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March 2025

WESTERN ONTARIO **WOWC** WARDENS CAUCUS

Monthly Update

Your monthly news & updates

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Explore Tariff Resources from the WOWC

Tariff Resources

\$226.8 Billion
Single & Upper Tier WOWC Exports*

\$145 Billion
Manufacturing Exports from WOWC Region

\$12 Billion
Agriculture Exports from WOWC Region

*Money received in the region from the sale of goods and services to foreign and domestic sources

Letter to Prime Minister and Premier
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.
[WOWC Letter to Prime Minister and Premier](#)

Statement from Vice Chair on Tariffs
The WOWC supports the Ontario and Canadian governments in addressing trade restrictions, recognizing their impact on industries and communities. [Statement](#)

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) is committed to supporting regional growth, prosperity, and collaboration across Western Ontario. To further this mission, the WOWC has made a wide range of helpful resources available on its website.

These resources include WOWC's letter to the Prime Minister and Premier, County level supports, AMO's response, and Federal supports. Whether you're an elected official, municipal staff, or community partner interested in regional development, you'll find up-to-date and relevant information.

Visit the [WOWC Tariff Resources](#) page to access the latest information and stay up to date on how the WOWC is working to strengthen Western Ontario.

Save the Date: Western Ontario Municipal Conference



The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus is pleased to announce the return of the Western Ontario Municipal Conference, taking place on Friday, October 17, 2025, at the Lamplighter Inn in London, Ontario.

This year's conference will feature relevant, dynamic programming designed to foster the exchange of knowledge and best practices, along with excellent networking opportunities. With four key streams—Housing, Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Mental Health & Addictions—we're offering a strong line-up of sessions to engage and inform all delegates.

Interested in becoming a sponsor or speaker at this year's event? Contact us at info@wowc.ca.

Stay tuned to this newsletter and our [website](#) for registration and program updates.

Premier Doug Ford Unveils Cabinet to Protect Ontario

CONGRATULATIONS TO ONTARIO'S CABINET MINISTERS



We look forward to working together to
advance key priorities for our region.

WESTERN ONTARIO
WOWC
WARDENS CAUCUS

Congratulations to Ontario's Cabinet Ministers!

WOWC looks forward to continuing our work with Premier Doug Ford and his Cabinet to advance key priorities for rural communities, including housing, infrastructure, economic development and mental health & addictions.

A special acknowledgment to the Ministers from Western Ontario:

- Sylvia Jones – Deputy Premier & Minister of Health
- Trevor Jones – Minister of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness
- Doug Downey – Attorney General
- Rob Flack – Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing
- Andrea Khanjin – Minister of Red Tape Reduction
- Lisa Thompson – Minister of Rural Affairs

We also look forward to working with:

- Kinga Surma – Minister of Infrastructure
- David Piccini – Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development
- Vic Fedeli: Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Graydon Smith – Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing
- Vijay Thanigasalam – Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions

View the full [press release](#)

Wellington County Announces 2024 George Bridge Economic Development Influencer Award Recipients



The recipients of the 2024 George Bridge Economic Development Influencer Awards were announced on February 27, 2025.

This new Economic Development Awards programme was created to honour the contributions of Past Warden and Economic Development Committee Chair, George Bridge, to the field.

“The George Bridge Economic Development Awards recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to economic development in Wellington County,” said Jeff Duncan, Economic Development Committee Chair. “Today, we celebrate community leaders and highlight their important work that supports local

economic development efforts. Congratulations to our 2024 recipients.”

Community Economic Development Influencer of the Year Award - Rick Whittaker

Awarded to an individual who has made a significant impact on Economic Development in Wellington County. Eligibility extends to all members of the public, including community members, the business community, and various organizations.

Young Professional Economic Development Influencer of the Year Award - Laura Emery

Awarded to an individual new to the economic development profession, actively working in an economic development capacity within Wellington County.

View the full [press release](#)

Grey County Named to Smart21 Intelligent Communities of 2025



For the third consecutive year and fourth time since 2017, Grey County has been named one of the world's Smart21 communities of the year by the [Intelligent Communities Forum](#) (ICF). The announcement came on March 6 at the Communities in Transition conference in Hamilton, Ontario.

technology to realize economic, social, and cultural growth. Intelligent Community nominees are evaluated on six indicators: broadband, knowledge workforce, innovation, digital equality, sustainability, and advocacy.

The ICF's annual Intelligent Community of the Year competition recognizes communities that embrace

View the full [press release](#)

Community Partners Unite to Combat Human Trafficking across the Region



Human Trafficking is a serious crime that often goes unnoticed, but communities in Grey and Bruce Counties are taking action. The CSWBP Crime Prevention Action Table in partnership with the Joy Smith Foundation and Violence Prevention Grey Bruce are raising awareness about the dangers of human trafficking and providing resources to help prevent this crime.

Short-term rentals (STR) owners and operators can play a crucial role in preventing human trafficking by recognizing signs, implementing preventative measures, and reporting suspicious activity. There is a growing trend of traffickers using STRs due to the greater possibility of anonymity. This initiative educates STR owners and operators on how to identify potential trafficking situations and respond appropriately to protect their communities and properties.

To access the Short-Term Rental Anti-Human Trafficking resource visit:

[Resources - Community Safety and Well-Being Planning](#)



Grey County announces leadership changes

Grey County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Kim Wingrove has given notice she will be stepping down from her role on May 2, 2025. Ms. Wingrove's decision was announced at the end of the March 13 meeting of Council and committee of the whole.

Ms. Wingrove joined Grey County as CAO in September of 2015. In nearly a decade on the job, Ms. Wingrove led staff in delivering services that are essential to residents, businesses and the community.

Ms. Wingrove led the county through several significant projects and challenges, including the renovation and expansion of the County Administration Building, the Rockwood Terrace redevelopment project, the formation of Supportive Outreach Services and growth of community paramedicine programs, and the expansion of emergency housing supports. Using her extensive experience in Economic Development, Ms. Wingrove united partners together throughout the region to work on projects which help Grey County thrive.

She also led operations and response through the challenging COVID-19 pandemic.



Bruce County's Jeff Loney Recognized as Top 40 Under 40

Jeff Loney, Bruce County's Economic Development Manager has been announced as a recipient of the 2025 Economic Development 40 Under 40 Award, the biennial award recognizing rising stars under 40 years old in the economic development industry.

"Economic development is a purpose-driven field that shapes communities worldwide, and young professionals are at the heart of that impact," said Julie Curtin, president of DCI's economic development practice. "These 40 rising stars are driving change through their innovation, commitment, and leadership. Their contributions are already making a difference, and I'm excited to see how they continue to shape the industry in the years to come."

"We are incredibly proud of Jeff's accomplishments as our Economic Development Manager," said Luke Charbonneau, Warden of Bruce County. "This award recognizes Jeff's dedication to the field of economic development, and Bruce County. Through his work stewarding Bruce County's Economic Development Strategic Plan Jeff has profiled our County on both a North American and International Stage."



Rural Healthy Democracy Forum

AMO's Healthy Democracy Project is a unique initiative focused on improving local democracy through civic engagement that's respectful and diverse. It's a project based on collaboration and a collective will to improve the health of local democracy in Ontario. For more information on the origin of the Healthy Democracy Project and initiative click [here](#).

This full-day event will bring together municipal and sector leaders, academics and experts for insightful discussion on the state

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada



Federal Government Unveils Designs as part of the Housing Design Catalogue

The federal government released the final renderings, floor plan layouts, and key building details as part of the Housing Design Catalogue, an initiative under Canada's Housing Plan. The catalogue features some 50 standardized housing designs for rowhouses, fourplexes, sixplexes, and accessory dwelling units across the country.

The release provides a head start for homeowners, builders, and communities in their

of the democracy in rural Ontario. Engage in thought-provoking conversations and explore to strengthen civic participation and governance in your communities.

Location: Almonte Old Town Hall Auditorium
Registration fee: \$50.00

[Register Here](#)

planning processes. The designs were developed by regional architecture and engineering teams, and focus on creating gentle density and infill development in existing neighbourhoods in all regions of the country. The final architectural design packages will be released this spring.

[View the press release](#)

Community Futures Week: April 7- 13, 2025



Community Futures Week is a unique celebration organized by Community Futures Western (CFWO) and Community Futures Eastern Ontario (CFEO), with the collaborative backing of their member Community Futures Development Corporations. This week is dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship, promoting small business growth, and creating economic opportunities in Southern Ontario. Scheduled for April 7-13, 2025, it will feature a mix of virtual and in-person events across the region.

Visit the link below for more details on our FREE webinars covering topics such as:

- Small Business Fraud Prevention
- Succession Planning: Buying or Selling a Business
- Future-Proofing Your Marketing Plan: How Small Businesses & Nonprofits Can Adapt and Thrive in 2025

Additionally, you'll have the chance to hear directly from business owners about the support they received from their local Community Futures office and Community Futures Partners throughout Southern Ontario. This week not only honors the contributions Community Futures has made to rural businesses over the past 35 years but also celebrates the businesses that keep our rural communities alive and thriving.

CF Week 2025

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CA

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