

**GROWING STRONG RURAL
COMMUNITIES**

WORKBOOK

JUNE 2004

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

Communities across Ontario face financial, economic, social and environmental challenges. Rural communities need a different approach than urban centres to address these challenges because they often cover broad geographic areas, have smaller, more dispersed populations, smaller tax bases and a higher dependency on resource industries. Some rural areas are also without municipal structure making it even more difficult to address the challenges they face.

This workbook and the accompanying consultation paper are divided into four themes based on the range and variety of challenges that rural communities face. These four themes are inter-related and together contribute to the development of strong rural communities.

The themes are:

- Sustainable Municipal Fiscal Capacity and Infrastructure;
- Strong Economies;
- Healthy Social Climate; and,
- Clean and Healthy Environment.

We want you to help shape a plan for rural Ontario. We need your advice to identify changes to improve the economic prosperity, environmental well-being and quality of life in your community. Your input will help us better understand the priorities of rural communities and key areas for action.

We value your input and would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time to help us develop a plan for rural Ontario – a plan that will reflect your views and address your needs, issues and concerns.

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THEME: SUSTAINABLE MUNICIPAL FISCAL CAPACITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

1a. What is the greatest challenge facing your community? Rank the challenges listed below (#1 being the greatest).

- Municipal fiscal capacity
- Infrastructure
- Telecommunications infrastructure

1b. What are the reasons for your #1 choice?

2a. Municipal Fiscal Capacity

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with municipal fiscal capacity challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to pages 6-7 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Exploring creative approaches to diversify local economies and attract investment
- Assisting municipal staff to develop the capacity to carry out strategic planning, capital asset management and business-case preparation
- Encouraging partnerships
- Encouraging the sharing of best practices

2b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing municipal fiscal capacity challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

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3a. Infrastructure (water and waste water systems, roads, bridges, cultural, recreational and tourism facilities)

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with infrastructure challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 8 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Developing capital asset management planning
- Providing technical resources to municipal staff to help them better understand and assess financing options
- Encouraging use of new and emerging technologies
- Encouraging partnerships
- Encouraging sharing of best practices

3b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing infrastructure challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

4a. Telecommunication Infrastructure

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with telecommunication infrastructure challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to pages 9-10 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Encouraging partnerships
- Stimulating demand for broadband infrastructure
- Identifying new options for models of broadband service delivery

4b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing telecommunication infrastructure challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

5. Do you have any other comments related to municipal fiscal capacity and infrastructure?

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THEME: STRONG ECONOMIES

1a. What is the greatest challenge facing your community? Rank the challenges listed below (#1 being the greatest).

- Local economies and community capacity
- A skilled labour force
- Business development
- Attracting and retaining young people

1b. What are the reasons for your #1 choice?

2a. Local Economies and Community Capacity

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with local economy and community capacity challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 12 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Providing additional data and tools
- Revitalizing downtown areas and redeveloping brownfields and waterfronts
- Creating a “tool-kit” for municipalities to assist them with economic development
- Providing leadership development tools and resources
- Providing support for research and development
- Promoting opportunities for agricultural activities

2b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing local economy and community capacity challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

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2c. How important is the revitalization of downtown areas and/ or the redevelopment of waterfronts and brownfields to the health and vitality of your community? Circle one. (1 - very important, 5 - not very important). Refer to pages 11-12 of the Consultation Paper for more information on community revitalization.

1 2 3 4 5

2d. Rate the importance of each of the following types of support that the Ontario government can provide for community revitalization efforts (1 - very important, 5 - not very important).

Municipal financing tools (incentives to communities under Community Improvement Plans e.g. flexible development charges)

1 2 3 4 5

Advisory support (e.g. technical assistance and facilitation provided to individual communities)

1 2 3 4 5

Grant programs (e.g. financial assistance to communities)

1 2 3 4 5

Enabling legislation (e.g. heritage designations, business improvement areas)

1 2 3 4 5

Training, education and awareness (e.g. publications, training events, web resources, conferences, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

3a. A Skilled Labour Force

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with possible existing and future skilled labour force shortages? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 13 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Providing tools to help identify skill needs
- Working with employers to identify needs and develop actions
- Providing assistance for upgrading skills and retraining
- Identifying gaps in services, networks and amenities needed to attract new workers
- Working with academic institutions to offer opportunities to meet skill gaps

3b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing skilled labour force challenges?
You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

4a. Business Development

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with business development? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 14 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Creating community investment tools
- Examining the development of business clusters
- Developing the necessary skills and knowledge for e-business adoption
- Providing business development and management resources, information and advice
- Developing a targeted investment strategy

4b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing business development challenges?
You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

5a. Attracting and Retaining Young People

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What are the most effective ways to help rural communities attract and retain young people? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to pages 15-16 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Creating a community marketing strategy
- Creating employment opportunities (connecting businesses with schools)
- Supporting employment for current students
- Providing a wage rebate to rural business owners
- Maintaining contact with young people
- Encouraging community organizations' continued support of education and training opportunities for young people

5b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing the out-migration of young people?
You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

6. Do you have any other comments related to strong economies?

THEME: A HEALTHY SOCIAL CLIMATE

1a. What is the greatest challenge facing your community? Rank the challenges listed below (#1 being the greatest).

- Health-care services
- Education
- Community well-being and safety

1b. What are the reasons for your # 1 choice?

2a. Health-Care Services

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with health-care service challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to pages 17-18 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Supporting partnerships to renovate or provide equipment for local health-care facilities
- Developing long-term strategies to attract young people into the health-care profession
- Putting more resources into community health and services
- Supporting the development of long-term plans to integrate all aspects of health care
- Developing innovative community-based approaches to address the shortage of medical professionals

2b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing health-care challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

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3a. Education

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with education challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 18 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Expanding the availability of courses through distance education
- Examining options for more integrated education and employment opportunities
- Establishing partnerships to expand the use of school facilities
- Adjusting school closure guidelines, student and transportation funding formulas

3b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing education challenges? You may build on the examples provided or develop your own.

4a. Community Well-Being and Safety

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with challenges to community well-being? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 20 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Supporting the formation and operation of community foundations
- Developing community cultural plans
- Assisting communities to build local leadership skills
- Encouraging private and public sector corporations to contribute time, leadership and financial support
- Supporting volunteer centres and organizations
- Developing knowledge and skills to undertake community crime prevention
- Increasing awareness of victim support services
- Developing coordinated, comprehensive strategies to deal with property crime

4b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing community well-being challenges? You may build on the examples provided or develop your own.

5. Do you have any other comments related to a healthy social climate?

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THEME: A CLEAN AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

1a. What is the greatest challenge facing your community? Rank the challenges listed below (#1 being the greatest).

- Water quality and quantity
- Waste management
- Air quality
- Natural features and landscapes

1b. What are the reasons for your #1 choice?

2a. Water Quality and Quantity

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with water quality and quantity challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 21 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Providing information and tools
- Facilitating meetings and workshops to share information
- Encouraging communities to consider developing partnerships

2b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing water quality and quantity challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

3a. Waste Management

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with waste management challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 22 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Exploring regional collaboration and partnerships
- Developing demonstration sites, pilot projects and case studies
- Working with communities to examines options to meet 60 per cent waste diversion
- Promoting the sharing of best practices among municipalities
- Encouraging the private sector to develop new technologies and invest in infrastructure

3b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing waste management challenges?
You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

4a. Air Quality

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with air quality challenges? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 23 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Supporting the development and promotion of alternative energy production
- Promoting the use of multi-purpose trails and public transit (where available)
- Developing resources that describe innovative approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

4b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing air quality challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

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5a. Protecting Natural Features and Landscapes

What are the most effective ways to help rural communities deal with challenges related to protecting natural features and landscapes? Rank the following ideas (#1 being the most effective). Refer to page 24 of the Consultation Paper for a more detailed description.

- Providing tools and resources to assist communities with community revitalization initiatives
- Promoting tourism and recreation and natural heritage
- Supporting volunteer initiatives that protect communities' biodiversity

5b. What additional ideas do you have for addressing natural features and landscape challenges? You may build on the examples provided above or develop your own.

6. Do you have any other comments related to a clean and healthy environment?

A VISION FOR RURAL ONTARIO

**STRONG RURAL COMMUNITIES WITH PROSPEROUS ECONOMIES,
RICH CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE, AND THE CAPACITY
AND LEADERSHIP TO SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE A HIGH QUALITY OF
LIFE.**

1. How well does this statement match your vision of a strong rural Ontario?
Please circle. 1 – very well 5 – not at all.

1 2 3 4 5

- 2a. Is there anything you would add, remove or change about this vision?

YES NO

- 2b. If yes, what changes would you make?

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COMPLETING THE PICTURE

Thank you for sharing your ideas and comments. The ultimate success of Ontario's Rural Plan will depend to a great degree on the quality and range of suggestions the province receives from rural residents and stakeholders.

This workbook is available online, as is the accompanying consultation paper. Respondents can detail their opinions and ideas through the website of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing at www.ruralplan.ontario.ca.

Submissions can also be sent by July 30, 2004, by mail or fax to the following address:

The Rural Plan
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Rural Development Division, 4NW
1 Stone Road West
Guelph, Ontario
N1G 4Y2
Fax: (519) 826-4336

If you have questions or would like further information, please contact us toll-free at 1-888-588-4111 or (519) 837-6313, or e-mail at ruralplan@mah.gov.on.ca.

Our goal is to create a framework that will help Ontario's rural communities, and the people who live and work there, achieve new levels of prosperity and quality of life for years to come. Thank you for adding your thoughts and proposals to help shape Ontario's Rural Plan.

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