

**From:** [Ontario News](#)  
**To:** [Terri Towstiuć](#)  
**Subject:** Ontario Investing in the Success of Rural Communities  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 21, 2025 10:38:35 AM

---



## NEWS RELEASE

# Ontario Investing in the Success of Rural Communities

Province announces new rural economic development program, investments in housing-enabling infrastructure at annual ROMA conference

**January 21, 2025**

[Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing](#)

**Toronto** — The Ontario government has announced new measures that continue its historic support for rural communities and residents at the 2025 annual Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference. These measures include a new Rural Economic Development Strategy announced by Minister of Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson, with \$10 million in annual funding in a new Rural Ontario Development Program aimed at supporting economic growth, workforce capacity and business development in rural communities.

“Our government is continuing our historic investments in the success of rural Ontario because we understand how critical rural Ontario is to the success of the entire province,” said Premier Doug Ford. “After years of neglect from previous governments, we are making sure rural communities are seeing the new investments, infrastructure and homes they need to thrive and create new jobs and opportunities.”

Kinga Surma, Minister of Infrastructure, announced the government is opening applications for the \$175 million Health and Safety Water Stream

of the province's Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program (MHIP) starting February 12, 2025, to ensure communities across the province have access to safe drinking water, reliable wastewater services, and are protected during extreme weather events. This funding is part of the government's historic ongoing investments to help municipalities and First Nations preserve and increase housing supply across the province.

Minister Surma also announced the province has completed evaluating applications for funding from the \$400 million Housing-Enabling Core Servicing Stream of the MHIP and has approved 58 successful projects across 60 municipalities. These projects will help enable up to 160,000 new homes and ensure these growing communities are connected to reliable roadways. Successful recipients will be announced in the coming weeks.

"Our government is working with municipalities and First Nations to ensure they have the support they need to maintain crucial water infrastructure assets and promote housing growth in their communities," said Minister Surma. "Proper maintenance of our water and wastewater infrastructure is critical for protecting our homes and businesses and ensuring communities have access to clean drinking water. We remain dedicated to supporting municipalities and First Nations by delivering the critical infrastructure their communities need today and for generations to come."

Minister Thompson's announcement of a new Rural Economic Development Strategy is a key pillar in the government's plan to help rural communities address the challenges they are facing and take advantage of new opportunities. As part of this strategy, the government has replaced its previous Rural Economic Development Program with the new Rural Ontario Development Program and is doubling its funding to \$10 million annually over the next two years for a total of \$20 million.

"Our government believes in and is committed to enabling opportunity, which is the foundation from which we built Ontario's rural economic development strategy," said Minister Thompson. "Our plan to support rural Ontario reflects how our entire government is working together to ensure our programs and policies enable strong and dynamic rural communities."

The [Enabling Opportunity: Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy](#)

focuses on three key areas:

- **Safe and Strong Rural Communities** – improving local economic development capacity and championing local leadership, supporting the rehabilitation of municipal and community infrastructure, optimizing rural connectivity, and supporting communities in developing plans for housing and transportation to ensure rural communities are places where people want to live, work and play.
- **Business Development and Attraction** – supporting rural communities and other economic development partners in strengthening and growing rural business, encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation, attracting investment, revitalizing downtowns and diversifying regional economies.
- **Growing the Rural Workforce** – helping grow local talent, raising awareness of job opportunities available in rural Ontario, supporting workers in obtaining the skills needed to succeed, and attracting and retaining workers so rural communities and small towns thrive.

ROMA is the rural voice of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). The annual conference is an opportunity for the province and municipal leaders to make progress on rural priorities.

## Quick Facts

- Municipalities and First Nations will be able to apply for funding through the Health and Safety Water Stream to address outdated water, wastewater and stormwater facilities, replace local pipes and watermains, and make enhancements to shoreline and flood mitigation infrastructure that will increase climate resilience. Eligible projects must be net new, rehabilitation or expansion projects. More information about the Health and Safety Water Stream is available at [ontario.ca/housinginfrastructure](https://ontario.ca/housinginfrastructure).
- Ontario is providing nearly \$2 billion in total through the various streams and intakes of the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program to support housing- and community-enabling infrastructure and build more homes across the province. This is in addition to the province's \$1.2 billion Building

Faster Fund, which has awarded more than \$285 million to municipalities for their performance against their 2023 housing targets.

- With additional funding of \$18 million over three years to the Agriculture Drainage Infrastructure Program, more municipalities will be able to ensure adequate drainage, helping increase the productivity of Ontario's farmlands.
- Ontario is investing an additional \$52 million in 2025 to help municipalities address the increasing operational pressures of Ontario Works program delivery so that vulnerable Ontarians can continue to get the financial assistance they need.
- To help ensure northern and rural communities can build the housing they need, a [new building officials policy is now in place](#), making it easier for municipalities to recruit building officials to address labour shortages and get projects moving faster.
- Ministers, Associate Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants held over 500 meetings with municipalities and municipal organizations from across Ontario at the 2025 ROMA conference. They discussed key priorities including housing, infrastructure, and public health, including mental health and addictions and emergency health services.

## Quotes

"For generations, it has been our rural communities that have laid the very foundation on which the province stands. Under Premier Ford's leadership, our government has not only acknowledged the unique challenges of rural and northern Ontario, we have been actively unleashing the opportunity that exists there. From infrastructure investments to housing solutions, from cutting red tape to creating jobs, we are delivering real results — and we're just getting started."

**- Paul Calandra**

**Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

"Under Premier Ford's leadership, rural Ontario will never be left behind as it was under the previous government. Thirty thousand new jobs, \$3 billion in added GDP and a 65 per cent increase in exports are the Premier's track

record for Ontario's agri-food sector, proof that our government's investments are reinvigorating the economic muscle of rural Ontario."

**- Rob Flack**

**Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness**

"This \$175 million investment is an important step toward empowering municipalities to build the infrastructure needed to support our growing communities and improve the quality of life for all Ontarians. By addressing aging infrastructure and adapting to climate change, we can ensure a sustainable future for generations to come."

**- Robin Jones**

**President, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and Mayor, Westport**

"The province's new Rural Economic Development Strategy recognizes the immense potential of our rural communities. The expanded scope and resources in the new Rural Ontario Development Program will help unlock this potential and drive local economic growth. Prosperity across the province relies on a thriving rural Ontario."

**- Christa Lowry**

**Chair, Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) and Mayor, Mississippi Mills**

## **Additional Resources**

- [Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program](#)
- [Building More Homes](#)
- [Rural Economic Development program](#)

## **Media Contacts**

Ash Milton

Press Secretary, Minister Surma's Office

[Ash.Milton@ontario.ca](mailto:Ash.Milton@ontario.ca)

Ministry of Infrastructure Media Line

Communications Branch

[MOI.media@ontario.ca](mailto:MOI.media@ontario.ca)

Morgan Mattern

Minister Thompson's Office

[Morgan.Mattern@ontario.ca](mailto:Morgan.Mattern@ontario.ca)

Meaghan Evans

Communications Branch

[OMAFRA.media@ontario.ca](mailto:OMAFRA.media@ontario.ca)

519-826-3145

[Visit the Newsroom](#)

[Manage your subscriptions](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)