

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 26, 2023

WOWC advocates for housing, mental health, workforce, and broadband at ROMA 2023

Toronto, Ontario – The Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (WOWC) continued to advocate strongly for its four major priorities as part of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) 2023 Conference, through a series of constructive discussions with provincial government representatives from January 22 to 24, 2023.

Joining thousands of other rural municipal colleagues in Toronto, WOWC members met this week with several Provincial Ministers as well as Opposition Parties to discuss its key priorities for the 2022-2023 year, which include:

- Affordable and Attainable Housing
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Workforce Development
- Broadband and Cellular Infrastructure

“The delegations with provincial representatives were very well received, and our members were respectful but firm in our dialogue with the government – outlining very clearly where we supported the government’s initiatives, while emphasizing the unique needs and improvements required in the many rural and small urban communities across Western Ontario,” stated WOWC Chair Glen McNeil.

“We reiterated the WOWC’s desire to continue building our relationship and collaborating with the provincial government and presented a series of recommendations based on significant research conducted with regional stakeholders over the past year,” continued Chair McNeil. “Specifically, these recommendations include permanent, predictable funding for mental health and addictions; increased consultation with rural and small urban municipalities regarding housing legislation; and measures to address and better prepare for future workforce gaps.”

Representatives at the WOWC's delegation with the government included Hon. Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Housing; Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General; Amarjot Sandhu, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure; Andrew Dowie, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade; Robert Bailey, Parliamentary Assistant to the Solicitor General; and MPP Rick Byers, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance..

The WOWC also met separately with MPP Marit Stiles, Leader of the Ontario NDP; MPP John Fraser, Interim Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party; and MPP Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario.

"We would like to thank the many provincial representatives for attending these delegations, engaging in constructive dialogue with us, and demonstrating how they value our priorities," added WOWC Vice-Chair Wade Mills. "We are adamant that the work being conducted by the WOWC – and the recommendations being made – will serve as a model for the entire province, and we plan to continue our advocacy over the coming months in order to ensure that rural and small urban Western Ontario receives the support and recognition it deserves."

"The WOWC certainly appreciates the government's willingness to hear our perspectives, and benefited from our delegations to advocate clearly and effectively on our intentions as well as our interest in continuing to collaborate with all levels of government on these initiatives," concluded Vice-Chair Mills. "This excellent cooperation among governments will only continue to foster our collective success.

To learn more about the WOWC's priorities and view the briefing materials used for the ROMA 2023 Conference, please visit www.wowc.ca.

About

The ***Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC)*** is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single-tier municipalities in Southwestern Ontario, representing more than 1.5 million residents. The WOWC aims to enhance the prosperity and overall wellbeing of rural and small urban communities across the region. Caucus members work collectively to influence federal and provincial legislation and programs through advocacy, research, analysis, and education. For more information, visit www.wowc.ca.

-30-

Media Contact

Kate Burns Gallagher, Executive Director
T: 519-495-6059 E: kate@wowc.ca

Justin Bromberg, Manager of Government Relations
justin@wowc.ca

Photo Information

Amarjot Sandhu, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure

Warden Chris Peabody, Bruce County

Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General

Andrew Dowie, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade

Warden Kevin Marriott, Lambton County

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs;

Warden Marcus Ryan, Oxford County

Hon. Michael Parsa, Associate Minister of Housing

Vice Chair WOWC, Warden Wade Mills, Dufferin County

Chair WOWC, Glen Mc Neil, Huron County

Warden Basil Clarke, Simcoe County

Robert Bailey, Parliamentary Assistant to the Solicitor General

MPP Rick Byers, Bruce-Grey- Owen Sound

Mayor Jim Ginn, Central Huron, Chair of WOWC Economic Development Committee

Warden Brian Milne, Grey County

Warden Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Middlesex County

Warden Ed Ketchabaw, Elgin County

Warden Andy Lennox, Wellington County