

Newsletter

April 2025

EOWC Advocacy Update

EOWC Mobilizes Support Amid U.S. Tariff Threats

U.S. tariffs on key industries could put billions of dollars in Eastern Ontario exports at risk, impacting jobs and economic stability. The EOWC stands with our Federal and Provincial governments to reinforce economic ties with the U.S. and protect regional industries.

With \$42.5 billion in private sector exports at stake, the region's top industries—including agriculture, manufacturing, and chemical production—face significant uncertainty. Municipalities are calling for stronger partnerships with U.S. counterparts, advocating for policies that eliminate trade barriers, invest in infrastructure, and prioritize Canadian businesses.

The EOWC is committed to creating strong cross-border partnerships and advocating for Eastern Ontario throughout the unwanted trade ware and related threats of tariffs.

We have reached out to the [New York Association of Counties](#), the [Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#), and the [Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers](#), as well as all of our region's Chambers of Commerce.

\$64.6
BILLION/YEAR

Total exports from Eastern Ontario to other jurisdictions outside the region (public and private) ⁽²⁰²¹⁾

\$132.5
BILLION/YEAR

Annual demand within Eastern Ontario for all goods and services (private) ⁽²⁰²¹⁾

\$42.5
BILLION/YEAR

Total private sector exports from Eastern Ontario to other jurisdictions outside the region (commercial and industrial) ⁽²⁰²¹⁾

Top commercial or industrial export by Eastern Ontario Census Division (2021), by dollar volume (at risk in the face of 25% tariffs)

Jurisdiction - Census Division	Largest Commercial or Industrial Export Sector (2021)	\$ Exports - Largest Commercial or Industrial Sector (2021)
Haliburton	Residential building construction	\$63,465,690
Kawartha Lakes	Dairy product manufacturing	\$154,833,089
Northumberland	Basic chemical manufacturing	\$1,740,927,393
Peterborough	Grain and oilseed milling	\$496,953,307
Hastings	Motor vehicle parts manufacturing	\$1,039,614,332
Prince Edward County	Farms	\$271,450,837
Lennox and Addington	Rubber product manufacturing	\$1,027,721,309
Frontenac	Resin, synthetic rubber, artificial and synthetic fibres and filaments manufacturing	\$4,079,336,835
Lanark	Fabric mills	\$194,037,944
Leeds and Grenville	Other electrical equipment and component manufacturing	\$1,076,196,526
Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry	Dairy product manufacturing	\$862,461,728
United Counties of Prescott Russell	Iron and steel mills and ferro-alloy manufacturing	\$1,069,311,571
Renfrew	Scientific research and development services	\$345,258,847

Visit our Web Page on Economic Resilience, Trade and Tariffs

Congratulations to the Ontario Government

The EOWC would like to congratulate Premier Doug Ford and the Progressive Conservative Party on their re-election on February 27, 2025. We look forward to continued collaboration as key partners with the provincial government to address the needs of our 103 communities and build our region.

The EOWC remains 'Ready to Work and Ready to Grow'. We remained focused on economic resilience and growth, infrastructure development and maintenance, housing people across the continuum, and supporting increased health care access.

The EOWC sent letters to the Premier, Ministers, and MPPs outlining key areas of focus and 13 top recommendations for the term ahead including the following:

- ➔ Ensure municipalities are part of Ontario's approach to U.S. tariff threats, and eliminate barriers to enable municipalities to buy local and give preference to Canadian companies
- ➔ Increase investments in municipal infrastructure to fill the deficit, prevent critical infrastructure failures, and support new infrastructure that will create jobs and grow the region's economy

→ Support municipalities to build housing for everyone through capital investments and modernize provincial programs to prevent homelessness

→ Continue provincial funding for community paramedicine programs that are proven to succeed

READY TO WORK READY TO GROW

Read the EOWC's 'Ready to Work, Ready to Grow' priorities [here](#)

The EOWC Signs Partnership Agreement with the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



Left-to-right: GLSTCI Chief Development Officer, Phillip Murphy-Rhéaume; United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Warden, Martin Lang; County of Hastings Warden, Bob Mullin;

EOWC Vice-Chair, Steve Ferguson; County of Northumberland Warden, Brian Ostrander; Mayor of City of Kawartha Lakes, Doug Elmslie; County of Lennox and Addington Warden, Nathan Townend; County of Lanark Warden, Toby Randell; United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Warden, Corinna Smith-Gatcke; County of Frontenac Warden, Gerry Lichty; United Counties of Prescott and Russell Warden, Yves Laviolette; Mayor of St. Catharines, Mat Siscoe; and EOWC Chair, Bonnie Clark

With the continuation of the (unwanted) trade war between the U.S. and Canada, the EOWC recognized the urgent need for adaptability and resiliency across our region's communities to support our economy.

Aligning with our focus to strengthen regional and cross-border ties, the EOWC and the [Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative](#) signed a Memorandum of Understanding during our March board meeting. This agreement will promote knowledge sharing across the Canadian and Ontario-Québec borders, further strengthening the EOWC's national and international connections. Our members look forward to attending their conference later this May, and to expand work around our mutual advocacy and priorities.

Read the [EOWC's ongoing Tariff Report](#) and [the EOWC's Strategic Plan](#).



A Snap Federal Election: Prepping for the Polls

As Canadians prepare to head to the polls and choose the next government, protecting and strengthening our local communities is more important than ever. A long-term approach that addresses the unique needs of these communities and sets Canada on a path to a stronger future is essential.

The EOWC stands together with our partners at the [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#) to call for a [National Prosperity Partnership](#) between Canada's next government and municipal governments across the country. This election is an opportunity to have a national conversation about how Canada funds and enables economic growth.

This partnership will aim to:

- Support local economic growth and resilience
- Invest infrastructure renewal
- Achieve housing affordability
- End homelessness with local solutions
- Keep communities Safe Build Climate resilient communities
- Support Thriving rural, remote and northern communities

[Visit FCM's Stronger Together Election Campaign](#)

Concerns re: Alto High Speed Rail Cutting Through Eastern Ontario

While the EOWC supports improved transportation, the proposed route of the Alto High-Speed Rail Network (between Toronto and Quebec City) cuts through the EOWC region without delivering meaningful benefits to our businesses, residents, or the tourism industry.

The EOWC sent a letter to Alto's CEO, urging both Imbleau and the Government of Canada to reconsider the number of stops the high-speed train would have in Eastern Ontario and ensure it does not negatively impact the trail systems that municipalities own and operate.

Read the [EOWC's letter to Martin Imbleau, President and CEO of Alto, here.](#)



EOWC Statement: High-Speed Rail Cutting Through Eastern Ontario

"On behalf of Eastern Ontario's 103 municipalities, the EOWC remains concerned with the Prime Minister's announcement today regarding the high-speed rail network development plan between Toronto and Québec City.

While we support transit expansion in principle, this project will cut through our region's communities without bringing benefits to local business, trail systems, or residents.

The EOWC will continue to advocate for additional train stop(s) in Eastern Ontario as part of the Alto high-speed rail system to boost local economies, improve access to transit for rural communities, and strengthen regional connections, while ensuring that we retain the integrity of our recreational trail network as an economic driver."

- EOWC Chair, Bonnie Clark (Warden of Peterborough County)

EOWC Advocates for Regional Priorities at ROMA 2025 Conference



Left-to-right: MPP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands, Steve Clark; United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Warden, Corinna Smith-Gatcke; Northumberland County Warden, Brian Ostrander; Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, David Piccini; Mayor of City of Kawartha Lakes, Doug Elmslie; Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones; EOWC Chair, Bonnie Clark; Minister of Colleges and Universities, Research Excellence and Security / MPP for Stormont Dundas and Glengarry, Nolan Quinn; EOWC Vice-Chair, Steve Ferguson; MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott; County of Haliburton Warden, Dave Burton; County of Lanark Warden, Toby Randell.

The EOWC made significant progress in advocating for regional priorities at the 2025 Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) Conference, held in Toronto from January 19 to 21.

With over 2,000 municipal leaders in attendance, The EOWC's Chair, Bonnie Clark, and Vice-Chair, Steve Ferguson, led discussions with key provincial officials, emphasizing the need for strong partnerships to address critical infrastructure, housing, health care, and economic challenges.

"The ROMA Conference was a success in strengthening our relationships to better serve Eastern Ontario's 103 communities," said Chair Clark. Vice-Chair Ferguson echoed this sentiment, highlighting the EOWC's strategic approach. "We came prepared with data and clear recommendations. Our small rural municipalities play a crucial role in shaping Ontario's future, and it is vital that our voices are heard."

The EOWC's advocacy at ROMA had such impact that the Minister of Rural Affairs, Lisa Thompson, thanked the EOWC for their committed support of rural priorities and innovation around trade and tariffs. We were also pleased to support the launch of the new [Ontario's Economic Development Strategy](#).

Read the [EOWC's ROMA 2025 briefing package](#).



Lisa Thompson @LisaThompsonPC · Jan 22



Thank you @EOWC_ON and Bonnie Clark for your kind words & endorsement on our government's new important rural strategy!

#ROMA2025 marks a milestone for Ontario's rural communities with the launch of **Enabling Opportunity: Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy**. This strategy will support Eastern Ontario's small-urban and rural communities by creating new pathways for growth, supporting local businesses, and enhancing infrastructure, all while preserving our region's unique character. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus looks forward to continuing our work together with Minister Thompson to empower small rural Ontario to thrive and ensure that our communities are central to the Ontario Government's economic future.

— Bonnie Clark, Chair, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

The EOWC Attends Ontario Road Builders' Convention



Left to right: EOWC Director of Government Relations and Policy, Meredith Staveley-Watson, and Ontario's Big City Mayors, Executive Director, Michelle Baker

From February 2-4, the EOWC's Director of Government Relations and Policy, Meredith Staveley-Watson, attended the [Ontario Road Builders' Association](#) Convention, themed "Ready to Build Ontario's Future Together" on behalf of the EOWC.

As part of the EOWC's top priority—municipal infrastructure—roads and

bridges are essential municipal assets that require ongoing maintenance, repair, and expansion. Supporting the Canadian economy includes making continuous investments in municipal infrastructure while ensuring sustainability and community well-being remain at the forefront.

The importance of public-private sector partnerships was highlighted as critical in addressing the economic and social challenges faced by communities, large and small, across Ontario.

EOWC In The Media

EOWC Warden, Corinna Smith-Gatcke Speaks to U.S. Tariff Pressures on Border Towns

WATCH NOW



Border Towns in a Trade War | The Agenda

Left-to-right: Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, Matthew Shoemaker; Mayor of City of Windsor, Drew Dilkens; Mayor of City of Niagara Falls Jim Diodati; and United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Warden, Corinna Smith-Gatcke.

On March 13, Corinna Smith-Gatcke, Warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville and member of the EOWC, addressed the challenges that her community is facing due to the U.S. government's tariffs on TVO Today.

Watch the [full interview here](#).

EOWC Chair, Bonnie Clark, and Warden, Corinna Smith-Gatcke

On January 20, in an interview with CTV, Chair Bonnie Clark and Warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, Corinna Smith-Gatcke, emphasized the urgency of the tariff situation, and how alliances are crucial.

Chair Clark highlighted the situation, stating, "It's up to us to reach out to our neighbours to the south and get their support. These tariffs are a two-way street—they will hurt both Ontario and our trade partners in the U.S.". Smith-Gatcke warned of the devastating impact tariffs could have on local businesses and jobs.

"We are starting those critical conversations to ensure these tariffs don't take effect and damage our economies," Chair Clark said. The EOWC remains committed to protecting jobs, businesses, and cross-border partnerships.

Read the [full interview](#).



The EOWC's Chair and Director of Government Relations and Policy Honoured in AMO's International Women's Day News Release

On March 8, the [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#) (AMO) celebrated a historic milestone for International Women's Day - women now chair all major municipal associations in Ontario. This achievement highlights their dedication and influence in local government.

Among those recognized were Chair Bonnie Clark and the EOWC's Director of Government Relations and Policy, Meredith Staveley-Watson.

Read the [full list](#).

EOWC's Letter to Alto CEO, Martin Imbeau, Recognized in the Cornwall Standard-Freeholder

On March 24, The Cornwall Standard Freeholder released an article about the EOWC's letter to Alto CEO, Martin Imbeau. In the letter, the EOWC urged Alto and the Government of Canada to reconsider the number of stops the high-speed train will make, emphasizing that additional stops in Eastern Ontario communities would ensure the construction benefits the region economically.

Read [the full article here](#) and read [EOWC's Alto Letter here](#).

CBC Article Highlights How Inaccurate Rental Data is Creating Setbacks for Affordable Housing Efforts

A CBC article published on March 29 highlights the challenges Prince Edward County faces in creating affordable housing due to inaccurate rental data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Ken How, a retired teacher leading a project to turn the Pinecrest Public School into affordable housing, has had trouble securing funding because CMHC's rent figures are much lower than actual rents in the area.

How's non-profit, Pinecrest Housing, plans to offer 56 affordable units, but CMHC's inaccurate data makes it hard to get the necessary loan. The county has started collecting its own rental data, which shows rents are higher than CMHC reports. However, CMHC has refused to accept the county's data, making it harder to address the local housing crisis.

Local officials, including County Councillor Phil St-Jean, are calling on CMHC to adjust its funding formulas to include more accurate, locally-sourced rental data to better reflect the housing needs in rural areas like Prince Edward County.

Read the [full article here](#).

Partner Updates



New EORN Board Member Elected

At the EOWC's board meeting on March 27, 2025, an election was held to appoint a new board member to the Eastern Ontario Regional Network.

The EOWC is pleased to congratulate Toby Randell, Warden of the County of Lanark, on his election to the board. We look forward to his valuable contributions and leadership in advancing the interests of Eastern Ontario.

Update on new sites in Service: 75% of the Network Completed

A total of 121 new builds, 63 colocations, and 311 uplifts have been completed, marking the successful completion of all sites.

Help EORN Improve Internet in Eastern Ontario – Take the Speed Test!

The Eastern Ontario Regional network (EORN), in partnership with the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) wants to [measure your internet speeds](#).

Our governments want everyone to have good internet connectivity. They have established internet speed targets of 50 Mbps down and 10 Mbps up. The federal and provincial governments have funding programs available to support broadband projects.

Knowing what speeds citizens currently have available can act as baseline data for the region and show the improvements that are to come from broadband expansion projects underway now or are needed in the future. This is why EORN has partnered with CIRA, to collect the most detailed information relating to eastern Ontario's internet speeds.

Take the test here: <https://performance.cira.ca/eorn>

Regional Updates and News

Government of Canada Gouvernement du Canada

Canada 

Prime Minister Mark Carney Calls for a Snap Federal Election

On March 23, Prime Minister Mark Carney asked Governor Mary Simon to dissolve parliament, triggering a federal election for April 28, 2025.

With Election Day coming up, the EOWC will take a close look at each party's platform, looking for ways to connect their priorities with ours. The EOWC hopes to build a strong partnership with the newly elected government moving forward.

Read what the [EOWC's Strategic Priorities are here](#).

Ontario 

Doug Ford Announces New Cabinet

On March 19, Doug Ford unveiled his cabinet of an experienced team deemed to protect Ontario's economy and workers.

Among his cabinet members are Eastern Ontario's David Piccini, MPP

for Northumberland, named Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development, and Nolan Quinn, MPP for Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry, named Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence, and Security.

See the other members of [Ford's new cabinet here](#).

Ontario Government Increases Support for Farmers

The Ontario government is increasing annual funding for its Risk Management Program from \$150 million to \$250 million to enhance its support to the farmers of Ontario. This investment will help Eastern Ontario's 13,861 agri-food operations, including over 5,000 primary agriculture businesses, navigate market uncertainties and remain competitive.

The funding boost supports local farmers producing cattle, hogs, grains, and horticultural products while protecting 383,000 jobs across Ontario's agri-food supply chain. By enhancing financial security, this initiative ensures the region's agricultural resilience for generations to come.

Learn more about [this initiative here](#).

Ontario Investing in the Success of Rural Communities

The Ontario government has unveiled new measures to support rural communities at the 2025 Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference, including a new Rural Economic Development Strategy and significant infrastructure investments.

These initiatives include the launch of a new Rural Economic Development Strategy by Minister of Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson, featuring \$10 million in annual funding for the Rural Ontario Development Program to drive economic growth, workforce development, and business expansion in rural communities.

Read [Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy here](#).

Ontario's Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance Activated

Following the snow and ice storm that impacted the province from March 28-30, the Ontario government has activated the Municipal Disaster Recovery Assistance (MDRA) program.

The MDRA program helps municipalities cover unexpected costs after a natural disaster, such as a flood or tornado. The program covers:

- Capital Costs: Repairing public infrastructure or property
- Operating Costs: Expenses to protect public health, safety, or essential services

To be eligible, municipalities must:

- Experience a sudden, severe natural disaster
- Have costs beyond their normal budget due to the disaster
- Pass a resolution by the local council

- Submit an initial claim

Municipalities can get the necessary forms and instructions by contacting their local Municipal Services Office.

Find more information about [MDRA](#).

Ontario Acts to Safeguard Workers and Businesses Amid Economic Challenges

Ontario is taking decisive action to protect workers and businesses, providing \$11 billion in relief to strengthen the province's economy. To help businesses weather economic challenges and U.S. tariffs, the government is deferring select provincially administered taxes for six months from April 1, 2025, to October 1, 2025, giving businesses and job creators approximately \$9 billion in cash flow support to approximately 80,000 businesses.

Additionally, a \$2 billion rebate through the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board will further assist safe employers in keeping workers employed. Ontario is also focusing on removing internal trade barriers, expediting development approvals, and diversifying trade partners to build a more resilient economy.

Read more about [Ontario's efforts to protect workers amid economic uncertainty](#).

Upcoming Events



Community Futures Week

FUNDING THE FUTURE. SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURIAL DREAMS.

Community Features Week

Community Futures Week, happening from April 7-13, 2025, is a special event organized by Community Futures Western Ontario (CFWO) and Community Futures Eastern Ontario (CFEO), with support from their member organizations. This week is all about supporting entrepreneurship, boosting small businesses, and driving economic growth across Southern Ontario.

The week will feature a combination of in-person and virtual activities, including free webinars on important topics such as:

- Preventing Small Business Fraud
- Succession Planning: Buying or Selling a Business
- Future-Proofing Your Marketing Strategy for Small Businesses and Non-profits in 2025

Participants will also hear inspiring stories from local business owners about the valuable support they've received from Community Futures offices and partners throughout the region

[Sign up for Community Features Week](#)



P3s for Municipalities: 6-Part Webinar Series

The EOWC is excited to build its partnership with the [Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships](#) (CCPPP). CCPPP is offering the free P3s for municipalities webinar series available for municipal and Indigenous employees and elected officials across Canada.

Designed for those new to or seeking a refresher on P3 infrastructure delivery, the series covers fundamentals, opportunities, challenges, and tools for successful P3 procurement.

CCPPP is also introducing the Council's new municipal P3 recommendations and insights from the updated [Public-Private Partnerships: A Guide for Municipalities](#).

Upcoming webinars: April 8, May 6, June 3, and September 16. Webinars will continue to be available on the CCPPP site.

[Sign up for the webinars](#)



EOWC Queen's Park Day

The EOWC is looking forward to meeting with the Ontario Government at Queen's Park on May 13, 2025 to discuss mutual goals, partnerships and growing the region of Eastern Ontario.

[View the EOWC's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan](#)



OMAA 2025 Spring Workshop

The 2025 Spring Workshop will be held from May 14-16, 2025, at the JW Marriott The Rosseau Muskoka Resort & Spa.

This year's theme, Midterm Check-In: Pause, Reflect, Propel, offers a program filled with educational sessions, quick hits, social events, and sponsored sessions—all designed to equip CAOs and Aspiring CAOs with the tools to enhance their effectiveness.

[Find more information about the OMAA Workshop](#)



**GREAT LAKES AND
ST. LAWRENCE**
CITIES INITIATIVE

GLSLCI 2025 Annual Conference

From May 14-16, 2025, the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative will host its Annual Conference, The Future of Fresh Water: Leading the Way in an Era of Scarcity, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Access to clean water is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century.

As demand rises, public budgets shrink, and threats like pollution and flooding persist, our water supply and quality—and the communities that depend on them—are increasingly at risk. This conference will highlight the critical role local governments, industries, and innovators in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region play in addressing both regional and global water issues.

[Find more information and register for GLSLCI's conference](#)



EOWC Attending the Annual FCM Conference

On May 29 and June 1, 2025, the EOWC and our municipal members will be attending the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' 2025 Conference and Trade Show in the City of Ottawa.

[Find more information and register for FCM's conference](#)



EOWC Attending the Annual CAMA Conference

The 51st Annual CAMA Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Mont Tremblant, Québec, from May 26, 2025, to May 28, 2025, at the Fairmont Mont Tremblant.

[Find more information about CAMA's conference](#)



AMO Municipal Trade and Tariff Forum

On June 6, 2025, AMO will host a forum to bring together members, stakeholders, and partners to assess the impacts of tariff and trade disruptions on Ontario Municipalities and the business sector. The forum will focus on identifying strategies to address and mitigate these challenges, fostering new alliances and relationships to support effective economic advocacy.

Key topics will include:

- What the trade war means for municipalities
- Building Ontario in uncertain times
- Changing approach to procurement
- seizing opportunities to strengthen Ontario

[Find more information and register for the forum](#)

AMO Rural Healthy Democracy Forum

On June 11, 2025, AMO will host its Rural Healthy Democracy Forum. AMO's Healthy Democracy Project is an initiative aimed at improving local democracy through respectful and diverse civic engagement. It's all about collaboration and working together to strengthen democracy in Ontario.

This full-day event will bring together municipal leaders, experts, and academics to discuss the state of democracy in rural Ontario.

Find more information and register for the forum



ROMA's Teeny Tiny Summit

On June 17th, 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) will host the Teeny Tiny Summit.

This summit focuses on the challenges and opportunities faced by Ontario's smallest rural communities. With practical tools, examples, and insights from community leaders, the Summit offers valuable economic development strategies tailored for small towns.

Find more information about ROMA's summit

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and X**



About the EOWC

The EOWC is a regional non-profit organization representing 13 upper and single-tier municipalities across Eastern Ontario. The EOWC supports and

advocates on behalf of 103 municipalities and nearly 800,000 residents. The EOWC covers an area of approximately 50,000 square kilometers from Northumberland County to the Québec border.

The EOWC has gained support and momentum by speaking with a united voice to champion regional municipal priorities and work with government, business leaders, the media, and the public.

Visit the EOWC's website at eowc.org.

Connect with the EOWC

2025 Chair, Warden of Peterborough County, Bonnie Clark

2025 Vice-Chair, Mayor of Prince Edward County, Steve Ferguson

Director of Government Relations and Policy, Meredith Staveley-Watson

info@eowc.org



Meredith Staveley-Watson, Director of Government Relations and Policy | 235 Pinnacle Street | Belleville, ON K8N 3A9 CA

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