

Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC)

AMO Conference Update, August 2024

- As head of council, I continue to serve on the Board of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus.
- On behalf of the region of Eastern Ontario, the EOWC had a strong presence at the AMO 2024 Conference in Ottawa. I would consider it a success.
- We had a record number of meetings with federal, provincial and sector partners.
- The EOWC spoke to our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for our region's small urban and rural communities. Priorities include infrastructure, housing and health care.
- We shared the findings from our *Mind the Gap: Regional Municipal Infrastructure Policy Paper*. It covers the realities of infrastructure across our 103 municipalities and how Eastern Ontario is a growing economy.
 - We have a \$6 billion municipal infrastructure deficit, which has increased 58% since 2011.
 - We do not have the same financial tools in smaller communities to pay for infrastructure and need the Federal and Provincial Government to understand our small rural realities, and partner together with municipalities to make sure our roads, bridges, water treatment plants and arenas are a priority.

- I was pleased to find in the paper that across the region we are building housing at a faster rate per capita than the City of Toronto. The EOWC's communities are building 39 units and Toronto is building 17 units per 100,000 population.
- We held a joint meeting with our municipal partners, the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus and the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, representing 230 municipalities of the 444 across Ontario. We presented a united front around our support for the 'Solve the Crisis Campaign' that the Ontario Big City Mayors group is leading to bring attention to the homelessness and mental health crisis taking a big toll in communities of all sizes. Municipalities are stepping up on the front-lines, but provincial coordination and leadership is needed. We need to work together and act now.
 - The Big City Mayors has started a website (*SolveTheCrisis.ca*) that Ontarians can visit to write a letter and show their support.
- We also sent a joint letter to Premier Ford and the Ontario Government to ask for them to come to table around modernizing the municipal fiscal framework.
- Municipalities are faced with delivering more services and maintaining assets without a way to sustainably pay for them. In Ontario, we are the only province where municipalities are mandated to deliver housing and long-term care. AMO is leading this call to action for a 'Social and Economic Prosperity Review' and the EOWC is in full support.

- Some highlights include meeting with:
 - Sean Fraser, Canada’s Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to talk about our Mind The Gap paper and regional housing strategy.
 - We were also pleased to meet with Ontario Ministers:
 - Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing;
 - Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure;
 - Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs;
 - and Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister of Long-Term Care.
 - We established a new partnership with the Ontario Medical Association around our common priority of needing support with getting health care staff and family doctors in smaller communities.
 - We also held successful meetings with the Ontario NDP and Liberal parties.
- We are pleased to see investments made from the Ontario Government around infrastructure and we look forward to continued discussions.
- Advocacy materials are all available on the EOWC website.