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## Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Response to the Minister of Finance's 2024 Fall Economic Statement

**October 30, 2024 - Eastern Ontario** – The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) welcomes the Ontario Government's investment in municipalities and the services that they deliver as part of the [2024 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Building Ontario for You](#), announced today by Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy.

The Ontario Government's plan reduces the deficit and retains a path to balance the budget by 2026–2027. Compared to the 2024 Budget, Ontario is also projected to see both stronger growth in real GDP and employment in 2024.

A highlight for Eastern Ontario's small and rural municipalities includes an increase of \$100 million over the next two years to the [Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund](#) (OMPF). This will bring the OMPF funding to \$600 million by 2026. The OMPF is the Ontario Government's main general assistance grant to municipalities.

Infrastructure that enables housing and supports community vitality is the top priority for the EOWC. The EOWC's [Mind The Gap: Municipal Infrastructure Policy Paper](#) highlights that we are a growing economy that can grow more with strategic investments. The current reality for rural and small-urban Ontario communities across the region is that the municipal infrastructure deficit is growing and has deepened by 58% since 2011. The EOWC hopes to continue working with the Ontario Government to unlock long term, sustainable infrastructure funding that will work for Ontario's rural and small-urban municipalities.

Additionally, under our strategic priority of healthcare, the EOWC is pleased to see investments in the [Learn and Stay Grant](#) program. This will help train and retain family physicians in Ontario and increase overall access to primary care. The EOWC is currently partnering with the [Eastern Ontario Physician Recruitment Alliance](#) (EOPRA), which is a regional-municipal partnership of



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physician recruiters across Eastern Ontario working together to attract Canadians studying abroad as well as international doctors. This alliance supports our region's efforts to ensure people have timely access to primary care.

“On behalf of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, I thank Minister Bethlenfalvy for the increased investment in the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund highlighted in the Fall Economic Statement. This \$100 million boost signifies the Ontario Government's recognition of the unique challenges faced by our 103 rural and small-urban communities. The funding will bolster essential services and also foster growth and resilience across our region,” stated EOWC Chair Peter Emon.

## About the EOWC

The EOWC Inc. is a non-profit organization advocating for 103 small urban and rural municipalities across Eastern Ontario. The EOWC covers an area of 50,000 square kilometres, serving 800,000 residents. For more than 20 years, the EOWC has gained support and momentum by speaking with a united voice to champion regional municipal priorities and work with the government, businesses, non-profit organizations, Indigenous leaders, the media, and the public.

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