

Meeting Date: June 20, 2023
Submitted by: Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Warden
Subject: Western Ontario Warden's Caucus

BACKGROUND:

The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) represents 15 upper and single tier municipalities in approximately 300 communities in Ontario.

The WOWC region covers almost half a million square kilometres of territory, more than 90% of it rural including, approximately 25,000 kilometres of roads, more than 3,000 bridges and 24,000 culverts.

The purpose of the WOWC is to advocate and engage with other levels of government as one united voice on opportunities, common needs and issues of critical importance to Southwestern Ontario. Key items include infrastructure, transportation, long term care, broadband, and economic development.

Annually, the Middlesex County Warden is appointed by County Council to serve on the WOWC as a Director.

ANALYSIS:

In accordance with the Middlesex County Strategic Plan: The Middlesex Initiative, strengthened government relations and advocacy efforts have been implemented to establish and maintain relationships with other levels of government, as well as advocating for the needs and priorities of citizens.

Effective government relations and advocacy ensure that the voices of Middlesex County stakeholders are consistently heard and taken into consideration by decision-makers at the provincial and federal levels. By fostering open and collaborative dialogue with these government bodies, Middlesex County can better align strategic priorities with those government bodies, identify opportunities for collaboration, and leverage available resources to address the challenges faced as a community.

Middlesex County has an opportunity to establish consistency with its representation on the WOWC, for the entire term of Council, to enhance advocacy and engagement continuity with other levels of government. This may further strengthen the united voice of WOWC on opportunities, common needs and issues of critical importance to Southwestern Ontario.

For Middlesex County to consider this, Council would need to approve the Warden to annually delegate the WOWC Director role, in its entirety, to a single member of Middlesex County Council who would serve as the WOWC Director for the entire term of Council.

Pursuant to Middlesex County By-law No. 7208, the Procedural By-law, the Warden is elected by Council in each year of its term.

Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus By-law No. 1 outlines the conduct and affairs of the WOWC. Relevant in this analysis of a potential full term Middlesex County WOWC appointment is the following provisions:

Section 4.02 Qualifications - Every Director shall be eighteen or more years of age and shall be a member of the Corporation or shall automatically become a member of the Corporation within ten (10) days after his/her election as Warden or Mayor in their County, or appointment as a Director.

Section 4.05 Election and Removal - Directors shall be the Warden or Mayor of the fourteen (14) Municipalities which constitute the membership of this Corporation, namely: County of Brant, County of Bruce, County of Dufferin, County of Elgin, County of Essex, County of Grey, County of Huron, County of Lambton, County of Middlesex, Norfolk County, County of Oxford, County of Perth, County of Simcoe and County of Wellington. Directors, except for replacement Directors (the particulars for which are provided for in article 4.03) and Officers, including the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, shall be elected at the annual meeting. Officers shall be elected from amongst the Directors. The Past Chair will attend the annual meeting and act as returning officer or elections officer and shall manage and oversee the election at the of Directors and Officers. Directors shall be elected based on a show of hands unless a poll is demanded, in which case such election shall be by ballot. Retiring Directors shall continue in office until their successors have been duly elected or appointed and shall retire at the next meeting following the end of his/her respective term or immediately following the end of his/her term as Warden or Mayor of his/her individual Municipality or County.

It would also be prudent for the WOWC to confirm that the Middlesex County Warden is permitted to delegate the WOWC Director role, in its entirety, to a member of Middlesex County Council for the purposes of establishing consistency of representation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Cultivating Community Vitality	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote and support community wellness• Innovate social and community services• Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community• Champion and encourage active transportation and public transit opportunities
Connecting Through Infrastructure	Ensure communities are built on a sustainable foundation that is connected and thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage and advocate, through partnerships, the construction of scalable, equitable broadband infrastructure, recognizing our unserved and underserved areas• Commit to a sound asset management strategy to maintain and fund critical infrastructure• Use County infrastructure in an innovative way to provide a seamless service experience for residents
Strengthening Our Economy	Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support opportunities to create a stronger and sustainable agricultural sector• Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments• Attract visitors to Middlesex County• Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County
Promoting Service Excellence	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations• Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities• Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies• Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities• Build organizational capacity and capabilities

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Report be received for information;

THAT Middlesex County request the WOWC to confirm the Middlesex County Warden may delegate its WOWC Director role to a member of County Council to establish consistency of representation over the four year term of Council;

THAT pending the WOWC confirmation of the WOWC By-law No. 1 interpretation, Middlesex County Council approve a full term appointment to the WOWC Director position.