

January 2024

WESTERN ONTARIO
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Monthly
Update

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WOWC Champions Housing, Mental Health and Workforce Development Initiatives at ROMA 2024



The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) continued to advocate strongly for three critical regional priorities during the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) 2024 Conference. Engaging in constructive dialogue with provincial government representatives from January 21 to 23, 2024, WOWC reaffirmed its commitment to addressing key regional issues facing Western Ontario.

Joining thousands of rural municipal colleagues in Toronto, WOWC members met this week for discussions with several Provincial Ministers and Opposition Parties. These meetings centered around WOWC's key priorities for the 2023-2024 year, which include:

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

Representatives at the WOWC's delegation with the government included Hon. Paul Clandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Honourable Michael Kerzner, Solicitor General; Parm Gill, Minister of Red Tape Reduction; Deepak Anand, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development; and Stéphane Sarrazin, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Energy. The WOWC also met separately with MPP Marit Stiles, Leader of the Ontario NDP; the Ontario Liberal Party; and MPP Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Green Party of Ontario.

[View the Press Release](#)

WOWC Submission to Provincial 2024 Budget Consultations



The WOWC's recommendations for the 2024 Pre-Budget Consultations are with respect to two envelopes of funding.

Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) for Rural Areas

The WOWC requests that the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Solicitor General (SOLGEN) be on board as full partners, particularly in our small and rural communities, where a lack of access to adequate community health services – and integrated mental health and addictions services – is a major barrier to reducing homelessness and poverty

Rural communities require an increased fair share in HPP funding given the specific growing strain for rural communities. The WOWC requests that funding be allocated specifically for rural communities, which are less equipped, with fewer resources, yet experiencing significant increases in services required for homelessness, often related to mental health and addictions.

Permanent Funding for Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRT)

Communities in rural Western Ontario have felt the direct benefits from the pairing of specially trained police officers and mental-health professionals to respond to 911 emergency calls involving mental health or addictions.

The WOWC therefore recommends and requests the permanence of these programs – through annualized funding and permanently-funded mental health officer positions – using a formula based on the number of calls, population size, and geographic area

[View the full submission](#)

Chatham Ranked #7 on U-Haul's 2023 Top 25 Growth Cities List



Chatham-Kent ranked 7th on [U-Haul's List of Canadian Growth Cities in 2023](#), and is number 1 from Ontario featured by the same list.

Chatham has also ranked among the top 25 growth cities on this list in 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2017, and 2016. Growth Cities are calculated by the net gain of arriving one-way U-Haul trucks over departing one-way U-Haul trucks for a calendar year. With more than 2.5 million one-way U-Haul truck rental transactions, the data collected provides a comprehensive overview of where people are moving to.

As more people choose Chatham-Kent as a place to visit, live and invest, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent and community partners continue work to ensure Chatham-Kent is a welcoming community for all and continues to grow sustainably for future generations. As part of these municipal efforts, Community Attraction and Promotion works with community partners to promote the benefits of life in Chatham-Kent and helps to welcome new residents to the area. Being listed as the top growth city across Canada by U-Haul in 2023 is a clear reflection of these community-wide efforts.

[View the press release](#)

Grey County to move forward with motel purchase for emergency housing program



Grey County will look to expand emergency housing access with the purchase of the Diamond Motel in Owen Sound. County Council directed staff to finalize an agreement of purchase and sale with the motel operator at a meeting of Committee of the Whole on January

25 at a cost of \$3,050,000. The property is located at 713 9th Avenue East in Owen Sound. To finalize the sale, a by-law will be presented to County Council at the next meeting on February 8.

“Homelessness is a problem we see growing in communities across the province and Grey County is no exception,” said Grey County Warden Brian Milne. “Investing in this motel is an investment in safety and security for the residents of our communities who are being left out in the cold.”

[View the press release](#)

Oxford County Career Expo March 21, 2024



Get in front of more than 5000+ people from Oxford County and beyond to connect with top talent, shape the future workforce and contribute to the success of young minds?

The Oxford County Career Expo on March 21, 2024!

Here's why you don't want your company to miss out:

Access Top Talent: You'll be able to connect with your future and skilled workforce with the students and skilled professionals that will be present.

Expand Your Reach: Reach beyond your local boundaries and tap into our diverse pool of candidates.

Showcase Your Company: Highlight your company's culture, values and career opportunities at this FREE EVENT – yes, it's completely FREE to participate.

[Click here for more information](#)

Upcoming Webinar: Entitlement vs. Fairness in Farm Transition



The conversation around farm transition can be a tough topic, but it's vital. Continue the conversation by attending an informative webinar on February 29th from 1:30pm– 2:30pm.

Featuring renowned speaker Elaine Froese – Canada's Farm Whisperer. With over 25 years of experience in the field, Elaine supports families alleviating the emotional stress of transition planning and helps to find harmony through

understanding.

Throughout the webinar, Elaine will answer questions sent in anonymously via text or in the Zoom group chat. Following the presentation, there will also be a Q&A period with Elaine.

Register TODAY!

- Tickets: \$25 each.

For more farm transition planning resources and to get tickets for the “Entitlement vs. Fairness in Farm Transition” webinar, please visit:

<https://www.huroncounty.ca/economic-development/farmsuccession-transitionplanning/>



Social and Economic Prosperity Review: 2024 Pre-Budget Submission

AMO has released its 2024 pre-budget submission [Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#), calling on the provincial government to sit down with municipalities and work together on a joint review of municipal finance, including a detailed analysis of Ontario's infrastructure investment and service delivery needs.

The full pre-budget submission builds on the ongoing discussions AMO has been leading across the province around the stability and sustainability of municipal finances, including a presentation - [AMO-Ontario Social and Economic Prosperity Review](#) - on

Ontario Helping Rural Communities Grow with More Jobs, Home and Infrastructure

At the ROMA Conference, The government is taking further action to support rural municipalities and drive economic growth and success in rural Ontario. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs announced the start of consultations to help develop a new Rural Economic Development Strategy. Rural municipalities and the public will have an opportunity to share ideas about how Ontario can improve economic opportunities, create jobs and support growth in rural and Indigenous communities across the province.

Minister Thompson also announced the opening of the

Government of Canada invests in main streets in Southern Ontario

On January 16th the Honourable Filomena Tassi, Minister of the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#), announced a \$15-million investment for the [Canadian Urban Institute](#) (CUI) to continue the recovery and revitalization of main streets across southern Ontario through [My Main Street](#) (MMS).

With this investment, the organization will launch two new programs through MMS to provide funding and support for businesses and community organizations across southern Ontario.

the plenary stage at the 2024 ROMA Conference.

Municipal councils are encouraged to support AMO's ongoing advocacy efforts by using these resources.

2024/25 Rural Economic Development (RED) Program applications. Municipalities, Indigenous communities and not-for-profit groups have until February 21, 2024 to apply for cost-share funding for projects that will drive economic growth.

The new programs will support up to 325 businesses on main streets across 100 communities, along with 75 community projects promoting high-impact placemaking activities.

[Resources](#)

[View the full release](#)

[View the full release](#)

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Let's sit down together, explore possibilities, and create a roadmap to success!

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