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## **Eastern Ontario Leadership Council Communications Newsletter Winter 2020**

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The following newsletter is a communications update regarding the recent activities and advocacy of the Eastern Ontario Leadership Council (EOLC). To learn more about the EOLC or any of the documents referenced in this newsletter, visit <http://www.eolc.info>.

### **1. Composition of the EOLC Board**

The EOLC consists of five partner organizations:

- [Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus](#)
- [Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus](#)
- [Eastern Ontario Regional Network](#)
- [Ontario East Economic Development Commission](#)
- [Community Futures Ontario East](#)

### **2. Major Presence at OEMC and Official Launch of the Refreshed Strategy**

In September 2019, the EOLC officially unveiled a significant update of its region-wide "Eastern Ontario Economic Development Strategy" during the Ontario East Municipal Conference (OEMC) in Cornwall. This "refresh" of the Strategy also included implementation plans for its four pillars and priorities, being: Workforce Development and Deployment; Technology Integration and Innovation; Integrated, Intelligent Transportation Systems; and Digital Infrastructure.

The implementations plans are intended to guide the EOLC's work through 2024 and allow for project development funding to the EOLC's working groups. In line with these four major themes, the EOLC held four "breakout sessions" during the OEMC Conference, allowing attendees to learn more about the ongoing and future work of the EOLC.

Announced projects included the acquisition of a one-year subscription to third party workforce data (Vicinity Jobs), to understand the challenges, trends, sectoral patterns, and occupational or other gaps associated with workforce; the roll-out of a Municipal Innovation Certification (MIC) Program aimed at both innovators and municipalities; and encouraging the emergence of a regional 511 system, including the creation of a one-window permitting system for trans-regional freight movement.

### **3. Municipal Innovation Certification**

Innovation procurement is defined as the purchase of solutions that do not exist in the market, or need to be adapted or improved to meet specific needs and create value for users and the procuring organizations. With this in mind, the Municipal Innovation Certification (MIC) Program was created to bring together innovators – including early-age start-ups, of which there are many in the Eastern Ontario region – with municipalities, that often require innovative solutions but face challenges such as insurance requirements, or quite simply, bureaucracy.

Through the MIC Program, participating municipalities would undergo innovation certification by adapting their procurement by-laws to recognize innovation as a viable option, providing training to Council and senior staff; identifying three potential challenges that require solutions, and providing a modest three-year financial commitment. The ultimate goal is to help the region's start-ups acquire their "first customers" while helping the municipal sector address its challenges – and, if successful, more of these companies will stay and grow in the region.

### **4. Commuter Strategy Project for Eastern Ontario**

In November 2019, the EOLC launched a 17-month region-wide "Commuter Strategy" project, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The goal of this major initiative is to understand the significance of transportation challenges for the workforce, both for commuters and employers.

Specifically, the EOLC will be analyzing the demand and the opportunities for financially sustainable non-conventional "cross-boundary" transportation options, whether private or not-for-profit, and subsequently provide modest seed funding for up to six pilot projects across the region. These analyses will then be evaluated and the results provided across the region.

## **5. One-Window Permitting System for Freight Movement**

The EOLC has recently launched a multi-municipality pilot project, in conjunction with [Transnomis Solutions](#), to develop and test a “one-window” online permitting system for freight carriers moving oversize or over-limit loads across multiple municipalities. This initiative comes as result of significant collaboration between the EOLC and Transnomis on a regional 511 model, to better support municipal operations and freight carriers traveling on municipal roads.

This project is designed to investigate the potential for savings in municipal staff time, improved compliance, and reduced infrastructure repair and maintenance costs, from the deployment of a one-window digital platform for freight permits. Specifically, this project would gather data, consult with municipal and carrier stakeholders on the volume and types of permit requests that must be processed manually, and quantify the potential cost savings for municipalities.

The Province of Ontario is providing a portion of the funding for this pilot project, as part of the Municipal Modernization Program. The initiative has also received much interest and support from the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA).

## **6. Building Momentum (Ministers, PIC, MOL, ROMA, OEMC)**

With the launch of these groundbreaking initiatives and projects, the EOLC has made significant progress and created important momentum over the past few months. In tandem with these announcements, the EOLC continues to build and develop its critical relationships with stakeholders and partners, including those at the Province of Ontario.

The EOLC meets regularly with representatives from the Provincial Interministerial Council (PIC), and has established a presence with key Ministries through regular delegations and presentations to Ministers and staff. In doing so, the EOLC has established itself as a reputable regional voice that is recognized and supported by the Province of Ontario, including funding opportunities.

## **7. The EOLC Working Groups**

The EOLC employs a “working group” model to guide the board’s deliberations and offer recommendations on implementation priorities and directions. These three working groups also build broader collaborations across the region; draw on widespread expertise; provide opportunities for participation from across the region and across various sectors (e.g. private sector, post-secondary education).

All three working groups meet on a regular basis throughout the year. Each group is chaired by an EOLC member or designate, and features membership from various levels of municipal, provincial, and federal government, as well as the private sector, colleges and universities. Staff from Provincial Ministries sit as observers on the board, including the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD).

## **8. Looking Ahead to 2020**

The coming year promises to be busy for the EOLC, with significant projects now underway and tremendous interest building across many sectors. Please keep up to date with the EOLC, its progress and its initiatives by visiting its website at [www.eolc.info](http://www.eolc.info), where material and information will be posted regularly.