

EOLC receives funding to advance Regional Economic Strategy

Belleville, April 24, 2018 – The [Eastern Ontario Leadership Council](#) (EOLC), a multi-organization partnership tasked with advancing regional economic development opportunities, welcomes the announcement from the Province of Ontario on the \$135,000 funding grant to refresh and plan for implementation of the *Eastern Ontario Economic Development Strategy*.

Minister Jeff Leal, of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), joined numerous elected officials and economic development partners from across Eastern Ontario during the announcement held Monday in the County of Hastings' Council Chambers. With Eastern Ontario being the first region in Ontario to undertake this endeavour as part of the Province's regional economic development planning process, the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth (MEDG) is providing the funding and any required project support.

The EOLC consists of five major partners that together represent the various sectors across the region: the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network, the Ontario East Economic Development Commission, and Community Futures Ontario East. The partnership was launched in 2015 following the release of the initial regional *Strategy*, designed to tackle issues regarding the economic performance of the region and pursue opportunities to maintain and enhance its economic prosperity.

This funding will advance the EOLC's ongoing work, which began in 2016 with the creation of three working groups. These groups are responsible for implementation planning and priority setting, while engaging a broad cross-section of public and private sector stakeholders. They represent the three pillars of the *Strategy*, being: Workforce Development and Deployment; Technology Integration and Innovation; and Integrated, Intelligent Transportation Systems.

"The EOLC is a unique organization in Ontario, founded on the principle of promoting regional economic development in collaboration with the many municipalities and stakeholders across Eastern Ontario, which represents about 1.2 million residents," stated EOLC Co-Chair Leslie O'Shaughnessy, Mayor of the City of Cornwall. "We thank the Province and Minister Leal for recognizing the EOLC's work and providing funds to move forward in such a positive manner."

The refresh of the 10-year *Eastern Ontario Economic Development Strategy* will reflect recent economic considerations and incorporate the EOLC's existing regional work, while translating broad action steps into specific, prioritized projects to fulfill the 10-year vision. One major outcome is the creation of a comprehensive implementation plan, which will guide the EOLC's work through 2024 and provide project development funding to the three working groups.

"As with any project of this magnitude, it is essential that the EOLC undertake a review and refresh of the existing *Strategy*, including the collection and inclusion of relevant data, reports, and studies that have emerged since the release of the first version in 2014," added Co-Chair John Fenik, Warden of the County of Lanark. "Once the *Strategy* is implemented, our region's inclusive and collaborative economic development model will become a model for others."