

From: Western Ontario Wardens Caucus <info@wowc.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 2:31 PM
To: Denyse Morrissey <dmorrissey@shelburne.ca>
Subject: Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus August 2024 Newsletter

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August 2024



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**ONTARIO WEST
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CONFERENCE 2024**

October 25, 2024 | Chatham-Kent, ON

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**Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Advocates for Rural Needs at
AMO Conference 2024**



The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) strengthened its vital partnerships with representatives from the Province of Ontario during the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 2024 Conference, held from August 18 to 21, 2024.

Throughout the conference, the WOWC engaged in productive discussions with Provincial Ministers and Opposition Parties, effectively advocating for its strategic priorities. For the 2024-2025 year, the WOWC's key focus areas are:

- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Workforce to Support Economic Growth
- Mental Health, Addictions and Homelessness
-

“During our recent delegations with provincial representatives, we were pleased with the positive response to our discussions,” stated WOWC Chair Glen McNeil. “We emphasized the unique needs of our rural and smaller communities across Western Ontario, underscoring that the support required in these areas differs significantly from the needs of urban centers. Our recommendations aim to ensure that these distinct challenges are effectively addressed by the government.”

In advance of the conference, WOWC members engaged closely with regional MPPs and senior provincial staff to present comprehensive briefings, research, and recommendations on key priority issues. For detailed information on the WOWC’s priorities, research, and the materials used for the AMO 2024 Conference, please refer to the briefing document [here](#).

Representatives at the WOWC’s delegations with the government included;

- Kinga Surma, Ministry of Infrastructure
- Lisa Thompson, Ministry of Rural Affairs
- Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General
- Parliamentary Assistant, Patrice Barnes, Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

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

“The WOWC remains committed to ensuring that our research and insights help inform policies across the province,” stated WOWC Vice Chair Andy Lennox. “We value the constructive dialogue with our provincial partners and are hopeful that these discussions will lead to tangible outcomes. Our advocacy for rural Western Ontario will continue with the goal of securing the support our communities need to thrive.”

[View the press release](#)

Rural Municipal Leaders Support ‘Solve the Crisis’ Campaign to Address Homelessness and Mental Health



Representing 230 municipalities and over 2.6 million people across Ontario, the [Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus](#), [Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus](#), and Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus join the call to action around the ['Solve the Crisis' Campaign](#), led by the [Ontario Big City Mayors](#).

During their joint meeting at the start of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) 125th Conference, the three caucuses are stating their collective support around the need for the Ontario and Federal Governments to take immediate and targeted action to help solve the crisis around homelessness and mental health.

There is a homelessness and mental health crisis happening on streets across our communities, small and big, rural and urban. Municipalities continue to step up, but do not have the tools, expertise or capacity to fully address the intersectional and complex issues around housing, homelessness, health care, and social services.

We appreciate the actions that both the Federal and Ontario Governments have taken to-date including Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness, the creation of the Homelessness Prevention Program, and investing in youth wellness hubs. But we need to do more to 'Solve the Crisis' together as government partners, and we need to act swiftly.

As municipalities continue to raise, the rising number of homeless encampments and the human toll of the opioid crisis are a symptom of deeper system failures that hurt Ontario's overall social and economic prosperity. The WOWC, EOMC, and EOWC will be sending a letter to Premier Ford to further underscore the need for a [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#). We need a municipal

fiscal relationship that supports the foundations of a strong economy, sustainable communities and quality of life that reflects modern day and front-line realities.

Organizations and Ontarians can join the call to support the 'Solve the Crisis' campaign by visiting www.solveethecrisis.ca.

[View the press release](#)

Chair McNeil Meets with Ministers Flack and Thompson



On Tuesday, August 6th, WOWC Chair Warden Glen McNeil met with Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agri-business.

Discussion included the WOWC's four strategic priorities and how the organization can support the new Ministry in protecting valuable farm land in Western Ontario.

The new Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, created in June of 2024, helps to build a stronger agri-food sector by investing in the development and transfer of innovative technologies, retaining and attracting investment, developing markets, providing regulatory oversight, and providing effective risk management tools.

In a separate meeting on Thursday, August 15th, Chair McNeil met with Hon. Lisa Thompson, to extend WOWC's support to the new Ministry of Rural Affairs.

[Learn more about the ministries](#)



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Get your tickets to attend The Rural Talks to Rural 2024 Conference

Rural Talks to Rural Conference

October 16 - 18, 2024

Blyth, ON

This year's conference theme: **THE RURAL ASSEMBLY: EXPLORING OUR DIFFERENCES TOGETHER** focusing on participatory leadership, and collective action through different models, formats, and creative expressions such as storytelling, and art.

The preliminary conference agenda is posted!

[Click here to view.](#)

Province Launches Largest Energy Procurement in History

The Ontario government is launching the largest competitive energy procurement in the province's history, focused on generating affordable electricity for families and businesses. This builds on the province's plan to procure up to 5,000 megawatts (MW) of energy through a series of procurements to help foster economic prosperity and meet the growing demand for clean and reliable energy.

The Second Long-Term Procurement (LT2) will plan future energy initiatives in communities that provide consent while protecting prime agricultural areas, including:

Requiring energy project developers to receive municipal support resolutions to ensure local support and consent for new projects.

Government of Canada to enhance tourism experiences in Southwestern Ontario

Southwestern Ontario attracts thousands of visitors with its scenic landscapes, rich heritage, dynamic arts scene and quaint towns. Nestled between Lake Erie to the south and Lake Huron to the north, this is a cherished destination offering a blend of rural experiences, natural splendor, culture, and hidden treasures, for those searching for unforgettable adventures.

On August 21st it was announced an investment of over \$3.2 million for 20 organizations across southwestern Ontario and along Lake Huron, through the Tourism Growth Program, which are diversifying their offerings to attract new visitors to the region. This includes over \$1.1 million for five projects that support the growth of Indigenous tourism that are creating experiences that celebrate, preserve and teach Indigenous culture.

Who Should Attend?

Anyone passionate about our rural communities. A gathering of artists, scientists, farmers, students, researchers, local knowledge keepers, entrepreneurs, economic developers, environmentalists, community development officers, and rural organizations.

Group (10 or more from one organization) and student rates are available.

Virtual tickets are available for those who cannot attend in person. Virtual delegates have access to keynote addresses, presenters, conference highlights and closing remarks.

Prohibiting all projects in specialty crop areas and ground-mounted solar in prime agricultural areas to prevent solar farms.

Incentivizing projects located in northern Ontario and those which avoid prime agricultural areas, along with a plan to unlock Crown Lands for renewable energy.

Incentivizing economic opportunities for projects with or by Indigenous communities on whose traditional territory the projects are proposed.

Requiring Agricultural Impact Assessments for projects that are permitted on all prime agricultural areas.

The County of Oxford, with an investment of \$90,000 from the Government of Canada, is developing and implementing a five-year strategic tourism plan to improve inclusivity, community vitality and sustainability. This includes creating trip itineraries and implementing technology improvements to help attract thousands of visitors to the area.

The Government of Canada is investing in tourism projects in the region, including many rural tourism and agri-tourism businesses which are key drivers for local communities and economies.

[Read the full press release](#)

[Read the full press release](#)

[Purchase your tickets.](#)

New Date: Community Futures Western Ontario AGM



Community Futures Western Ontario would like to invite you to our 13th Annual General Meeting on September 25, 2024, at 11 AM.

(Doors open at 9:45 AM)

Elm Hurst Inn & Spa, 415 Harris St., Ingersoll, ON N5C 3J8

(The event will be held in the James Harris Room)

We look forward to sharing our highlights and successes from this past year.

To register for this event please use one of the 3 links below that applies to you.

Please register by Monday, August 19, 2024

We look forward to your attendance.

In-Person – Board Member

<https://survey.tractus.ca/#/pp/CFWO24/14C5571DD4774503A689800F6DABC897>

In-Person – Non-Board Member (Guest/Partner)

<https://survey.tractus.ca/#/pp/CFWO24/C2F691E5CBEB4C9EA724E4B7CAC744DF>

Join in Virtually

<https://survey.tractus.ca/#/pp/CFWO24/AF93C5275F2E4250B5F8631679DF98F1>

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