



Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus
www.eowc.org



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NEWS RELEASE

Eastern Wardens elect New Chair, Vice Chair and set Priorities for 2011

Picton - The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Inc. has elected J. Murray Jones, Warden of Peterborough County as its new Chair for the coming year. Warden Mel Campbell of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville was elected as the Vice-Chair.

"I am thrilled to assume the Chair's position and appreciate the support that my fellow members of the EOWC Inc. have shown in me," said Chair Jones. "Along with my colleague Warden Campbell we are committed to continuing the important work of the Caucus on behalf of property taxpayers across Eastern Ontario this year."

"The strength and success of the EOWC has always been based on a cohesive and co-ordinated regional approach supported by thorough research and analysis. Chair Jones and I embrace this strategy and will do our very best to help advance our priorities this year," said Vice-Chair Campbell.

"Establishing our annual priorities as a group is one of the most important things we do each year," said Mayor Peter A. Mertens. "The many successes of the EOWC over the years has been the result, I believe, of our commitment to work together, offer well thought out alternatives whenever possible, and engage the other orders of government in a positive and productive way," added Mayor Mertens.

Each year at this time, the EOWC meets in Kingston to elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair and to set the key issues that the Caucus will promote to both the federal and provincial governments. It is also an opportunity to share these priorities with many of Eastern Ontario's MPs and MPPs who join the Caucus for a morning of discussion.

2011 Priorities

This year's focus is on three main areas:

- Fiscal concerns
- Economic Development
- New research and analysis

Some of the priorities are described below:

Farm & Managed Forest Lands

Rural property taxpayers are being saddled with an unaffordable financial burden because of two provincially-mandated programs, the Farmland Tax Program and the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program, which the Province requires municipalities to fund through property taxes. The burden was shifted onto rural municipalities in 1998, when the Province downloaded the cost of the programs.

In 2008, the download cost municipalities more than \$257 million, but the Province reimbursed only \$50 million. The net cost to property taxpayers was \$207 million in that one year alone.

In the face of these shortfalls, local councils in rural areas have no choice but to raise property taxes. In these municipalities, the financial burden falls largely on homeowners, farmers and other private landowners – many of whom are supposed to be benefiting from the programs, not helping to pay for them. Property taxes are as much as 20% higher than they would be with fair funding for these necessary provincial programs. In one municipality alone, the annual loss in revenues is \$18 million a year.

Continuation of Eastern Ontario Development Fund and Eastern Ontario Development Program

Ontario's four year EODF will have invested \$80 million directly into growing Eastern Ontario's business to create new jobs and help restructure the sector to meet the challenges of a changing local and world economy. This program is scheduled to come to an end in 2011 and the EOWC, which lead the drive to create this Fund in the first place, will make it a priority to ensure it becomes a permanent feature for Eastern Ontario. The EOWC will press its position with the current Government as well as the other provincial parties.

The Government of Canada is also in the midst of reviewing its program, the Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP). The EODP was created in 2004 in response to an active campaign several years ago lead by the EOWC and Community Futures Corporations from around the region. The Program has been very successful in creating new small businesses and the jobs that go along with them. Since its creation, the EODP has invested more than \$46 million in businesses across Eastern Ontario and that has resulted in a further \$147 million of private sector spending.

The EOWC will put its resources and efforts into convincing the Federal Government to make this a permanent part of its new development agency for Southern Ontario, FedDev Ontario.

A Growth Plan for Eastern Ontario

The EOWC has been pressing the Province for several years now to create a Growth Plan for the region. This is a key ingredient in developing a master plan for future investment in all types of infrastructure including roads, bridges, health and educational institutions, to support economic development and future growth in Eastern Ontario.

With the recent completion of a Northern Ontario plan the EOWC strongly believes the Province needs to immediately begin working with municipalities, educators, the business community and health care institutions on a Plan specifically designed for the region. It intends to advocate for this work at every opportunity with the current Government as well as the opposition parties.

For a complete list of the 2011 Priorities, go to www.eowc.org

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