



2024-2027

# STRATEGIC PLAN

**EOWC** EASTERN ONTARIO  
WARDENS' CAUCUS





## A MESSAGE FROM THE EOWC

The process of building a strong and prosperous Eastern Ontario is never finished. As united advocates of our region's continued growth and success, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) is dedicated to addressing key priorities that shape the future of our communities and the people who live there. We thank municipal elected officials and staff that continue to guide and contribute to the plan's priorities and serve the region.

Our 2024-2027 strategic plan outlines a comprehensive roadmap, guiding our collective efforts to enhance the following priorities that are crucial for our member municipalities to thrive: infrastructure, housing and healthcare. Together we will work to address the opportunities and challenges facing our region, and build a brighter future for all.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The EOWC formally recognizes the traditional keepers of this land. The EOWC acknowledges that our work and the work of municipal governments takes place on traditional Indigenous territories. We respect the history, languages, and cultures of all Indigenous peoples on this land whose presence continues to enrich our communities.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to EOWC's municipalities for providing photography of our region's communities for this publication.

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## VISION

The respected voice of Eastern Ontario that ignites a vibrant, thriving and inclusive region through strategic municipal partnerships and advocacy.

## MISSION

The EOWC elevates Eastern Ontario through collaborative leadership, innovative solutions, and sustainable development for a prosperous and connected future.



STATEMENTS



VALUES

LEADERSHIP

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

EVIDENCE-BASED AND SOLUTION DRIVEN

INCLUSION

RESPECT FOR RURAL AND SMALL URBAN

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The Foundation for Local Prosperity

## HOUSING

The Backbone of Thriving and Supportive Communities

## HEALTH CARE

The Engine for Healthy and Resilient Communities

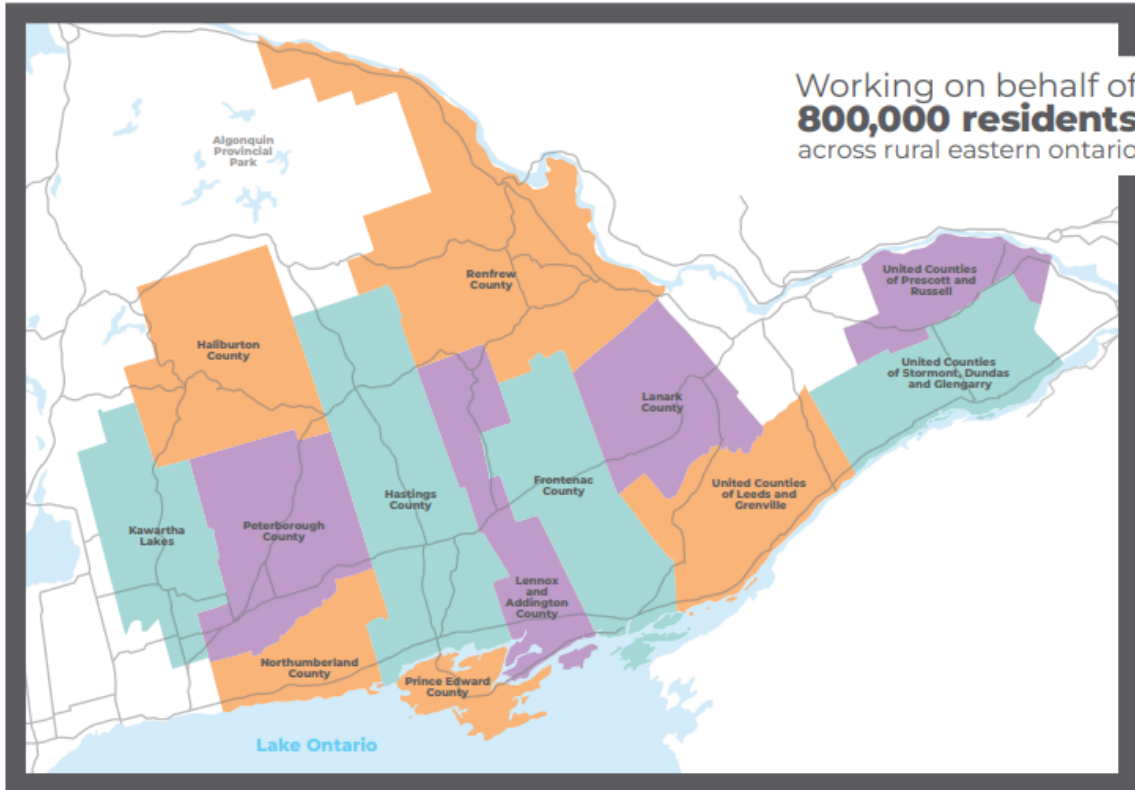
## STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

The Value of the EOWC's Voice



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES





## EOWC MEMBERS

- County of Frontenac
- County of Haliburton
- County of Hastings
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- County of Lanark
- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
- County of Lennox and Addington
- County of Northumberland
- County of Peterborough
- United Counties of Prescott and Russell
- Prince Edward County
- County of Renfrew
- United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

## ABOUT THE EOWC

The EOWC Inc. is a non-profit organization advocating for 103 small urban and rural municipalities across eastern Ontario. The EOWC covers an area of 50,000 square kilometres, serving 800,000 residents. For more than 20 years, the EOWC has gained support and momentum by speaking with a united voice to champion regional municipal priorities and work with the government, businesses, non-profit organizations, Indigenous leaders, the media, and the public.



# VALUE STATEMENTS

## LEADERSHIP

We lead with courage and integrity, and are committed to respectful and strategic engagement.

## COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

We strive to develop strong relationships that amplify a diversity of ideas, resources, expertise, and assets to realize meaningful outcomes.

## EVIDENCE-BASED AND SOLUTION DRIVEN

We ground our work in thorough research, evidence and local experience to ignite impactful collective action.

## INCLUSION

We recognize our role as leaders of a diverse population and are dedicated to an approach that is inclusive of our community members.

## RESPECT FOR RURAL AND SMALL URBAN

We promote the inherent value of our rural communities and are committed to protecting our welcoming heritage, natural environment and quality of life.



# OUR 3-YEAR VISION

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The EOWC is a respected and unified voice that champions solutions to advance thriving, resilient communities across Eastern Ontario. We are a team of municipal leaders that commit to creating a prosperous future. Together, we advocate on behalf of 103 rural and small urban municipalities, representing more than 800,000 residents.

For more than 20 years, we have a proven record of working together to develop relationships, evidence-based research and innovative solutions that reflect the values and unique character of our region. We are an effective voice that has influenced policy and program development to strengthen municipal governments' ability to respond to emerging issues and opportunities. We have successfully led regional broadband projects and improved cellular service. We have also played a critical role in improved implementation of economic development and community service delivery.

Eastern Ontario is poised for growth. Our strategic location attracts businesses and a diverse and skilled workforce. Going forward, we will leverage our strengths and foster strategic investment for future generations, while respecting what makes our region distinct.

To achieve this vision, we will continue to advocate for effective policy initiatives and collaborate to promote economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. Key areas of focus include fair and consistent funding around infrastructure, paramedic services, long-term care, housing, economic development and other emerging issues that impact municipal service delivery. Our efforts are informed by unwavering dedication and strong leadership and are supported by timely and high-quality research.

Throughout this three-year plan, the EOWC's priorities will include infrastructure, housing and health care – key pillars that support the EOWC vision.

The complexity and cross-jurisdictional nature of the challenges facing our communities demand meaningful partnerships across governments, sectors and organizations. To address these issues, we will work together with our many partners to leverage diverse expertise, perspectives, resources, and solutions.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Foundation for Local Prosperity



## **HOUSING**

The Backbone of Thriving and Supportive Communities



## **HEALTH CARE**

The Engine for Healthy and Resilient Communities



## **STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT**

The Value of the EOWC's Voice



# PRIORITY ONE: INFRASTRUCTURE



The Foundation for Local Prosperity

The EOWC’s 103 municipalities manages more than \$12 billion in physical assets. We understand that without roads, bridges and pipes in the ground, houses cannot be built and businesses cannot expand. Local prosperity depends on adequate infrastructure. This includes physical systems and facilities that support communities, maintain services, and foster expansion and growth.

**Infrastructure maintains public health and wellbeing, supports economic development and enhances overall quality of life.**

Existing municipal revenue streams are not enough to achieve the funding required to maintain and grow our current infrastructure. Despite our ongoing efforts, the gap continues to widen. This is further exacerbated in rural and Eastern Ontario, where investments have fallen short.



# PRIORITY ONE: INFRASTRUCTURE



## The Foundation for Local Prosperity

The EOWC is committed to advocating for vital infrastructure assets, policy and financial supports. We will partner with both the federal and provincial governments and appropriate allies to:

1. Invest in municipal infrastructure that provides predictable, fair, evidence-based funding to allow municipalities to plan and create economic environments that foster growth.
2. Create flexible and adaptive policies to enable our municipalities and the Ontario Government to unlock capacity and build innovative infrastructure solutions.
3. Invest in infrastructure that supports an environmentally sustainable economy.
4. Advocate for continued and necessary investment in provincially and federally-owned and controlled infrastructure.

The infrastructure gap is growing and requires urgent attention. Solutions can only be achieved if there are meaningful partnerships with all orders of government. The viability of our communities depends on it. We will mobilize strategies to preserve and grow infrastructure to support our economy and livability.





## PRIORITY TWO: HOUSING



### The Backbone of Thriving and Supportive Communities

Canada is facing a national housing crisis. Eastern Ontario is no exception. We urgently need all types of housing to maintain our existing quality of life and foster future growth.

The EOWC is committed to meeting our obligations as Housing Service Managers. We recognize that adequate housing is a key economic driver for municipalities and Eastern Ontario. We promote policies and initiatives that ensure everyone has access to safe, stable and affordable housing options.

**More than 90,000 households in the EOWC region are spending 30% or more on shelter costs (Statistics Canada). Over 16,000 vulnerable families are in desperate need of affordable housing and are on our municipal social housing waitlists. People are waiting an average of almost 5 years, and in some cases up to 10 years, to access homes.**

The EOWC will work with the Ontario and Federal Governments to partner and implement rural-based support, programs and funding to bring housing and related infrastructure projects to fruition in small urban and rural settings. Many rural municipalities in Eastern Ontario are growing, and growing fast. The need for housing is escalating and urgent.



## PRIORITY TWO: HOUSING



### The Backbone of Thriving and Supportive Communities

Starting with research, we will undertake an Eastern Ontario Regional Growth Study to benchmark demographic data that examines the housing needs across the continuum. This will provide the EOWC with the evidence needed to respond proactively to regional housing gaps, positioning Eastern Ontario for growth while serving our



vulnerable populations. It will also support the creation of evidence-based policies, programs, and plans for advocacy and development.

The EOWC commits to partner with both the Federal and Ontario Governments and other housing providers and champions to:

1. Continue to advocate for alternative funding to assist Eastern Ontario municipalities to plan and develop housing and related infrastructure.
2. Make programming more equitable by advocating for the expansion of the parameters for funding eligibility and allocation across all municipalities.
3. Develop and recommend flexible and adaptive housing policies to enable Eastern Ontario municipalities and the Ontario Government to build innovative housing solutions.

Additionally, we will promote shovel-ready housing initiatives and infrastructure projects across Eastern Ontario's municipalities. We will also examine the development of a rural housing regional repository that shares expertise, best practices, successful projects, tools and resources across our 103 municipalities. This will support our members to build the local conditions and capacity to respond to housing needs strategically and efficiently.



## PRIORITY THREE: HEALTH CARE



### The Engine for Healthy and Resilient Communities

Every person in Eastern Ontario should have timely access to high-quality health care services regardless of income, location or social status.

Municipal governments are key partners in the delivery of health care in Ontario. We continue to be in the unique position of being directly responsible for long-term care, paramedic services, and funding for public health. We are also indirectly responsible for, and directly impact, the social determinants of health as well as the underserved health needs of our communities.

**Ontario's municipal governments are deeply invested in the public health and health care systems...Municipal involvement includes direct, legislated funding and service delivery, as well as indirect and sometimes voluntary efforts to address local gaps in health services. It also includes the myriad municipal services that contribute to health outcomes. (Credit: AMO, 2019)**

Between 2017 and 2021, the EOWC's member municipalities invested ~ \$613 million in locally raised tax dollars for health services which equates to approximately \$122.6 million per year (Statistics Canada, 2021).



## PRIORITY THREE: HEALTH CARE



The Engine for Healthy and Resilient Communities

Municipal governments cannot make up reductions in provincial funding related to health care. Property taxpayers cannot continue to bear the burden for increasing health care expenditures and provincial downloading.



Developing ways for municipal input into provincial health policy and decision-making will help improve health outcomes across Ontario. There are many ways to continuously improve the existing system by building capacity and better system coordination. To do this, we need to better understand our current environment and context.

Going forward, the EOWC will:

1. Undertake an environmental scan to measure what municipalities are spending directly on health care and to access related trend data and forecasting. This will include integrating a social determinants of health framework into the assessment.
2. Provide evidence-based feedback and data to inform government decisions around long-term care, paramedic services, public health and the evolution of Ontario Health Teams. The EOWC will incorporate social determinants of health to map out impact.
3. Educate the public and continue to advocate for adequate and sustainable funding to support the delivery of health care services and to ensure the long-term viability of the health care system.



## PRIORITY THREE: HEALTH CARE



### The Engine for Healthy and Resilient Communities

We will advocate for transparent and accountable funding mechanisms that prioritize frontline care and invest in health care workforce development. Furthermore, we will continue to advocate for measures to reduce wait times; expand health care infrastructure; and increase access to primary care, mental health and addiction services, and specialized care in underserved areas.

Through continued advocacy for transformative changes, we will build a health care system that meets the evolving needs of Eastern Ontarians, promotes health and wellbeing for all, and achieves better outcomes for individuals, families and communities.





# STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT



The Value of the EOWC's Voice

In order to achieve our strategic goals, we will continue to invest in our capacity and organizational development.

We will be pragmatic, solutions-oriented and evidence-based in our approach. We will focus on collaboration, knowing that this leads to greater impact, efficiency, success, and communication.

In the next three years, the EOWC will:

1. Ensure our work is informed by research and an evidence-based approach.
2. Engage in collaborations and partnerships that move the needle on issues impacting Eastern Ontario.

Communicate strategically and

3. effectively on multiple levels with the government and all our key partners and members.

Provide effective and strategic

4. leadership and build our organizational strength to ensure our efforts are impactful.



# CONNECT WITH US

For updates on the advancement of our strategic priorities, please contact us today by email, and follow us on social media for news updates from our team.

## CONTACT US



[www.eowc.org](http://www.eowc.org)



[info@eowc.org](mailto:info@eowc.org)

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus



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