
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CAO-02-2023 Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Membership For Consideration by Council in Committee on October 10, 2023



OBJECTIVE:

To provide information related to a trial membership with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) and future membership considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CAO-02-2023 Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus Membership be received;
2. AND THAT a membership with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus not be pursued for the reasons outlined in Report CAO-02-2023.

Prepared by: Jerri Whiting, Project Manager, Continuous Improvement / Executive Assistant to the CAO

Approved: Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

After a trial period participating as guests, and a cost versus benefit evaluation, it is recommended that Haldimand County not join the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus.

BACKGROUND:

A representative of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus was in attendance at the April 11, 2023 Council in Committee meeting. As a result of this presentation, the following resolution was passed.

1. *THAT the correspondence and presentation material from Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) Re: Membership, dated March 16, 2023, be received;*
2. *AND THAT membership in the WOWC for 2024 be considered in October 2023.*

Haldimand County was offered a trial participation to assess the potential benefits and relevance of a WOWC membership going forward.

ANALYSIS:

WOWC is a non-profit organization representing 15 upper and single-tier municipalities in southwestern Ontario, aiming to advance community well-being through advocacy, research, and education. The Caucus involves Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) from member municipalities as well as supporting WOWC staff. WOWC staff also facilitate:

- an Economic Development Committee, which includes elected officials (Mayor Bentley or alternate for Haldimand)
- the following Subject Matter Expert Groups

- Planning
- Social Services
- Communications
- Economic Development

The full Caucus meets every other month with CAO's meeting in the alternating months. The Economic Development Committee and Subject Matter Expert Groups meet quarterly.

After reviewing the potential benefits and considering Haldimand County's specific circumstances, staff do not recommend pursuing WOWC membership for the following reasons:

- **Overlap with Existing Memberships:** Haldimand County already holds numerous corporate and individual memberships and actively participates in associations and networking groups that offer similar benefits to what WOWC provides.
- **Staff Availability:** Due to existing commitments to various memberships and associations, staff availability to attend additional meetings is constrained.
- **Priority Alignment:** WOWC's priorities do not consistently align with Haldimand County's corporate objectives and priorities.
- **Geographical Disparity:** WOWC's main focus is further southwest, with a membership base predominantly comprised of rural municipalities. Haldimand County, while rural, differs substantially due to its proximity to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and related growth, resulting in divergent priorities and issues.
- **Cost Considerations:** Joining WOWC would entail a substantial increase in membership costs, as well as additional expenses for staff travel and accommodations to attend meetings which are typically located much further west. With membership fees and associated costs combined, it would require an addition to the Tax Supported Operating Budget of approximately \$35,000 per year.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Given the recommendation not to pursue a WOWC membership, there are no financial or legal implications at this time.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

Not applicable.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.