



**WESTERN ONTARIO WARDENS' CAUCUS**  
**Warden Donald Woolcott, Chair (2006)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2006

**EASTERN AND WESTERN WARDENS "ON-SIDE" WITH MCGUINTY**

**Grey County** – Wardens representing 28 counties from Eastern and Western Ontario are united in their support for the provincial government's efforts to get a fair financial deal from the federal government.

"The Premier's drive to get a fair and reasonable deal on equalization, one that will address the fiscal imbalance, has our wholehearted support," said Robert Sweet, chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) and Warden of Renfrew County, following the wardens' semi-annual joint caucus session June 9 in the Town of Blue Mountains.

"Both of our caucuses recognize the immediate need to fix the system of transfers to the province from Ottawa, so that Ontario is not further disadvantaged," said Donald Woolcott, chair of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) and Warden of Oxford County.

Even as wardens backed Premier Dalton McGuinty in his fiscal fight with the federal government, they also met directly during their session with provincial Conservative leader John Tory, and discussed the pressing need for fundamental change in how municipal services are delivered and financed.

The meeting with Mr. Tory on provincial funding matters was "frank and direct," said Renfrew County Warden Bob Sweet. "He certainly seemed to have a solid understanding of the difficulties we face." Fifty percent of every property-tax dollar from the counties goes to the provincial government for education and to fund provincial social and health programs.

Warden Sweet said the Conservative opposition leader committed his party – should they form the next provincial government – to begin "immediately" to

establish a process for remedying the financial burden taxpayers bear annually when they pick up \$3.2 billion in provincial costs through their property taxes.

“Frankly, we cannot wait much longer, regardless of who is at the head of the next provincial government,” said Warden Woolcott.

In other business, the wardens:

- Called on the provincial government to fully honour its commitment to fund long term care at a level of \$6,000 per resident, as promised in the last election campaign;
- Continued to press for a program of payment in lieu of taxes to cover the cost of maintaining 2 million acres of unpatented Crown lands in Eastern Ontario – land that requires expensive municipal police, fire and ambulance services;
- Called for the full exemption of paramedics from Part VII of the provincial Employment Standards Act – covering hours of work and eating periods – because operating ambulance services without this exemption is costly and unworkable;
- Demanded restoration of proper funding for residential farm tax properties, inasmuch as the provincial government’s new funding formula has resulted in millions of dollars of lost tax revenue to counties across the province.

The Eastern Ontario and Western Ontario Wardens’ caucuses represents 28 counties and single-tier municipalities and their 3.2 million residents.

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