



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 22, 2008

WARDENS' CAUCUS MEETS GOVERNMENT MEMBERS TO DISCUSS 2008 PRIORITIES

Picton, ON: In a statement released today by the new Chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Ron Gerow of Peterborough County, he spoke of their meeting with members of the Provincial Government, including Ministers Gerretsen, Dombrowsky and Parliamentary Assistant Lou Rinaldi.

"Each year at this time our Caucus invites members of the Provincial Government to meet with us to discuss many of the issues our municipalities and the province are currently facing," said Chair Gerow. "We were pleased that we could also share with them our priorities for 2008", he added.

These priorities include:

- A Pre-Budget Submission to the Honourable Dwight Duncan, Ontario's Minister of Finance;
- The Caucus's deep concerns over the looming crisis in municipal infrastructure like roads and bridges as a result of under funding;
- The importance the Caucus is placing on working with the Provincial Government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario on the critical need to dramatically improve the financial well-being, on an ongoing basis, of all municipalities;
- Pushing for continued investment by both the Province and indeed the Federal Governments in broadband connectivity across Eastern Ontario.

"We had a frank and open exchange of ideas," said Mayor Leo P. Finnegan. "This kind of forum is very valuable and I believe both the EOWC members and the Government representatives came away from the session with a new sense of challenges we face and the opportunities that exist for positive change in our region", added Mayor Finnegan.

The Wardens' Caucus over the past 6 years has made significant efforts to study, assess and develop action plans to meet the significant challenges and opportunities faced in Eastern Ontario. Its *Prosperity Plan for Eastern Ontario* provides detailed recommendations for creating a vibrant and healthy Eastern Ontario.

The *Prosperity Plan* contains 51 recommendations that cover six broad themes:

- moving to a knowledge-based economy;
- building local economies from existing regional strengths;
- building linkages between urban and rural communities;
- designing programs that reflect the true scale and financial resources of rural Ontario;
- improving service delivery through strategic approaches to infrastructure;
- redressing responsibilities to foster municipal financial sustainability.

“The EOWC has also been successful in working with the Provincial and Federal Governments on issues that have resulted in direct financial investments and improvements for Eastern Ontario,” noted Gerow. These include:

- the creation of a new provincial \$80 million Eastern Ontario Economic Development Fund;
- the establishment of the Federal Government’s Eastern Ontario Development Program which has resulted in \$28 million in direct federal investments that has leveraged some \$66 million in other investment;
- the phase-in of reductions in commercial and industrial education property taxes that will make local businesses more competitive.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus represents the 13 Counties and single tier municipalities stretching from the City of Kawartha Lakes on the west to Renfrew County in the east.

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