

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 23, 2023

WOWC builds on municipal-provincial collaboration and regional advocacy at AMO 2023

London, Ontario – The Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (WOWC) continued to build on its meaningful and critical partnerships with representatives of the Province of Ontario, during the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2023 Conference from August 20 to 23, 2023.

The WOWC advocated strongly for its three priorities through a series of constructive delegations with Provincial Ministers as well as the Opposition Parties.

The WOWC’s key priorities for the 2023-2024 year are:

- 1) **Housing:** Request for a definition regarding the government’s commitment to “keep municipalities whole” regarding impacts to our ability to fund housing enabling infrastructure because of Bill 23.
- 2) **Workforce to Support Economic Growth:** For the Ontario Innovation Nominee Program to include the in-demand occupations in Western Ontario for motor vehicle and transit drivers, cleaners, and retail salespersons.
- 3) **Mental Health, Addictions, and Homelessness:** Dedicated rural funding through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) and request for permanent funding of the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT).

“Our delegations with provincial representatives were very well received, and the Wardens emphasized the unique needs of our rural and small urban communities across Western Ontario,” stated WOWC Chair Glen McNeil. “Our research and statistics regarding the priorities are clear and well-researched, and allowed us to provide recommendations to the government on the supports required – whether financial or otherwise – that differ greatly from those of our urban counterparts.”

In preparation for the conference, WOWC members worked collaboratively with regional MPPs and senior Provincial staff in providing briefings, research, and recommendations regarding these priority

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

Representatives at the WOWC's delegation with the government included Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General; and Hon. Michael Tibollo Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

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

"We remain steadfast in our approach and confident that the WOWC's research and recommendations can serve as a model for the entire province," added WOWC Vice-Chair Wade Mills. "The WOWC appreciates our provincial partners' willingness to hear our perspectives and our concerns, and we look forward to meaningful change in the coming months – and rest assured that we will continue advocating on behalf of rural Western Ontario to ensure our region and our residents receive the support and recognition they require and deserve."

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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Photo Information



From Left To Right

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

Warden Andy Lennox, Wellington County

Hon. Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General

Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Warden Glen McNeil, Huron County, Chair Western Ontario Wardens Caucus

Warden Wade Mills, Dufferin County, Vice Chair Western Ontario Wardens Caucus

Mayor Amy Martin, Norfolk County

Warden Chris Peabody, Bruce County

Warden Kevin Mariott, Lambton County

Hon. Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions

Warden Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Middlesex County

Warden Marcus Ryan, Oxford County

Warden Ed Ketchabaw, Elgin County

Warden Rhonda Ehgoetz, Perth County