



## **2014 Priorities**

### **Backgrounder**

Each January, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus meets to set its priorities for the coming year. Last week the EOWC, in addition to electing its Chair and Vice-Chair, established its key objectives which will guide its work through the course of 2014.

#### ***Priority #1***

*The EOWC's first priority in 2014, in tandem with our partners, will be to approve, distribute, advocate and take other necessary steps to assist in the implementation of the new regional economic strategy for Eastern Ontario.*

The economic development plan will be the result of a year-long collaboration between the Eastern Ontario Mayors Committee (EOMC), the business and academic communities, and supported financially by the provincial and federal governments. The Plan will be released in mid-February.

#### ***Priority #2***

*The EOWC's second priority in 2014 will be to continue its research and advocacy efforts on the issue of the financial sustainability of municipalities in the EOWC region.*

The EOWC has undertaken extensive studies to assess issues affecting the continued financial sustainability of local governments across Eastern Ontario. Last year, it released two white papers; one that deals with the state of municipal infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, and the amount of money that should be spent on maintaining it. The study showed that municipalities are facing a \$3.4-billion shortfall. The second white paper identified that neither using existing reserves nor issuing more debt would solve the problem.

A long-term provincial infrastructure program is needed and the EOWC will continue its advocacy for permanent infrastructure funding.

The EOWC has committed itself to completing and distributing three more white papers in 2014 to further assist its advocacy efforts on the financial sustainability of municipal government. They are:

- Ratepayer Affordability
- Social Housing
- Environmental Services

### **Priority #3**

*The EOWC expresses its strong concern over the unsustainable and escalating costs of policing and will – along with AMO and other interested parties – develop strategies to deal with this critical issue.*

The EOWC will lend its voice and assistance to the efforts of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and other municipal groups in the fight to bring policing costs under control.

The EOWC is prepared to assess any option that leads to reducing the cost of policing, including the possibility of negotiating a single contract for the 103 member municipalities in the EOWC region.