



## Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus Newsletter – Spring/Summer 2020

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This newsletter provides updates regarding recent activities and advocacy of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC). The intended audience includes Wardens, Mayors, CAOs, upper-tier and lower-tier municipal councils, municipal staff, and the media. EOWC members are encouraged to circulate this newsletter within their County networks.

For complete details about the EOWC, including priorities, membership, meeting schedules, minutes and press releases, please visit [www.eowc.org](http://www.eowc.org), or via [Twitter](#).

### Reframed EOWC Priorities

EOWC members met for their first virtual meeting on Friday, May 29 to discuss the reframing of their priorities in response to the ongoing pandemic. As the impacts of COVID-19 continue to evolve, the EOWC recognized the need to adjust its priorities to represent the current and anticipated environments facing municipalities and local businesses. During these challenging times, the EOWC remains committed to responding to its region's needs and continuing to work with upper orders of government on recovery efforts.

Reframed 2020 EOWC priorities include:

- EORN Cell Gap Project and Broadband Gap Strategy;
- COVID-19 Municipal Recovery;
- COVID-19 Economic Recovery; and
- Long-Term Care.

[Media Release: EOWC Reframes Priorities in Response to COVID-19](#)

### Meeting with Federal Members of Parliament (MPs)

On June 12, Caucus members met with Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) to discuss reframed priorities and opportunities for the federal government to support the EOWC. The virtual meeting was hosted by EOWC Chair Andy Letham, as well as Glengarry-Prescott-Russell MP Francis Drouin and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry MP Eric Duncan. The EOWC looks forward to continuing its work with the Federal Government in order to implement solutions that

help local economies, reduce costs, and ultimately make changes that improve the lives of the people of Ontario, and across Canada.

## Review of Municipal Long-Term Care Homes

The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the long-term care sector and the need for longstanding systemic issues to be addressed. EOWC member municipalities have the expertise of operating long-term care homes and are committed to working alongside the Province during its review of Ontario’s long-term care system.

In order to be proactive and better positioned to inform provincial discussions, the EOWC is in the process of undertaking a comprehensive review of municipal long-term care homes. The EOWC is currently preparing an RFP in order to engage a consultant and looks forward to providing an update on the study findings in the coming months. This research will help provide a portrait of the “situation on the ground” and better inform provincial ministries of the current municipal realities.



Municipal governments in eastern Ontario spend approximately \$38 million every year to operate 2,200 LTC beds.

## Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN)

### Mobile/Cell Gap Project

In April, EORN Staff, in partnership with Peterborough County procurement commenced the procurement process for the Mobile/Cell Gap Project. The RFP is set to close in August 2020. EORN also recently welcomed new members to their team in order to help support the Mobile/Cell Gap Project.

[Media Release: Procurement Process begins for EORN Mobile/Cell Gap Project](#)

### Gigabyte Project Proposal

COVID-19 had exposed the serious lack of internet access and capacity for rural residents and businesses across Eastern Ontario. EORN and the EOWC are proposing a new fixed broadband project that will be capable of delivering speeds of 1 Gbps (gigabit per second) for up to 95% of the homes and businesses across the EOWC region. EORN is ready to work with the Federal and Provincial governments, as well as other key stakeholders in order to move the project forward quickly.

## Eastern Ontario Leadership Council (EOLC)

As Ontario continues to reopen the provincial economy over the coming weeks and months, the Eastern Ontario Leadership Council (EOLC) is currently preparing and positioning itself to support the region's economic recovery, namely through several major projects initiated in the months leading up to the COVID-19 crisis.

At its June 11 Board meeting, the EOLC received the first detailed assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the regional economy of Eastern Ontario, with a specific focus on its labour market. The report, prepared by Limestone Analytics of Kingston, Ontario, estimates that between February and April 2020, COVID-19 reduced the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by about \$1.8 billion, and has reduced employment by the equivalent of 64,000 full-time jobs.

On June 19, the EOLC and Limestone Analytics held a webinar regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the Eastern Ontario economy, in the presence of approximately 50 attendees from across the region. The EOLC is providing a recording of the webinar in order to assist in sharing the data modelling work that Limestone Analytics has provided regarding the impacts of COVID-19 and preliminary work on recovery scenarios. The EOLC encourages stakeholders to watch and share the recording, which is [available via Google Drive here](#).

To learn more, visit the [EOLC's website](#).

## Upcoming Events

### EOWC Meeting

The next EOWC meeting will take place on Friday, July 24 via Zoom Videoconference.

[2020 Meeting Schedule](#)

### 2020 Virtual AMO Conference

The EOWC is excited to be participating in the 2020 virtual AMO Conference taking place from August 17 to 19, 2020. Over the past many years, the EOWC and Ministers of the Provincial Government have met during the annual conference to discuss issues and challenges faced by member municipalities across rural Eastern Ontario. EOWC members once again look forward to the Multi-Ministerial delegation during the upcoming AMO Conference.

### Eastern Ontario Communications Conference

Organizers of the Eastern Ontario Communications Conference have announced that the second edition of the conference is being held on Thursday, October 22, 2020. Due to COVID-19, staff are exploring options for a virtual conference. This event is designed for staff from across the Eastern Ontario region working in communications and is being organized by a team

of local peers. The goal of the conference is to share experiences and highlight best practices and real-life scenarios.

Conference organizers are seeking suggestions regarding potential speakers and topics. The deadline to submit proposals is July 31, 2020 and can be sent to [eocommsconf@gmail.com](mailto:eocommsconf@gmail.com).

**For more information, please contact:**  
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