execute their asset management plans



Address the disparity in social assistance rates and rent scales

A growing number of Ontarians can no longer afford the basic necessities of life. Forty-five percent of Ontario tenant households spend 30 percent or more of their total income on shelter. This is the highest rate in the country.

The EOWC is encouraged that the Province has recognized that a transformation of social assistance programs is required, but the Province has yet to recognize the critical importance of increased social assistance rates.

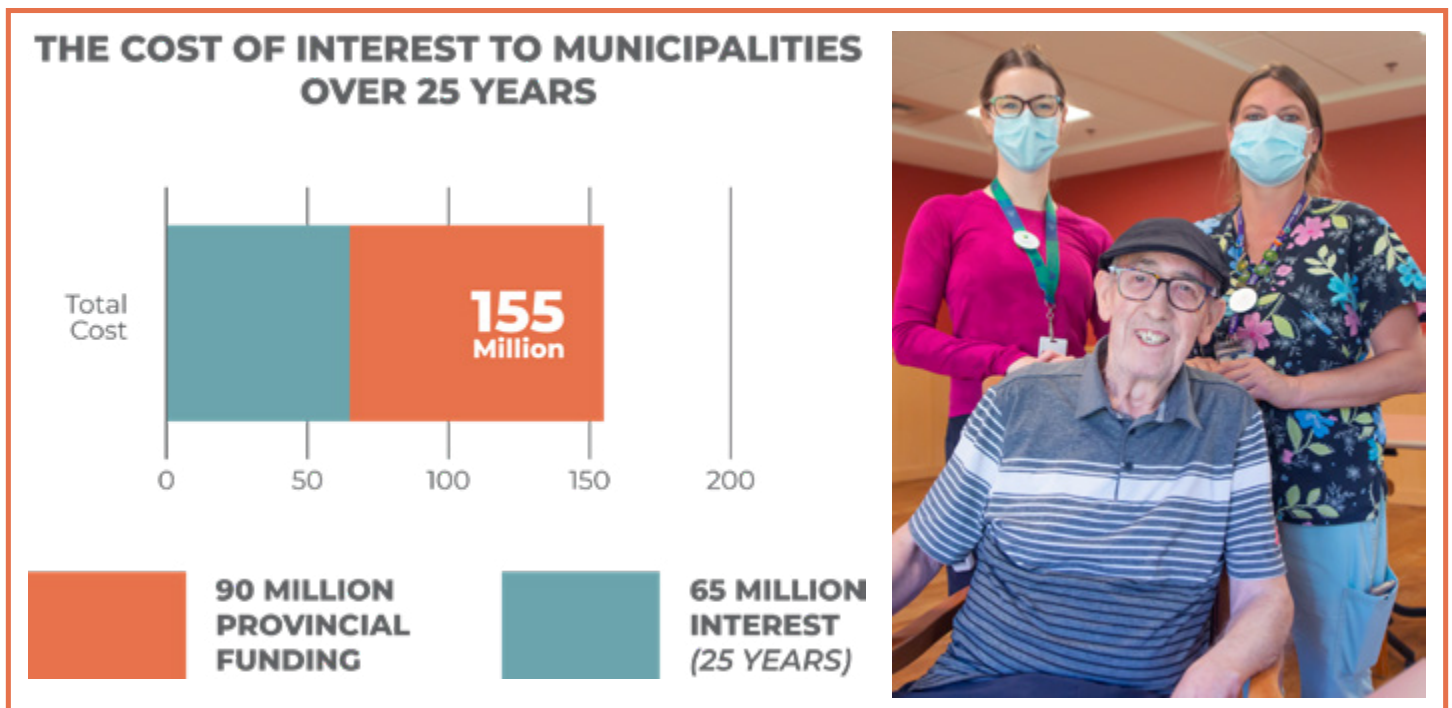
Despite recent increases to Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates, in real terms ODSP and Ontario Works (OW) rates have not kept up with inflation for decades. The result is significantly less purchasing power. Outdated and overly complicated rules keep people in poverty. Increasing social assistance rates and transforming social assistance to better help people get back on their feet and fully participating in the economy is a critical part of ending homelessness.

In addition, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing needs to increase the Social Assistance Rent Scales under the *Housing Services Act*. Under *the Act*, certain housing providers that receive significant municipal subsidies are only eligible to charge a single OW recipient \$85 per month for rent. But the maximum shelter allowance under the *Ontario Works Act* is \$390 per month. This results in the municipality subsidizing the Province \$305 per month for that rental unit. In the case of a family or an ODSP recipient, the amounts are even more alarming.

The total-units tally under these policies represent millions of dollars that would be better spent by municipalities on building more affordable housing units.

Invest in municipal long-term care homes, staffing, and residents

- That the Province provide funding to offset premiums that municipalities have to pay for private staffing-agency workers
- That the Province fund temporary foreign workers to fill the human resources gap in rural long-term care homes
- That the Province reinstate the Construction Funding Subsidy (CFS) that ended in August of 2023 to help municipalities build and reinvest in long-term care homes
- That the Province implement a low-interest loan program to assist municipalities with the capital redevelopment and expansion of long-term care homes, and that these loans apply to homes that are both under construction and yet to be built



The EOWC believes that rural residents require access to the same level of care as their urban counterparts. Government investment – taxpayer dollars – are being poured into private staffing-agency profits. It is not sustainable and is demolishing municipal budgets.

The EOWC stands with the Ontario Government and its goal of building 58,000 new long-term care beds. The redevelopment of long-term care homes is a significant capital investment for small, rural municipalities. The ongoing debt charges are difficult for property tax payers to afford especially in light of the infrastructure deficit rural municipalities are addressing for roads, bridges, and other assets. Tax dollars would be saved under this approach and more homes could be built.

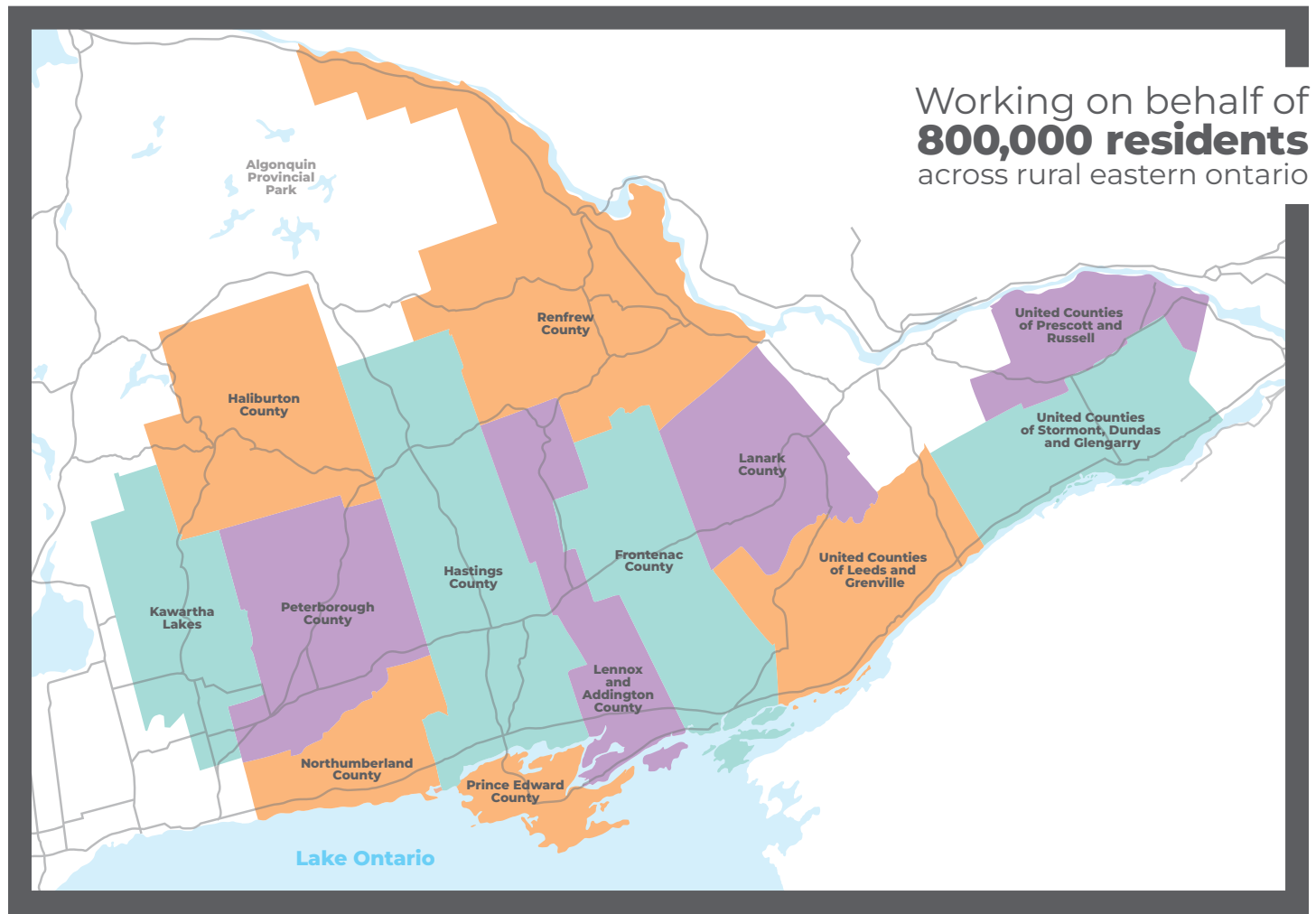
Reports by Auditor General of Ontario, AdvantAge Ontario, KPMG, and the Institute on Municipal Finance and Government show that municipally operated long-term care homes have better outcomes for residents than do privately operated homes.

The money saved from interest payments would allow municipalities to move beyond a basic model to deliver higher quality support to residents.

[See the EOWC's advocacy briefing package for full details.](#)

About the EOWC

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) Inc. is an incorporated non-profit organization comprised of the Heads of Council of 13 municipalities (11 upper-tier counties and two single-tier municipalities). The EOWC covers an area of approximately 50,000 square kilometres from Northumberland County east to the Québec border. The EOWC supports and advocates on behalf of its 90 lower-tier municipalities and 800,000 residents across the region. The EOWC has gained support and momentum by speaking with a united voice to champion regional municipal priorities and work with the government, business leaders, the media, and the public.



EOWC Members

- County of Frontenac
- County of Haliburton
- County of Hastings
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- County of Lanark
- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
- County of Lennox and Addington
- County of Northumberland
- County of Peterborough
- United Counties of Prescott and Russell
- Prince Edward County
- County of Renfrew
- United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry



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