
Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus March 2026 Newsletter

From Western Ontario Wardens Caucus <info@wowc.ca>

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To Jenna Fentie <jfentie@ELGIN.ca>

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MARCH 2026



YOUR MONTHLY NEWS & UPDATES

WOWC Statement on the 2026 Ontario Budget

FROM THE CHAIR

A Statement on the 2026 Ontario Budget

“ The 2026 Ontario Budget reflects a continued commitment to strengthening the economic foundation of our communities while recognizing the growing pressures facing municipalities. Investments in small business tax relief, health care, and strategic economic development are important steps in supporting growth across Western Ontario.

The historic reduction of the small business tax rate by 30% will directly support entrepreneurs and local employers across our region, helping drive investment and job creation. At the same time, the new \$4 billion Protect Ontario Investment Fund will help drive investment, support local employers, and position Western Ontario for continued growth. The increases to the Ontario Transit Investment Fund of \$15 million, along with additional investments in community infrastructure of \$300 million for the Community Sport and Recreation Infrastructure Fund, are meaningful steps toward strengthening the livability and connectivity of our communities.

For our region, these measures must be paired with targeted investments in infrastructure, including a dedicated rural component of the Building Faster Fund, expanded supports through the Homelessness Prevention Program, and meaningful progress on regional rural transit.

As Western Ontario continues to power the province's economic engine, aligning provincial investments with municipal capacity on the ground will be critical to ensuring sustainable growth and strong, resilient communities. ”

-WOWC Chair, Marcus Ryan



SAVE THE DATE
Western Ontario Municipal Conference
Friday, October 16, 2026

SAVE THE DATE

WESTERN ONTARIO
WOWC
WARDENS CAUCUS

**WESTERN ONTARIO
MUNICIPAL
CONFERENCE**

October 16, 2026, Guelph, ON



The Hon. Bob Rae as the Keynote Speaker

Registration opening soon | WOWC.ca

Sponsored by  **ENBRIDGE**

The Western Ontario Municipal Conference returns on Friday, October 16th, 2026 at the Delta Conference Centre in Guelph, ON.

We are pleased to announce our keynote speaker, sponsored by Enbridge, the Hon. Bob Rae

Watch for updates [here](#).

Find us on Instagram @wowcinc



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Community Surveys Going out Soon



Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus is pleased to partner with the University of Guelph and Dr. Leith Deacon on the The HEAR Initiative (Health, Economy, Adaptation in Rural Communities).

HEAR is a large-scale, longitudinal, community-engaged research initiative designed to generate the evidence rural communities need to plan, adapt, and thrive. By collecting and integrating data on rural health, economic well-being, and environmental adaptation, HEAR provides an unprecedented, place-based understanding of how rural communities experience and respond to change.

At the core of HEAR is one of the largest rural household survey efforts ever undertaken in Ontario. Every two years, the initiative will reach 300,000 rural residents across Ontario—approximately 20% of the province's rural population. Surveys are co-designed with rural stakeholders and administered in accessible formats to ensure participation from communities often excluded by digital or geographic barriers. Survey data are then securely linked with administrative, geospatial, and environmental datasets to create a powerful, integrated evidence base.

Learn more about the HEAR Initiative at [this ROMA Information Session](#) on April 2nd 12 - 1 pm.

2026 Rural Research Symposium



The Rural Symposium is an annual opportunity for University of Guelph graduate students to showcase their rural research.

The event facilitates knowledge mobilization and network building between graduate students at the University of Guelph, researchers, practitioners, and the Government of Ontario.

The event is co-hosted by the Government of Ontario, the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, and the School for Environmental Design and Rural Development.



**2026 Rural
Research Symposium**
1 April 2026
1 Stone Road West in Guelph
and Online

The event will take place in the conference room at 1 Stone Road West in Guelph and online. The event is

open to everyone and is free to attend. A lunch will be provided to those attending in-person.

If you are interested in attending, please register by March 30 using this [link](#).

OSUM Conference: April 29 - May 1, 2026

Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts/ Bobby Orr Hall of Fame

**2 Bay Street, Parry Sound, Ontario, P2A 1S3
April 29 to May 1, 2026**

Join your Parry Sound hosts to experience the beautiful surrounds of their town and the OSUM Executive as they offer curated programming and networking events to support Ontario's small urban municipal leaders and colleagues in the emerging political, economic and social environment of today.



More details [here](#).

Welcome Sarah Fencott: Municipal Climate Internship Program



Sarah Fencott (she/her) is from Waterloo, Ontario, located on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. This area is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the treaty territory belonging to the Six Nations of the Grand River, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River and is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum.

Sarah holds a degree in Environment and Business with a minor in Environment, Resources and Sustainability, as well as a diploma in Environmental Assessment. Her professional background includes field-based conservation and species at risk management, including work with Ontario Parks and collaboration on applied recovery initiatives such as the reintroduction of the Mottled Duskywing butterfly to Ontario. Through this work, she has supported habitat restoration, monitoring, and on-the-ground implementation of conservation actions informed by regulatory and assessment processes.

Through the Municipal Climate Internship Program, Sarah is working with Bruce County to better understand how municipalities translate climate and sustainability goals into practical action. She is particularly interested in using the

business case for sustainability to support meaningful engagement with rights holders, community members, and local decision-makers, advancing plans that are grounded in community priorities and create lasting, place-based impact.

Learn more about the [Municipal Climate Internship Program](#)



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

[Ontario Supporting \\$250 Million Investment to Expand Life-Saving Medical Isotope Production at Bruce Power](#)

[Ontario Expands Long-Term Care Capacity in Amherstburg, Supporting More Than 370 Good-Paying Jobs](#)

[Ontario Celebrates Grand Opening of NextStar Energy's Battery Facility in Windsor](#)

[Ontario and Canada Investing More Than \\$228 Million to Protect Workers and Key Industries](#)

[Ontario Investing \\$7.3 Million in Windsor to Protect Tariff-Impacted Workers](#)

[Ontario Welcomes \\$15.8 Million Manufacturing Investment in Southwestern Ontario](#)

[Ontario Investing Nearly \\$29 Million to Expand and Improve Infrastructure in Perth and Wellington Counties](#)

advanced technologies and enhance competitiveness

Canada has one of the most productive and innovative automotive sectors in the world, supported by a highly skilled workforce, a strong industrial base, and decades of leadership in advanced manufacturing. To sustain that leadership, the Government of Canada is focused on supporting the suppliers and manufacturers who form the backbone of this sector—helping them navigate tariff pressures, strengthen their operations, and enhance competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global market.

This includes an over \$886,000 investment in Canadian manufacturer [MVA Stratford](#), to modernize its core production lines through the adoption of new specialized equipment that will strengthen competitiveness and position the company to explore opportunities beyond the U.S. market.

London-based manufacturer, [Armo Tool](#), is receiving an investment of \$750,000 to enhance its tooling and manufacturing capabilities, which will bring diversification opportunities in new markets.

[Full Press Release](#)

Employment Opportunity: General Manager

Community Futures Middlesex



Community Futures Middlesex (CF Middlesex) is passionate about helping entrepreneurs grow and succeed, thereby strengthening our community. Offering loans, planning and advisory services, workshops, and much more, we exist to support entrepreneurs in Middlesex County. We understand our communities, our rural culture and values. These insights help us see our clients differently and make loan decisions right here at home. Funded and backed by FedDev Ontario, you can trust CF Middlesex for support through the full life cycle of your business.

The Board of Directors is looking to recruit a passionate, innovative and creative individual to provide leadership to our team of local business support and lending professionals. The General Manager is responsible for the supervision of staff, monitors all programs administered by the Corporation so that client needs and program goals are met; oversees accounting procedures and governmental reporting; implements investment policies for loans, monitors all matters about the management of internal investment funds; promotes and builds awareness for the Corporation within the communities served and oversees the general administration of the Corporation.

More information [**here**](#)

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