



Tuesday, March 18, 2025

The Honourable Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
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Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Room 281
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1
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Dear Prime Minister Carney and Premier Ford,

On behalf of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), I want to thank you both for your strong leadership on behalf of Ontario and Canada through the continued uncertainty around tariffs and international trade.

The WOWC is a not-for-profit organization representing 15 upper and single-tier municipalities and 1.6 million constituents across rural Western Ontario, aiming to enhance the prosperity and overall well-being of rural and small communities across the region.

As Chair of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), I want to express our ongoing support for the Governments of Ontario and Canada as you work to navigate the challenges posed by tariffs, inter-provincial trade barriers, and other trade restrictions.

Western Ontario's economy is closely linked to trade, particularly with the United States, but also within Canada. Economists highlight that sectors most vulnerable to the imposition of tariffs and trade barriers—potentially leading to layoffs or significant economic challenges—include automotive, construction, energy, agriculture, and consumer goods. In terms of industry GDP, manufacturing, wholesale trade, and transportation and warehousing are expected to be among the most affected industries.

Regional export data, defined as both domestic and international exports outside of Western Ontario, is available through Lightcast Analyst. Western Ontario's exports outside of the region totaled over \$226 billion in 2022. Exports outside the Western Ontario region in the largest industry, manufacturing, totaled close to \$145 billion in 2022, representing 64% of total regional exports. Tariffs on agriculture and food also present substantial risks to the regional economy. This industry accounts for nearly \$12 billion in goods in regional exports.

The WOWC recognizes that trade barriers—whether international or inter-provincial—create significant challenges for industries that are vital to our region's economic stability, job

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creation, and long-term prosperity. Restrictions on the movement of goods, services, and labour between provinces can hinder economic growth, increase costs for businesses, and limit opportunities for rural communities. Addressing these inter-provincial trade barriers is crucial to ensuring that businesses in Western Ontario can compete effectively in the national and global marketplace.

The WOWC will remain a vocal advocate for solutions that protect our industries and communities, as we are committed to working with all levels of government to safeguard our region's economic future. As part of this commitment, the WOWC strongly supports efforts to develop and implement procurement policies that alleviate some of the financial and administrative burdens on municipalities. We recognize that municipalities are often constrained by procurement regulations that limit flexibility and increase costs. By collaborating with provincial and federal governments, we can work towards policies that streamline procurement, promote local economic development, and enhance the efficiency of public investments.

Western Ontario's strength comes from our ability to adapt and respond as a region, and the WOWC remains dedicated to partnering with all stakeholders to ensure our communities remain strong and resilient. We look forward to continued collaboration with both levels of government to address these pressing economic and trade-related challenges.

Sincerely,



Mayor Amy Martin
Chair, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
chair@wowc.ca

cc.

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs
Rebecca Bligh, President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Robin Jones, President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Christa Lowry, Chair, Rural Ontario Municipal Association
Bonnie Clark, Chair, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
Western Ontario MPs and MPPs
Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Counties and Municipalities