



Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

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## NEWS RELEASE

### **EOWC hosts third annual meeting with Federal MPs**

**Ottawa, May 1, 2017** – For the third consecutive year, members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) welcomed their federal representatives from across the region to a breakfast meeting this morning on Parliament Hill, to discuss priorities and partnership opportunities that would directly benefit rural Eastern Ontario.

Mayor Robert Quaiff, 2017 Chair of the EOWC and Mayor of Prince Edward County, spoke at length on behalf of the 13 counties and single-tier municipalities in the region about the importance of a regional approach and the need for increased collaboration between the federal government and rural municipalities.

"It is our job, as leaders of our municipalities, to bring forward our most pressing issues to the upper levels of government," Chair Quaiff told his federal counterparts on Monday morning. "The EOWC has a proven track record of working with its many partners, and specifically using research and data, to effectively explain why these should also be their priorities."

The first priority discussed with the MPs was stable, predictable infrastructure funding for roads and bridges, which is rural Eastern Ontario's public transit network. "The federal 2017 budget recognized the critical importance of managing and improving infrastructure in rural communities across Eastern Ontario, and the EOWC was pleased to see the federal government's \$2-billion commitment to rural and northern municipal infrastructure and how that funding will be awarded in part on the basis of need," explained Chair Quaiff.

"The EOWC has the research and the data to support the fact that we have major investment challenges when it comes to our roads and bridge networks across the region. EOWC member municipalities own – and are responsible for – 73% or 69,110 kilometers of all the roads in Eastern Ontario, including the City of Ottawa. We also own 60% of all the bridges," added EOWC Vice-Chair Bill Dobson, the Warden of Lanark County. "That equates to some 5,113 bridges and structures. Based on the needs for roads and bridges, we should be spending an additional \$500 million to \$600 million a year to keep them to an acceptable standard."



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As further illustration, the EOWC noted that in rural communities, the cost of improving one kilometre of road is shared by just five residences, while in urban areas it is shared by 25 homes.

The second item discussed on Monday morning was the business case prepared by the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) on closing the many cellular network gaps across rural Eastern Ontario. This project would improve cellular and mobile broadband services for the many residents and businesses without adequate service, while also improving the cellular network from a public-safety perspective for our first responders.

“The EOWC is working very closely with EORN on this project, as well as our partners in the federal and provincial governments and the private sector – just as we all worked together in partnership when we collectively brought improved high-speed internet to rural Eastern Ontario,” stated Warden Rodney Cooney of the County of Hastings. “Like with the broadband project, we hope to close these many cellular gaps on time and on budget, with the essential support and contribution of our partners – and today’s meeting was a great step forward in our mutual collaboration.”

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