

Report to Municipal Services Committee
Meeting Date: July 14, 2025
Report Title: Rural Ontario Development (ROD Program)

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RECOMMENDATION:

Be it resolved that the Municipal Services Committee recommends to Council that staff be authorized to submit an application to the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program in an amount up to \$170,000 (total project cost over a two-year period) with at least 65% municipal funding (approximately \$55,000 per year) being included in the 2026-2027 budget(s), as presented in MSC report ADM-2025-09.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMMENTS:

Recommendations directly relate to several areas in the Strategic Plan 2030:

Sector #1 – Economic Prosperity. Strategic Initiative #1

Sector #3 – Infrastructure. Strategic Initiative #1 and #2

Sector #10 – Heritage and Culture. Strategic Initiative #2 and #4

The Economic Development Action Plan 2023-2026 identifies Village Renewal Projects within Priority #2 - Physical Infrastructure (Active Transportation) and Priority #3 - Community Revitalization.

BACKGROUND:

The Rural Economic Development (RED) Program has been expanded to become the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) Program. Correspondence from Ontario Minister of Rural Affairs, Lisa M. Thompson announced that the (ROD) program is now open for applications. Find full program details at www.ontario.ca/RODprogram

This enhanced program is part of Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy. The province is investing \$20 million to support rural municipalities, not-for-profits, Indigenous communities, local service boards and rural small businesses to attract investment and create new jobs and opportunities for rural workers.

The ROD program introduces four new enhanced funding streams and expands program eligibility to include more rural communities and rural small businesses. Staff are recommending that the Township apply to Stream 3.

Stream 3:

Community Infrastructure Enhancements

Projects that update or transform community assets that have been identified as important to the community's economy. Applicants can apply for up to \$25,000 (35% cost share) for small projects or up to \$250,000 (35% cost share) for large projects.

Rehabilitation of cultural, heritage or tourism attractions

Minor Capital Costs Projects that rehabilitate an existing cultural, heritage, or tourism attraction, as identified through previously completed strategies and Projects that establish its significance for Economic Development.

Example Projects:

- rehabilitation of a historic building or structure
- rehabilitation of an established tourism asset
- rehabilitation of a recreational trail

Redevelopment of vacant and/or underutilized buildings

Minor Capital Costs Projects to redevelop vacant and/or underutilized buildings to achieve an Economic Development outcome.

Example Projects:

- expansion of an incubator or innovation hub
- development of a co-working space
- youth centre
- agri-food hubs

Streetscaping and landscaping

Minor Capital Costs Projects identified through previously completed strategies that improve the design quality of public areas.

Example Projects:

- wayfinding signage
- beautification (for example, decorative lighting, banners, murals, street furniture, public art, trees)
- wi-Fi equipment for public use

Ineligible Projects

The following Projects are ineligible:

- submissions with incomplete applications
- Projects that do not meet the outcomes of the ROD Program (as outlined in the "Program outcomes and performance measures" section below) or align with the program streams
- Projects that do not benefit Rural Ontario

- Projects receiving any amount of other provincial funding
- Projects seeking funding for academic research
- debt restructuring, fundraising, or financing (for example, re-granting ROD Funds)
- Projects that will influence or lobby any level of government
- Projects seeking funding for major capital Projects (for example, new building construction, roads, bridges, paved or concrete surfaces, water/wastewater treatment facilities, utility distribution, broadband)
- regional marketing and outreach Projects that do not have an impact across at least 2 lower-tier or least 2 communities within a single-tier Municipality, or that focus exclusively on tourism events
- Projects that host events with the intent to primarily attract tourists or general community attendance
- those primarily benefitting an individual business
- Projects that the primary purpose is to ready a property or asset for immediate or imminent sale
- Projects that the primary purpose is to support compliance efforts with current Requirements of Law

DISCUSSION:

The Municipal Services Committee may recommend to Council that an application be submitted for the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program. The project, its budget and timeline are for discussion. Projects should be completed in 2 years.

Applications for the first intake are being accepted until September 24, 2025, at 5 p.m.

Proposed Project: Township-wide Historic Village renewal: Streetscape, Wayfinding and Landscape Project

In response to community input collected between 2012 and 2025 as reported in ECD 2025-04 and ECD 2025-06, this project will implement the Village Visions of Chaffey's Lock, Delta, Elgin, Lombardy, Newboro and Portland in partnership with Community Enhancement Committees.

Items

Streetscapes

Description

Specific to village identity, decorative benches as rest stops in key locations within villages and hamlets.

Example



*i.e. Newboro
"Heritage" Bench*

Wayfinding Signs

Further to the Rideau Lakes Sign Strategy 2020, additional wayfinding signs are needed within villages.



Landscaping

Enhance community spaces with decorative planters and pedestrian pathways in strategic locations within villages.



Other Elements

- Heritage: Highlight historic buildings identified on walking tours, historic settlements and heritage storyboards with villages.
- Accessibility: design for seniors, people with disabilities, strollers, clear sightlines and good lighting.
- Connectivity: consider connections to nearby trails, parks and waterways.

Potential Project Partners:

Partners are organizations or community groups that contribute financial or In-kind resources to the Project. (In-kind support could include a commitment of resources such as staff time, expertise, equipment, or other non-monetary support.)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

In 2025, there is no budget impact.

Township-wide Historic Village renewal: Streetscape, Wayfinding and Landscape Project

Should the application be successful, 65% of eligible costs of up to a total project value of \$170,000 would be placed in the 2026 and/or 2027 budget. Contributions may be received from partners. Options to be discussed.

Example Budget

If the total project cost is \$170,000 over two years in 2026 and 2027 as shown below: This may enable, for example, an investment of approximately \$28,000 into each of our 6 villages over the two-year period.

2026-2027 Municipal Contributions (65%)	\$50,250 / year)
2026-2027 CEC Contribution (approximately \$1,000 each)	\$5,000 / year
2026-2027 ROD program Contributions (35%)	\$29,750 / year)
2026-2027 Annual Project Cost	\$85,000 per year
2026-2027 TOTAL Project Cost (2 years at \$85,000 per year)	\$170,000

ATTACHMENTS:

None

e-signed

July 8, 2025

Marie White

Economic Development & Cultural Heritage Coordinator

DATE

e-approved

July 9, 2025

Shellee Fournier

CAO

DATE