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News release: EOWC elects Chair and Vice-Chair for 2019

Kingston, January 14, 2019 – The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), at its annual inaugural meeting held last week in Kingston, elected Mayor Andy Letham as the 2019 Chair and Warden Jennifer Murphy as the 2019 Vice-Chair.

Andy Letham is Mayor of the City of Kawartha Lakes, and Jennifer Murphy is Warden of the County of Renfrew and Mayor of the Township of Bonnechere Valley. The role of the EOWC 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 key priorities move forward.

"I am honoured to chair the EOWC in 2019 and advocate on behalf of the 103 municipalities and the 750,000 property taxpayers across rural Eastern Ontario," stated Chair Letham. "The coming year will be a critical one, with a federal election on the horizon and the first full year of the Progressive Conservative provincial government."

"For both those reasons, the EOWC has decided to stay the course its advocacy efforts over the past few years, and intends to send a loud and clear message to its federal and provincial partners – that there is only one priority for the 2019, which is to improve and enhance the cellular and mobile broadband network across Eastern Ontario," added Vice-Chair Murphy.

The EOWC will continue to work with the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) on its \$213-million business case to the provincial and federal governments, and the private sector, which would close the cellular network gaps and boost mobile broadband service across the region, and increase public safety for residents.

"This is a decisive time for Eastern Ontario, and our message is simple – this is the single most important project for the region, and it needs to happen this year," noted Chair Letham.

"The EOWC and its partners have done the necessary research, and we have been having these conversations with both levels of government for several years. Let's do this together; the time is now," stated Warden Robert Kirby, of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell.

In addition to the cellular network improvement project, the EOWC also plans to address a few other issues with the Province of Ontario in the early months of the year: the importance of maintaining the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF), particularly for rural and northern municipalities; acknowledging certain legislative changes made in 2018; and working with the government on reducing red tape and regulatory burdens.

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