

## MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICIT

### Introduction

Municipal Infrastructure includes roads, highways and bridges, transit systems, water and waste water systems, public-housing, long term care facilities, electricity generation and distribution, waste management and recycling facilities, sporting and recreational facilities and the infrastructure that supports police, fire and ambulance services.

In the early 1990's the federal government drastically cut funding transfers to the provinces. The provincial government in Ontario, due to their lack of cash, down loaded the costs for programs. Welfare, social housing, ambulance services and 5000 kilometers of provincial highways and related bridges were passed on to the local municipalities. The final outcome from this domino effect has resulted in municipalities increasing taxes, year after year, reducing services and deferring much needed infrastructure and repairs.

RTO/ERO believes that the massive municipal deficit is undermining the prosperity and competitiveness of this province. Aging municipal water, sewers and storm sewer systems strain the safeguard the health of our communities, our natural resources and our environment. Municipal infrastructure will need to be enhanced as we adapt to the impacts of climate change and the global economy.

We believe the federal government and the provincial governments are beginning to address this area in a limited way through the Canada Strategic Fund and the ReNew Ontario plan. The Canada Strategic Fund emphasizes partnerships with any combination of municipal, provincial, territorial governments, as well as the private sector. The ReNew plan for Ontario is a coordinated long term approach to public infrastructure investment.

The issue for seniors including our members is the amount of their retirement income that is being consumed to deal with the infrastructure issues. All levels of government need long term plans to rehabilitate and maintain basic infrastructure such as water and sewers but in many communities the cost of water and sewers has increased by over 400%. Good long term planning and budgeting predictions at all levels of government would have alleviated this type of hardship. For those on low income we believe consideration should be given to special or reduced rates to basic areas like water, electricity or transit.

### Proposed Action Plan

RTO/ERO believes that an aggressive approach to alleviate municipal deficits would be, increased targeted funding from both levels of government, in co-operation with municipalities. This would:

- increase the effectiveness of urban development
- provide safer and faster movement of people and goods on transportation routes
- promote increased economic activity, including tourism
- develop and expand innovative technologies and practices to minimize green house gas emissions

1. How will your government/party deal with the local transportation infrastructure deficit?
2. What plans does your government/party have to start the process of up loading social service programs from municipalities?
3. What provisions has your government/party taken to alleviate the burden for those on low income who suffer the increases in areas such as electricity, water and gas?