



For Immediate Release

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EOWC PRESENTS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGN OF PROVINCIAL EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT FUND (EODF)

TORONTO—At last week’s meeting of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus presented a set of program design recommendations for the soon-to-be-unveiled Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF). A four year, \$80 million commitment to economic development in Eastern Ontario made by the Ontario Liberal government in the fall 2007 election campaign, the EODF is expected to be part of the 2008-2009 Ontario budget.

“Our presentation was the result of an invitation from the Province and was, in our view, an unprecedented opportunity to put forward ideas on program design before the final decisions are made”, said EOWC Chair Ron Gerow, who is also Warden of Peterborough County.

“We offered suggestions on how to ensure that the program reflects the specific needs, challenges and opportunities in Eastern Ontario on an ongoing basis, as well as recommendations on the types of investments that would have the greatest impact on the region’s economy and how the program ought to be evaluated against specific economic indicators. It is a comprehensive submission.”

For example, the EOWC has recommended that the overall objective of the EODF be to move the economy of Eastern Ontario to a position of competitiveness within Ontario and in relation to other jurisdictions with which the entire province competes. The EOWC has also recommended that in each of the four years of program operation, the Province consider five funding streams, with the percentages in brackets indicating the approximate percentage of the \$20 million annual allocation to be directed toward each stream:

- Business Attraction and Investment Readiness (30%)
- Access to Capital (30%)
- Local Business Development/Capacity Building (20%)
- Training and Internships (10%)
- Regional Development Projects (10%).

Chair Gerow noted that several face-to-face meetings between the EOWC and the Province in February ensured that EOWC recommendations are in the hands of the Premier’s Office as well as the Ministries of Economic Development and Trade; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Public Infrastructure Renewal; Transportation; Natural Resources; and Municipal Affairs and Housing. Additional distribution of the recommendations to other ministries, elected officials and stakeholders across Eastern Ontario is now under way. The full submission is available at www.eowc.org.

“We especially appreciate the efforts of Northumberland MPP Lou Rinaldi, who is Chair of the provincial Eastern Ontario Caucus and serves as Parliamentary Assistant to Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Leona Dombrowsky,” Warden Gerow said. “He has encouraged us to bring our ideas forward and has helped to build a stronger partnership between the EOWC and the Province. Many other regional MPPs have been supportive as well.”

A collaborative group of eleven Eastern Ontario Counties and two Single-Tier municipalities, the EOWC meets regularly to discuss issues of mutual importance and present our findings to the federal and provincial governments, acting as a unified voice on behalf of our constituents. Over the past few years, the EOWC has grown into a formidable organization, drawing upon its diversity and strengths to engage senior levels of government and improve both the municipal financial position and the socio-economic conditions throughout the region. The EOWC's goal is to see Eastern Ontario develop into strong, vibrant communities where innovation, economic growth and industry thrive.

The EOWC has been active in regional economic development for many years, earning a reputation for insightful analysis and forward-looking recommendations for the economic and social development of the region. Since 2002, the EOWC has produced annual Future Directions reports that document the circumstances of local government in Eastern Ontario; EOWC also makes an annual pre-budget submission to the Ontario Minister of Finance identifying priorities for the region. The EOWC was active in the development of the 2005 regionally-focused Eastern Ontario Opportunity Action Plan, led the development of the policy-oriented Eastern Ontario Prosperity Plan in 2007, and has worked to secure funding for essential rural infrastructure such as broadband. EOWC has also been a significant contributor to the work of the provincial Fiscal Capacity and Service Delivery Review process. As a result of this experience as well as EOWC members' role in delivering a range of provincial services, the EOWC believes that its further involvement in the detailed design, operation, and evaluation of the provincial EODF is warranted.

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