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News release: EOWC priorities for 2020 include housing and long-term care

Kawartha Lakes, March 23, 2020 – The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) met in the County of Lennox and Addington on March 12 and 13 for a two-day priority setting meeting in order to establish its 2020 advocacy efforts.

The Caucus has identified affordable housing and long-term care as its two key priorities for 2020. In addition, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) Cellular Network Improvement Project and Broadband Gap Strategy, the modernization of Public Health and Emergency Health Services, and infrastructure funding will remain ongoing EOWC priorities.

The Caucus looks forward to continuing to advance advocacy efforts in 2020 on behalf of the 103 municipalities and the 750,000 property taxpayers across rural Eastern Ontario.

2020 Priorities

The EOWC identified two key priorities for 2020:

Affordable Housing

Housing affordability will remain a central focus for the EOWC. In eastern Ontario, there are approximately 7,500 to 9,000 people on social housing wait lists and there are thousands of families spending more than 30 per cent of their after-tax household income on housing expenses. In 2019, the Caucus was very active in meeting with Provincial Ministers, developing policy recommendations, participating in provincial consultations, and hosting meetings with key stakeholders in order to advocate for housing affordability. The EOWC will continue to leverage work done in 2019 and the Caucus looks forward to working with the Province and other stakeholders to facilitate affordable housing initiatives and increase investments and supports for individuals across eastern Ontario.

Long-Term Care

The EOWC has also identified long-term care as a key priority for 2020. Municipalities are vital partners in the delivery of long-term care and the EOWC shares the Province's objective of expanding the number of long-term care beds across Ontario as well as reducing operational red tape and increasing the number of support staff available to work in long-term care facilities. The Caucus plans to undertake a review of Eastern Ontario long-term care homes in 2020 in order to be better positioned to inform ongoing provincial consultations.



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Other ongoing EOWC Priorities include:

1. Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) Cellular Network Improvement Project and Broadband Gap Strategy

The EOWC will continue to support the EORN project, which aims to improve high-speed connectivity for residents, businesses and visitors across Eastern Ontario through the construction of its mobile cellular broadband project. The EOWC will also continue to advocate for better broadband in rural communities and provide ongoing support to EORN in the development of a plan to ensure access to the CRTC minimum service level of 50 / 10 Mbps.

2. Modernization of Public Health and Emergency Health Services

The EOWC will continue to work collaboratively with the Province to inform the review of Public Health and Emergency Health Services in Ontario. The EOWC has a vested interest in helping shape the future of Ontario's health care system in order to ensure the best possible care for rural Eastern Ontario's residents.

3. Infrastructure Funding

Advocating for permanent sources of infrastructure funding remains an ongoing EOWC priority to address the infrastructure deficit facing eastern Ontario.

QUOTES

"The EOWC has narrowed its focus on affordable housing and long-term care as its key priorities for the coming year. We remain committed to being the government's municipal voice and offering advice and support from a local lens. We look forward to advancing EOWC priorities that will make a difference in the daily lives of eastern Ontario residents."
– Andy Letham, Chair, EOWC

"The EOWC does its homework, we provide the necessary research and data, and we mobilize quickly and effectively. The Caucus strives to influence positive changes, improve service delivery, and remove financial burdens." – Rick Phillips, Vice-Chair, EOWC

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