



Media Release

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WOWC supports AMO's campaign calling on Province to act on housing and homelessness

London, ON – The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) joined the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) in calling on the Province of Ontario to work collaboratively with municipalities on efforts to increase the supply of housing, and to tackle the growing homelessness crisis in Ontario.

These are both top-of-mind issues for municipalities across Ontario, including the 15 members of the WOWC and the 300 communities they represent across rural Southwestern Ontario. Specifically, the WOWC has emphasized that solutions are particularly required in small and rural communities, where a lack of access to affordable and attainable housing as well as to adequate community health services are major barriers to reducing poverty and homelessness.

"The WOWC has expressed its desire to collaborate directly with the provincial government on these important matters, and we have presented a series of recommendations based on significant research conducted with regional stakeholders over the past year," explained WOWC Chair Glen McNeil. "These 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."

Bill 23 limits municipal access to infrastructure financing – a cost to Ontario property taxpayers of \$1 billion a year, according to AMO. The municipal sector is looking for the provincial government to clarify how it will offset these costs for property taxpayers and commit to reversing legislative measures that create unintended consequences. There are risks to eliminating environmental protections or weakening municipal governance.

AMO's [pre-budget submission](#) also highlights that the Government of Ontario's per capita spending on programming is the lowest in Canada at \$2,000 less per person than the national

average. It states the homelessness crisis in Ontario is a direct result of decades of provincial underinvestment in areas such as affordable housing, community mental health and income assistance programs.

“As homelessness continues to rise, municipalities – particularly small and rural ones – need more support from upper levels of government to solve this important issue. The WOWC is adamant that its research and its recommendations will serve as a model for the entire province, and we plan to continue our advocacy over the coming months to ensure that rural and small urban Western Ontario receives the support and recognition it deserves,” stated Chair McNeil.

In adopting a resolution to support AMO’s campaign, the WOWC is therefore joining its municipal partners in calling on the Government of Ontario to heed AMO’s recommendations to end homelessness, by:

- Increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing through a variety of approaches from rent subsidies to property acquisitions;
- Increasing financial assistance to individuals and families and fulfilling the government’s promise to transform its social assistance system; and
- Investing in health services, community-based mental health services, supportive housing, and addictions services.

AMO is a non-profit organization representing almost all of Ontario’s 444 municipal governments, and recently [presented its top priorities](#) for the 2023 provincial budget to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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.

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