

Ontario's rural and northern residents contribute significantly to the economic well-being of this province and to the communities where they live.

The Mission of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations is: **To protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario.** FOCA is responsible for promoting vibrant and sustainable rural waterfront communities through effective communication, education and advocacy. FOCA provides leadership for sound public policy on key rural issues, and encourages and empowers positive environmental stewardship by providing information, tools, and leadership. FOCA's 50,000 member families have a significant major economic role in their rural communities, including contributing over \$800 million in annual property taxes. Collectively, these families own and steward 50,000 hectares of waterfront land, and 15,000 kilometres of sensitive Ontario shorelines.

Ontario has close to a quarter of Earth's available surface fresh water, and we have a collective responsibility to take action to ensure fresh water protection and restoration while we also maintain vibrant and healthy communities.

Ontario's watersheds are sources of our drinking water and support our commercial and recreational activities. One-third of Ontarians and 98% of rural Ontario rely on non-municipal water systems, and are therefore particularly vulnerable to threats to their drinking water.

Ontario's lakes and rivers are threatened; they will be able to sustain our communities and our economy only through meaningful action on climate change mitigation and adaptation, diligent land use planning, control of water borne pollutants, and preventing the threat from invasive species.

FOCA encourages every voter to ask your candidate what they would do to support sustainable and affordable rural living, particularly with respect to:

- ✓ Robust land use planning that considers cumulative and long-term impacts
- ✓ Preventing nuisance algae by reducing overall emissions of nutrient pollutants to water from Ontario industries and municipalities
- ✓ Properly managing, reviewing, substances that are harmful to aquatic life, including chloride pollution from the application of road salts
- ✓ Supporting implementation of agricultural best management practices to manage the impacts of nutrients on water quality
- ✓ Protecting homes and businesses from flooding by assessing the extent of flood vulnerabilities through watershed and shoreline studies
- ✓ Preventing invasive species, such as Asian carp, from taking hold in Ontario and Increasing efforts to combat invasive species that are already becoming established.



Water is crucially important to the health of Ontario's people, wildlife, ecosystems, and economy.

Clear commitments, targets with timelines, and investments are needed. We deserve significant progress toward protection and restoration of fresh waters in Ontario.

The **economies** of our communities and the ability of rural areas to contribute in a meaningful way to Ontario's prosperity will require meaningful and measureable action on:

- **The cost of energy.** Electricity costs are escalating out of control and a long-term affordable plan is required. Not just kicking the costs down the road.
 - **Expanded access to cellular and broadband internet connection,** to provide adequate, modern access and speed of connections
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In terms of rural affordability, municipal governments provide essential daily services and own more than 60% of all public infrastructure. Ontario municipalities face a \$4.9 billion annual gap to fund services and much needed infrastructure investments. Property taxes would need to increase by about 8% per year, every year for the next decade, to maintain current services and close the infrastructure gap. (All figures AMO, 2018) This is not sustainable.

Some practical changes by the province could **stretch our tax dollars** and help municipal governments deliver many services more efficiently and affordably, thus reducing the burden on property taxpayers:

- If imposing new municipal responsibilities or requirements, the Province must provide full and ongoing funding
 - Establishing reasonable limits on municipal liability to reduce insurance costs
 - Mitigating police and fire compensation to levels that more closely reflect increases of other municipal employees
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Other concerns include access to quality **medical services** nearby for rural and small town Ontarians who typically live some distance from urban facilities and services. A commitment and a thoroughly-planned approach to health care and quality medical services near to rural and northern residents is needed.