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February 2025



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**WOWC Releases Regional Priorities for Provincial Election Candidates**



## **2025 PROVINCIAL ELECTION CANDIDATES BRIEFING PACKAGE**

In advance of the 44th Ontario general election scheduled for February 27, 2025, the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) has released a comprehensive briefing package for election candidates across all major provincial parties.

The briefing package details the regional priorities outlined in the WOWC's 2025-2027 Strategic Plan—housing, infrastructure, workforce development, and mental health, addictions, and homelessness—along with the WOWC's requests and recommendations for each priority as well as important statistical data from across rural Western Ontario's municipalities.

"The WOWC has for many years been the united voice of small and rural municipalities across Western Ontario," stated WOWC Vice-Chair Kevin Marriott. "Our organization has made significant progress in addressing housing, infrastructure, workforce development, and the critical issues of mental health, addictions and homelessness."

Vice-Chair Marriott further concluded: "The priorities identified by the WOWC are without a doubt the core issues and recommendations that should be at the forefront of any discussions held with election candidates across rural Western Ontario in the coming weeks – and furthermore should form the basis of future provincial policy priorities for the elected candidates."

View [Press Release](#) and [Briefing Package](#)

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### **Statement from the Vice Chair of WOWC on Tariffs**



“As Vice-Chair of the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (WOWC), I want to express our ongoing support for the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada as they work to navigate the challenges posed by tariffs and other trade restrictions. The WOWC recognizes that these barriers create significant challenges for industries that are vital to our region’s economic stability, job creation, and long-term prosperity.

Our communities in Western Ontario thrive when we work together, and supporting our local producers, manufacturers, and farmers is critical to ensuring continued growth and sustainability. The WOWC will remain a vocal advocate for solutions that protect our industries and communities, as we are committed to working with all levels of government to safeguard our region’s economic future.

Western Ontario’s strength comes from our ability to adapt and respond as a region, and the WOWC remains dedicated to partnering with all stakeholders to ensure our communities remain strong and resilient.”

Warden Kevin Marriott, Lambton County Vice Chair, Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus

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## **Bruce County recognized as one of Southwestern Ontario’s Top Employers**



The Bruce County has recently been recognized as one of Southwestern Ontario’s Top Employers in the 2025 regional ‘Canada’s Top 100 Employers’ competition. The announcement made on February 5, 2025 highlights some of the reasons why Bruce County was selected as one of Southwestern Ontario’s Top Employers (2025):

- Bruce County encourages professional growth by reimbursing employees for the cost of tuition fees and textbooks for courses related to their position, as well as the costs associated with attending conferences and learning events - each department also coordinates development days on professional growth, skills enhancement and team building
- Bruce County helps employees save for the future with contributions to a defined benefit pension plan and provides retirement planning seminars to share information on transitioning from the workforce

- Bruce County surveys employees bi-annually to assess psychological health and safety in the workplace and offers coverage for mental health care as part of its benefits plan, to \$1,000 per year

The 'Canada's Top 100 Employers' new Southwestern Ontario regional competition covers the large region between Lake Huron/Georgian Bay and Lake Erie, excluding the Greater Toronto Area and Niagara - the same area that roughly comprises the '519' area code.

View the full [press release](#)

## Motion to Draft Bylaw Reducing Chatham-Kent Council Size Approved



Chatham-Kent Council has approved a motion by Ward 1 Councillor Melissa Harrigan directing staff to bring forward a bylaw that would reduce Chatham-Kent's Council size to 14 Councillors and one Mayor. This change is based on recommendations by consultant StrategyCorp. If

approved, these changes are expected to take effect for the 2026 election.

The motion included one amendment to the proposed boundaries in StrategyCorp's Report titled "Option 1". The amendment, brought by Councillor Jamie McGrail, will shift the community of Mitchell's Bay from the new proposed ward 5 to the newly proposed ward 4.

The new ward boundaries, if the bylaw is approved, will consist of eight new wards, up from the previous six. Three wards in Chatham with two councillors each, three wards in the county with two councillors each, and two wards in the county with one councillor each.

If the bylaw is approved, this will be the first time Chatham-Kent has updated its ward boundaries since amalgamation in 1998. The proposed Council composition and ward boundaries reflect the significant change in the community since then and would ensure the electoral system continues to provide a system of effective representation at least through to the 2030 Municipal election.

The proposed changes are a result of significant public consultation, including two separate surveys and four public consultation sessions. More information, as well as the proposed new ward boundaries, can be found here: [www.letstalkchatham-kent.ca/council-composition-and-ward-boundary-review](http://www.letstalkchatham-kent.ca/council-composition-and-ward-boundary-review)

## Middlesex County hosts esteemed delegation from Cambodia



This week, Middlesex County welcomed a delegation of local Cambodian government officials as part of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Partnerships for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) project.

This initiative is dedicated to reducing barriers to women's participation in public life and enhancing their access to municipal services. By focusing on strengthening women's leadership in local government, PMI-WILL aims to foster inclusive, gender-responsive

governance across participating countries.

Throughout the three day exchange, the delegation will engage in meaningful discussions, workshops, and exchanges with County officials designed to foster mutual understanding and collaboration. Workshops will be held on Gender-Responsive Governance, Leadership & Communication Training, and Social Media as a Communication Tool.



Tours of key County facilities will provide an opportunity for discussions about service delivery, infrastructure management, and community programs - fostering knowledge and exchange between Canadian and Cambodian counterparts.

This project is fully funded by the Canadian federal government through Global Affairs Canada and advances gender equality and social inclusion by empowering women in local governance in five partner countries: Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Zambia and Benin.

View the full [press release](#)

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## Western Ontario Takes Home Several EDCO Awards



On Thursday, February 6th The Economic Development Council of Ontario held their President's Dinner and Awards Ceremony.

Congratulations to the winners from Western Ontario;

- “Norfolk County Economic Development Strategy – Future Ready Norfolk” – Norfolk County
- “Move to Minto” – Town of Minto
- “Experimental Acres: A regenerative Agriculture Programme” – County of Wellington

View the [full list of award recipients](#)



### AMO's Guidance Resources for Electricity Procurements

Municipalities have an increasingly important role hosting electricity projects as part of efforts to meet a projected 75% increase in electricity demand, and to support a major provincial priority.

To empower municipalities in this role, AMO has developed the resources below to help municipal decision makers protect residents, sensitive lands, and municipal finances while securing local benefits and supporting growth.

These resources were created with input from municipal staff, senior leaders, and elected officials that have previous considered proposed energy projects. Input was also provided by several provincial ministries, and energy partners including the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and energy project

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### Windsor-Essex, Chatham-Kent make list of Canada's happiest places to live: StatsCan

A new study released by Statistics Canada has found Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent are statistically happier places to live.

The list of cities in Windsor and surrounding areas that were recognized are:

- LaSalle, 56.72 per cent overall satisfaction
- Chatham-Kent, 53.218 per cent overall satisfaction
- Lakeshore, 47.524 per cent overall satisfaction
- Windsor, 44.608 per cent overall satisfaction

Statistics Canada said the factors that contribute to overall satisfaction was life satisfaction, sense of meaning and purpose, future outlook,

developers, and environmental and clean energy associations.

[AMO's Municipal Electricity Procurement Toolkit](#) can support municipal review and decisions on proposed energy projects, to help support informed decisions. It consolidates answers to common questions and highlights resources that municipalities found useful when engaging with energy developers and assessing proposed projects.

loneliness, having someone to count on, and a sense of belonging to local community.

In all of Ontario, 46.3 per cent of residents reported "high life satisfaction".

The full map is available [here](#)

[View the CTV News article](#)

## CFWO New Executive Director - Todd Copeland



Community Futures Western Ontario (CFWO) is proud to welcome Todd Copeland as its new Executive Director. Starting Monday, February 24, 2025, Todd will assume leadership of the organization, guiding the team that supports the network of Community Futures offices serving rural communities across Southwestern Ontario.

Todd brings a wealth of experience in economic development and small business support. Since November 2019, he has served as the General Manager of Community Futures Middlesex (CF Middlesex), following over two years as a Board Member and active contributor on the Executive and Loans Committees.

Todd can be reached by email [todd@cfwo.ca](mailto:todd@cfwo.ca)

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