WESTERN ONTARIO
WOWC
WARDENS CAUCUS

April 28, 2026

Submission to the Standing Committee on Heritage Infrastructure and Cultural Policy

Regarding Bill 100 – Better Regional Governance Act, 2026

Submitted by:

Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC)
c/o Kate Burns Gallagher, Executive Director

Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
789 Broadway St. Box 3000 Wyoming, ON N0N 1T0

Email: kate@wowc.ca
Phone: 519-495-6059

WESTERN ONTARIO
WOWC
WARDENS CAUCUS

April 28, 2026

The Honourable Laurie Scott
Chair, Standing Committee on Heritage Infrastructure and Cultural Policy
Procedural Services Branch
Whitney Block
Room 1405
99 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

RE: Bill 100 – Better Regional Governance Act, 2026

Dear Chair Scott,

We recognize the Province's focus on municipal governance and the shared urgency to accelerate, infrastructure, and economic development across Ontario. Municipal governments are committed partners in achieving these priorities, and across Western Ontario, counties continue to deliver results through collaboration, fiscal responsibility, and strong local leadership.

On behalf of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC), we are writing to provide a respectful and principled perspective on Bill 100, the *Better Regional Governance Act, 2026*. While the legislation only affects one of our WOWC member counties (Simcoe), it signals a clear provincial direction toward governance reform as a tool to advance policy outcomes, including housing and infrastructure delivery. As such, it raises important considerations for Counties and upper-tier municipalities across Western Ontario.

WOWC members recognize the Province's objectives to streamline decision-making and improve alignment between municipal and provincial priorities. However, the proposed introduction of a provincially appointed Warden and strong Warden powers, represent a significant shift away from

locally determined governance models. These changes increase provincial influence in municipal leadership structures and risk undermining the democratic accountability that is foundational to municipal government.

Municipal governments are, by design, local, democratic, and transparent. Elected officials are directly accessible and accountable to their communities, bringing local-based knowledge and relationships that are essential to effective decision-making. This is particularly important in rural and County contexts, where geography, service delivery responsibilities, and community diversity differ significantly from large urban centres.

We also wish to highlight the important distinction between governance models. Counties are not regions, and they are not cities. County governments in Western Ontario operate through collaborative, two-tier systems that rely on representation from locally elected lower-tier municipalities. This structure reflects rural realities, ensures balanced regional representation, and supports effective and coordinated service delivery across large geographic areas. Applying a one-size-fits-all governance approach risks overlooking these differences and may lead to unintended consequences.

Feedback from our municipal partners, including those directly impacted by the legislation, reinforces these concerns. While there is support for measures such as council size adjustments in certain contexts, there is significant apprehension regarding provincially appointed Wardens and expanded executive authorities. Key issues raised include the potential lack of local knowledge in appointments, reduced accountability to elected councils, and challenges to maintaining cohesive and collaborative governance structures.

Counties across Western Ontario are already delivering on the Province's priorities. From enabling housing development through infrastructure investment to supporting economic growth and workforce development, municipal governments are essential partners in building strong, resilient communities. Between 2016 and 2021, Western Ontario experienced population growth of 7.8%—outpacing the provincial average—and welcomed over 121,000 new residents, nearly double the growth of the City of Toronto during the same period. This growth has been matched by strong housing development, with a 28.3% increase in new housing units, and significant investment, including $8.9 billion in building permits, of which $6.4 billion was for residential construction.

WOWC supports a united, respectful, and principled approach to this discussion. We believe there is an opportunity to work collaboratively with the Province to explore governance improvements that maintain democratic integrity while supporting shared priorities. In particular, we would welcome engagement on how Counties can continue to play a leadership role in advancing housing and infrastructure outcomes without compromising local representation and accountability.

As the Province continues to consider governance reforms, we respectfully request that any future changes involving upper-tier municipalities:

- Maintain locally elected leadership as a cornerstone of municipal governance
- Recognize the distinct roles and structures of counties, regions, and cities
- Reflect rural and regional realities, including geography and service delivery responsibilities; and
- Be developed in partnership with municipalities through meaningful consultation.

WOWC will continue to monitor Bill 100 and any associated regulatory developments, including potential expansion of governance tools, and we remain committed to constructive engagement with your Ministry on this important file.
Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to provide input. We look forward to continuing to work together to support strong, accountable, and effective municipal governance and critical services across Ontario.

Sincerely,

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus

Mayor David Bailey
Brant County

Warden Luke Charbonneau
Bruce County

Mayor Darrin Canniff
Chatham Kent

Warden Lisa Post
Dufferin County

Warden Dominique Giguère
Elgin County

Warden Hilda MacDonald
Essex County

Warden Andrea Matrosovs
Grey County

Warden Jamie Heffer
Huron County

Warden Kevin Marriott
Lambton County

Warden Sue Clarke
Middlesex County

Deputy Mayor Adam Veri
Norfolk County

Warden Marcus Ryan
Oxford County

Warden Dean Trentowsky
Perth County

Warden Basil Clarke
Simcoe County

Warden Chris White
Wellington County

cc.

Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
Western Ontario Municipalities