



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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NEWS RELEASE

EOWC elects Chair, Vice-Chair and sets priorities for 2018

Kingston, January 15, 2018 – The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), at its annual inaugural meeting held last week in Kingston, elected Warden Robin Jones as the 2018 Chair and Warden Jennifer Murphy as the 2018 Vice-Chair.

Robin Jones is the Warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, and the Mayor of the Village of Westport. Jennifer Murphy is the Warden of the County of Renfrew, and Mayor of the Township of Bonnechere Valley.

The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair, elected on an annual basis, is to provide the main point of focus and contact for the Caucus and ensure that the established key priorities move forward.

"I am honoured to chair the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus in 2018, alongside my colleagues, and to advocate for this year's priorities in support of the 750,000 property taxpayers across rural Eastern Ontario," stated Chair Jones, elected as the EOWC's first female chair since its incorporation in 2008.

"As we are aware, 2018 is a critical year for both the Province of Ontario and the municipal sector, with elections scheduled for both levels of government. That being said, the EOWC has restructured its focus and made its priorities very clear, and intends to send a loud and clear message to its partners at Queen's Park."

2018 PRIORITIES

Two priorities were established for the Caucus in the coming year:

1. ***Building the EORN Cellular and Public Safety Broadband Network:***
The EOWC will continue to support the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) on its \$299-million business case to the Provincial and Federal governments, which would close the many cellular network gaps, boost mobile broadband service across Eastern Ontario, and increase public safety for residents and first responders during emergencies.

2. **Implementing the Eastern Ontario Economic Development Strategy:**
The EOWC will continue to support the Eastern Ontario Leadership Council (EOLC) in its ongoing implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Regional Economic Development Strategy – the first regional plan of its kind across Ontario. By helping securing financial support from the Province, the strategy’s implementation would address Eastern Ontario’s future economic development needs, being a) workforce development and deployment, b) technology integration and innovation, and c) integrated, intelligent transportation systems.

QUOTES

“For this critical election year, the EOWC has kept its focus simple and identified the two most important projects for Eastern Ontario. The rest of the year – and specifically the next few months – will be spent on advocating at the provincial and federal government levels for multi-stakeholder solutions to these proposals,” explained EOWC Chair Jones.

“As always, the EOWC and its partners have done the necessary research before submitting their proposals. Not only is the cellular and public safety broadband network project essential for businesses and economic development, it would absolutely increase public safety for our residents and our first responders – such as police, fire and paramedics – during emergencies,” stated Vice-Chair Murphy.

“It is the primordial role and objective of the EOWC to use research and facts to influence positive changes, improve service delivery, remove financial burdens, and encourage growth and economic development opportunities in our region,” noted Warden François St-Amour, of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell.

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