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GOVERNMENT’S INVESTMENTS SUPPORTING ECONOMIC GROWTH, PROTECTING JOBS AND BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

TORONTO — The Ontario government is working with its rural municipal partners to build housing, encourage economic growth and development, reduce red tape, strengthen the agri-food sector and promote rural municipalities as great places to live, work and do business.

“Our government has a plan that’s building all of Ontario,” said Premier Doug Ford. “No matter the size of your community or where you live, we’re making sure every inch of Ontario benefits from our investments to support economic growth and protect

jobs, including by building infrastructure in rural communities. We want every part of Ontario to be the best place to live, work and raise a family.”

During the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference, Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, announced that the government is providing more than \$936 million in much-needed funds to municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators in 2023-24 and 2024-25 through initiatives under the National Housing Strategy to maintain

and create more community housing. This includes an increase of over \$23 million in funding under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit for women and children fleeing violence. These funds are the result of Ontario’s ongoing advocacy and recent negotiations with the federal government to help ensure our partners in the housing sector have the resources needed to protect, renew and expand community housing across the province.

Minister Clark also announced the province is extending the deadline for

implementation projects approved under Intake 3 of the Municipal Modernization Program (MMP) to streamline, digitize and modernize their services, including managing and approving applications for residential developments. Ontario is also extending the deadline for final reports for projects under the Streamline Development Approval Fund.

“Rural communities are the backbone of Ontario’s success and key to the province’s economy,” said Minister Clark. “Our government sees a bright future for rural Ontario with opportunities for growth, enhanced education and training, and increased workforce productivity – all while providing a high quality of life and housing options that Ontario families can afford.”

Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs also announced the launch of a new intake of the Rural Economic Development (RED) program. The RED program supports projects that help increase economic opportunities, create and retain jobs, and support the economic growth and resilience of rural and Indigenous communities. Applications for the new RED intake will be accepted until

February 23, 2023. This program aligns with the government’s priorities of removing barriers to investment, opening doors to rural economic development and creating good jobs across the province.

The ROMA conference is an important opportunity for provincial and municipal leaders to discuss and collaborate on rural priorities. This year’s conference was held in-person in Toronto for the first time since 2020, and rural municipal officials had an opportunity to interact face-to-face with Ministers, Associate Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants. They exchanged ideas, discussed opportunities and identified ways to address some of the key priorities facing rural municipalities today, including increasing housing supply, strengthening local infrastructure, tackling homelessness, improving mental health supports, economic development and more.

“Rural Ontario has always played an essential role in the prosperity of this province. The Rural Economic Development program provides rural municipalities, Indigenous communities, and not-for-profits with the tools they need for projects that contribute to local economic vitality,” said Minister Thompson. “Going forward our government will continue to build on rural successes.”

“Rural communities and those who call them home are what make Northern Ontario an incredible place to live, work and raise a family,” said Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development and Minister of Indigenous Affairs. “Our government is focused on a robust approach to promoting economic development across the North and we are supporting rural businesses as they look to grow their operations and workforces.”

“Rural Ontario is full of untapped potential. ROMA has spent the past two years exploring ways to ensure rural municipalities recover from the pandemic and realize their

promise,” said ROMA Chair and Mayor of the Village of Westport, Robin Jones. “We thank the Ontario Government for participating in the ROMA conference and we look forward to partnering to find creative solutions that will strengthen our communities for a more prosperous Ontario where no one is left behind.”

Quick Facts
The National Housing Strategy (NHS) bilateral agreement between Ontario and Canada provides more than \$5.75 billion over nine years to protect, renew and expand community housing and deliver direct affordability support to Ontarians in need of housing.

The Ontario government has invested nearly \$4.4 billion over the past three years to grow and enhance community and supportive housing, respond to COVID-19 and address homelessness for vulnerable Ontarians – including over \$1.2 billion to service managers and Indigenous program administrators through the Social Services Relief Fund.

Since 2019, Ontario has committed more than \$17.2 million to fund 308 economic development projects through the RED program.

Ontario is providing up to \$28 million through Intake 3 of MMP to support 321 projects led by small and rural municipalities.

In January 2022, the province launched the Streamline Development Approval Fund to provide more than \$45 million to help Ontario’s 39 largest municipalities modernize local approval processes for residential developments.

Ontario is investing nearly \$4 billion to bring access to reliable high-speed internet to every community across the province by the end of 2025.

Ministers, Associate Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants held more than 320 delegation meetings with rural municipalities and municipal organizations at the 2023 ROMA conference.



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