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## **News release: EOWC Reframes Priorities in Response to COVID-19**

Kawartha Lakes, June 3, 2020 – Members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) gathered during their first virtual meeting last Friday, May 29 to discuss the reframing of the EOWC's priorities in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As the impacts of COVID-19 continue to evolve, the EOWC recognized the need to adjust its priorities in order to represent the current and anticipated environments facing municipalities and local businesses," stated EOWC Chair Andy Letham. "During these unprecedented and challenging times, the EOWC remains committed to ensuring that rural eastern Ontario's needs are met and will continue to work collaboratively with Provincial and Federal Governments on recovery efforts."

### *Reframed 2020 Priorities*

#### **Long-Term Care**

Long-term care will continue to be a key area of focus for the EOWC. The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the sector and the need to address certain long-standing systemic issues. 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 will be completing a comprehensive "current state" analysis of the municipally operated long-term care sector.

#### **Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) – Broadband Advocacy**

The EOWC will continue to support the EORN Cellular Network Improvement Project and Broadband Gap Strategy. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the urgent need for infrastructure upgrades in order to expand and improve rural broadband connectivity in rural eastern Ontario. In 2019, only 63% of the region's households and businesses were found to have access to 50/10 Mbps standards. The EOWC strongly supports continued funding and collaboration between all levels of government and the private sector to reach required standards and to support pandemic recovery in rural and remote areas.



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## **Economic Recovery**

The EOWC has a critical role to play in the region's economic recovery and will continue to work closely with its partners in the Eastern Ontario Leadership Council (EOLC). The impacts of COVID-19 have been significant, and the EOWC and EOLC are committed to helping stimulate the local economy and to supporting municipalities and small businesses. For more information about the EOLC's ongoing work, visit [www.eolc.info](http://www.eolc.info).

## **Municipal Recovery**

The EOWC has also adopted municipal recovery as an additional key priority for 2020. Municipalities require financial assistance and funding certainty in order to rebuild and to continue serving their communities. The EOWC will hold discussions with its partners in the federal and provincial governments to highlight areas where its member municipalities require assistance.

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### **For more information, please contact:**

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