



**WESTERN ONTARIO WARDENS' CAUCUS
Warden Michael Raymond, Chair (2005)**

November 3rd, 2005

For immediate release

**Pay your Ambulance Bills Province
-Wardens Demand-**

Lindsay (November 1, 2005)– Heads of two groups that together represent close to four million rural residents in Ontario today called on the McGuinty Government to pay its half of the bill for land ambulance service that municipalities have already paid.

“Enough is enough,” said Michael Raymond, head of the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus, after a joint meeting of his group and the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus. “We can’t put up with the Province’s delaying tactics any longer. They owe municipalities, including the 28 counties and single-tier municipalities we represent, \$312 million. Because they have shortchanged us, our property taxpayers are paying far more than they should.”

Bob Sweet, head of the eastern wardens’ group, noted that “when responsibility for land ambulance service was downloaded to our municipalities, it was supposed to be funded 50% by property taxpayers and 50% by the provincial government. Today our taxpayers are picking up closer to 70% of the costs. The Province has continued to retreat from the partnership, and this is putting too much pressure on our ratepayers.”

Warden Susan Freeman, head of Lanark County, said that it was important to remember that this unequal bill is only part of a \$3 billion shortfall in provincial funding for services like public health, social assistance and social housing, as well as land ambulances that municipalities deliver on behalf of the Province. “There is continued downloading by the province to the property taxpayer, they are being asked to shoulder this shortfall and, frankly, their ability to do so is reaching the breaking point. We fully support the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in their drive to correct this situation.”

Warden Raymond noted that “Mr. McGuinty’s campaign to reduce the \$23 billion gap in funding from the federal government to Ontario is no different than AMO’s attempts to get the Province to pay Ontario municipalities the \$3 billion it owes us. Our taxpayers are starting to see this and to ask the question: When are you going to fix your own house, Mr. Premier?”

“Both Warden Raymond and I along with our caucuses are prepared to work alongside and support AMO but our members are telling us that we need action now, not at some future time,” said Warden Sweet.

The two caucuses together represent 28 counties and single-tier rural municipalities across Southern Ontario.

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