



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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NEWS RELEASE

NEW CHAIR ELECTED, 2009 PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED

Eastern Wardens elect new chair, vice chair and set priorities for 2009

January 19, 2009

NEWS

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Inc. has elected Ron Emond, Warden of Hasting County as its new Chair for the coming year. He replaces last year's Chair Ron Gerow, Warden of Peterborough County. Gerow agreed to continue a leadership role as Vice-Chair for 2009.

Each January the 13 members of the EOWC review their activities from the previous year and set their priorities for the coming year. Last week the members met in Kingston for two days to conduct this important task.

The EOWC Inc. was also able to share their 2009 priorities with M.P.s and M.P.P.s from across Eastern Ontario. Four members of the Federal Conservative Government, including Daryl Kramp M.P. Prince Edward-Hastings participated. Five members of the Provincial legislature including the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and M.P.P. for Prince Edward-Hastings also attended as did John Tory, leader of the Provincial Conservative Party were in attendance on the 17th.

QUOTES

"I am thrilled to assume the Chair's position and appreciate the support that my fellow members of the EOWC Inc. have shown in me," said Emond. "I have very big shoes to fill and I am equally delighted that Ron Gerow has agreed to serve as the Vice-Chair. His expertise will be of great assistance as we move on our 2009 priorities," he added.

"As we do each year, our January session is a time where we welcome new wardens as members of the Caucus," stated Emond. "As well, the incoming and

outgoing wardens look forward to the year ahead and set the direction for the Caucus in terms of the key issues that we will be promoting to both the federal and provincial governments,” he added.

“This year our focus is on economic development”, stated Chair Emond. “We believe our prosperity will depend on moving quickly into the ‘knowledge-based economy’ helping us promote innovation and entrepreneurship in our communities and at the same time reducing the burden on traditional industries like manufacturing and primary resource sectors to support our citizens,” he added.

FACTS – 2009 Priorities

The following priorities will be advanced by the EOWC Inc. in 2009:

- Ensuring the financial commitment of the Federal and Provincial Governments as well as the private sector to the *Eastern Ontario Regional Broadband Project*. This multimillion dollar project seeks to ensure that at least 95% of all people in the region get access with capacity to the Internet. This is a key building block in ensuring Eastern Ontario’s future prosperity
- Working with the Province to write a *Growth Plan for Eastern Ontario*. The proposed Plan will have a strong economic development focus similar to the Plan being written for Northern Ontario. The EOWC Inc. has had preliminary contacts with provincial officials and will now seek to establish the necessary partnership with the Government to launch this multi-year effort. It will be a road map for future growth across the region.
- Seeking substantial Federal and Provincial investments for the creation of new Affordable Housing units either through the construction of units or more money for rent-supplement programs is a high priority. Across the EOWC Inc. there are **8,208** people on the wait lists, some of who will have to spend 4-5 years on the list before getting adequate and affordable housing for themselves or their families. When the City of Ottawa is included the regional wait list soars to **17,969**.
- Participating in the upcoming Provincial-Municipal review of Ontario’s roads and bridges. The review will determine which level of government should be responsible for both the maintenance and ultimately for the financial responsibility that goes with them. The EOWC Inc. is particularly interested in dealing with former provincial highways that were downloaded to counties in 1995 and 1997. Of the nearly 5,000 kilometers of former provincial highways transferred to counties Eastern Ontario was given 40% of them. These highways are expensive to maintain and many

people believe they should never have been downloaded from the province in the first place.

- Requesting the Province to improve their \$80 million dollar Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF) by lowering the current minimum requirement of creating 10 new jobs before a small business can apply for funding under the program. The EOWC Inc. sees this minimum as a barrier to small businesses across the region because the creation of 1, 5 or 9 new jobs in a small community would be significant.
- Working with the Province to find ways to generate local revenues from Crown lands that would support the cost of providing municipal services like roads, bridges, ambulance or police services in these lands. Currently, no local tax revenue is created in Crown lands because provincial law exempts them from paying municipal property taxes. With nearly 2,000,000 acres of Crown land in the EOWC Inc. it is a major financial issues for the Caucus.
- Working the Province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to ensure that sustainable and predictable funding for municipal services is provided. Municipalities across Eastern Ontario are particularly reliant on provincial funding and as a result need to be assured that there will be enough money to support the cost of municipal services including things like affordable housing, police services or long term care operations. The EOWC Inc. will also be seeking to address the impact of seasonal residences in the funding formulas.
- Monitoring the new provincial mandated land ambulance response time standard that will be effective in 2011 to ensure that any new costs that result from the standard are shared with the Provincial Government and do not become the 100% responsibility of municipalities.
- Significantly rising costs for O.P.P. services in 2009 are a real concern for EOWC Inc. members. These new costs will have significant financial property tax impact and the Caucus will be assessing the affects of these rising costs.

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