

# WESTERN ONTARIO WARDENS' CAUCUS

Grey County Council Delegation  
August 8, 2024





# WHO IS THE WOWC?

- 15 Upper and Single tier municipalities
- 300 communities, 117 municipalities
- More than 1.6 million residents
- 250, 000 businesses
- ½ Million square kilometers
- 90% rural





# PURPOSE OF WOWC

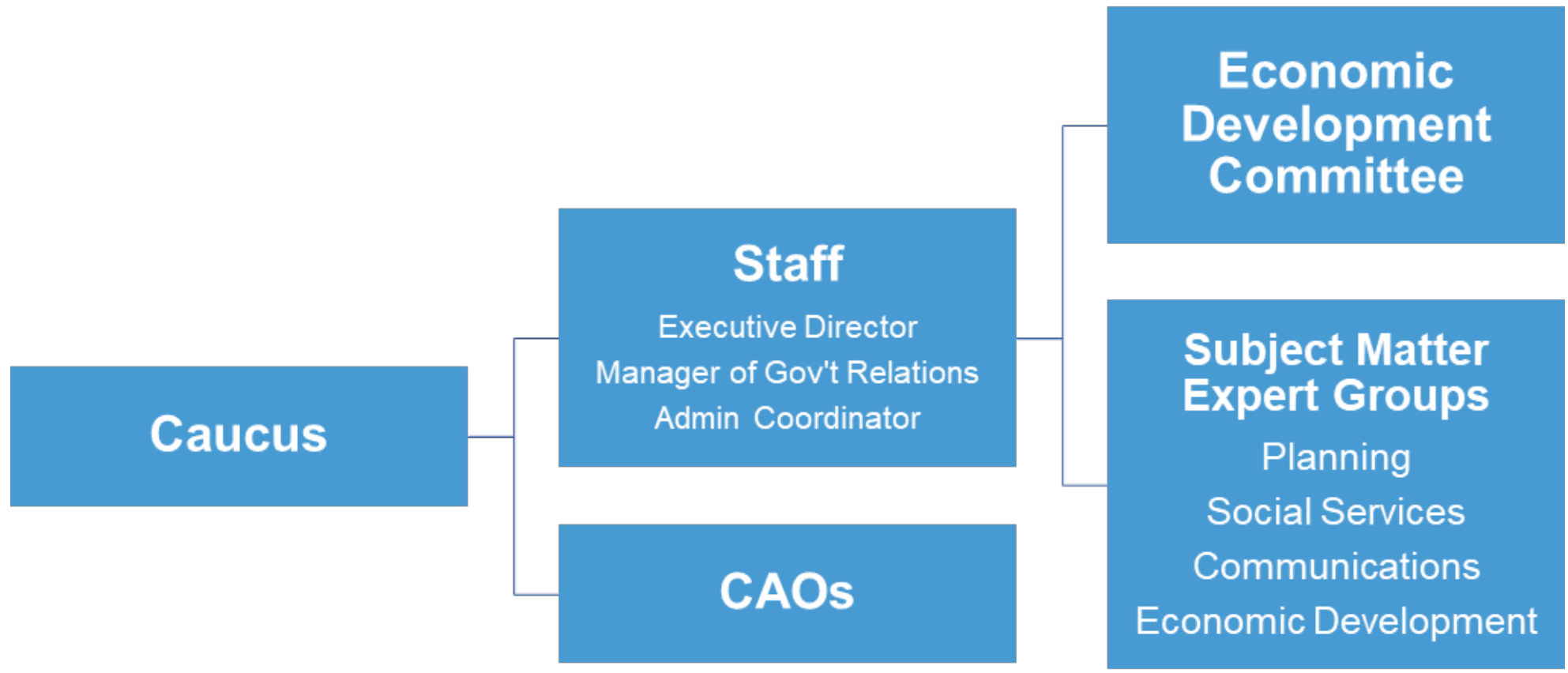


- To realize Western Ontario's full potential for sustainable economies and communities by presenting a unified voice on behalf of local governments.
- Looking at the big issues that affect all member Counties and how the power of the Wardens can implement positive change in the region





# HOW DOES THE WOWWC OPERATE?





# ADVOCACY

- The WOWC's advocacy work has been executed through:
  - Meetings with Ministers and senior government officials
  - Partnerships with local and regional municipalities and organizations, and joint projects/advocacy with stakeholders
  - Letters, financial analyses, ERO submissions, pre-budget submissions
- The WOWC monitors government legislation and provides research and analysis on issues affecting Western Ontario
- Where applicable, the WOWC supports and partners with other organizations such as SWIFT, AMO, FCM, EOWC, etc.







# 2024-25 PRIORITIES: HOUSING

## ISSUE

Housing affordability, particularly in rural areas, continues to remain a strong focus within rural Western Ontario. Given the current housing and rental market, it is crucial to focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing, of all forms, so that all residents regardless of income level have a safe place to call home.

## The Asks

1. The WOWC requests that the Province of Ontario reinstate housing services and the cost of land as eligible development charges (DC) costs.
2. The WOWC requests equity for small and rural municipalities regarding housing infrastructure funding.





# 2024-25 PRIORITIES: INFRASTRUCTURE

## Issue

As Western Ontario continues to be the economic driver of the Province, and more investments are being made in our region, we need to ensure that there is the infrastructure to support the growth.



## The Ask

The WOWC requires clear communication from the Province of Ontario on the infrastructure build out in Western Ontario, including clarity from the government on what to expect for utility investments, including hydroelectricity, natural gas, water, and wastewater.







# 2024-25 PRIORITIES: WORKFORCE

## Issue

There has been an ongoing focus for the WOWC over the past few years on workforce retention and expansion. This has been highlighted in the collaborative regional work through the Western Ontario Workforce Strategy.

## The Ask

The WOWC requires several important considerations regarding workforce development in rural Western Ontario, both to support economic growth and to stabilize the regional economy.







# 2024-25 PRIORITIES: MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTIONS & HOMELESSNESS

## Issue

Funding for our rural communities is a necessity. We are less equipped with fewer resources than our urban counterparts to tackle the growing mental health and addictions crisis.



## The Asks

1. The WOWC continues to emphasize its request for the Province that a specific portion of the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding be allocated specifically for small and rural communities.
2. The WOWC continues to advocate for permanent funding for the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) programs, through annualized funding and permanently-funded mental health officer positions.





# BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE



## Project Results

**63,932**

PREMISES PASSED



**4,250**

SERVED ROAD KMs

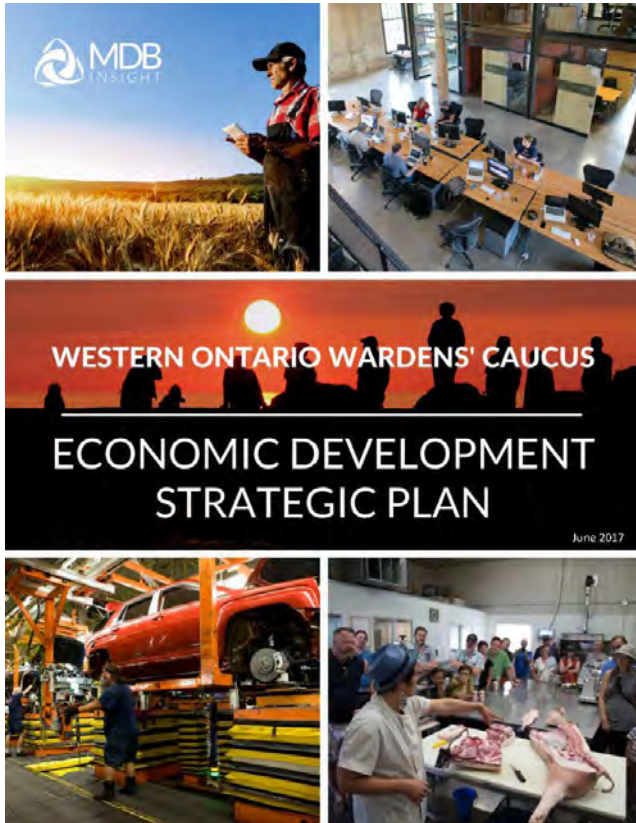


**\$270M**

TOTAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The WOWC with investment from Community Futures Western Ontario continues to implement the actions of the regional Economic Development Strategic Plan.

## The Project

- Identify opportunities to advance the economy of Southwestern Ontario that also leverages the ongoing efforts of WOWC.
- Improve the underlying conditions for economic development throughout the region.
- Generate a series of actions at the regional level that enables the creation of jobs, wealth and investment across the region.





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# ACCOMPLISHMENTS



- Ensured Western Ontario retained its current number of rural federal seats as part of the federal riding redistribution plan
- Advocated to the province to reverse course on proposed farm lot severance policy
- Leave to Construct Threshold Increase
- Secured Community Response Pilot Project funding for region
- Attendance at the Provincial Housing Forum
- Return of the Western Ontario Municipal Conference



# THANK YOU

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