Are we seeing participation in rural Ontario municipal politics from a diverse talent pool?
Are there sufficient candidates to foster a healthy, competitive environment in local elections?
Do new councillors feel prepared to carry out their roles and responsibilities?

THE MAKEUP OF RURAL ONTARIO MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS IS...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OLDER</th>
<th>PREDOMINANTLY MALE</th>
<th>NOT RACIALLY DIVERSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median age of councillors and mayors</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Councillors that are men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age of Ontario population</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>‘Heads of council’ that are men (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% of rural Ontario councillors have self-identified as a visible minority *</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* not significantly different from rural Ontario’s overall visible minority population (Census)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Data did not identify significant differences between urban and rural councillor demographics, suggesting this is a society-wide challenge.

THE CHALLENGE OF MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

GENDER IMBALANCE

Women are not running for council in the same numbers as men. Respondents cited various environmental factors that may deter women from running for election: lack of role models, conflict, stereotypes & socialization.

Rural Ontario councillors & mayors that are women | 25% |
Success rate in 2014 election | Men | 37% |
| Women | 43% |

2014 candidates that were women | 23% |

“As long as we think a woman is abandoning her family and a man is serving his community, we will continue to see these lower numbers for women.”

AGE DISCREPANCY

The job of municipal council is not seen as a “young person’s sport”. Councillor duties conflict with commitments like young families, full-time jobs and new mortgages.

Ontario councillors | 18-40 years old | 9% |
50-70 years old | 69% |

“... If you have a young family, the worst thing that can happen is you either rob your family to do the job, or you rob the job to do right by your family.”

Continued on opposite side
COUNCILLOR PREPAREDNESS AND EXPERIENCE

Councillors reported struggling to learn their roles on council and how the municipal system works.

Many councillors cited a negative working environment as a reason for them leaving municipal politics and as a deterrent for peers running.

WHAT CAN BE DONE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE ACTION

ENCOURAGE CANDIDACY

Collect and house more robust demographic data for municipal candidates across Ontario
Identify and connect existing candidacy initiatives to build on best practices
Actively recruit candidates through social marketing and public education campaigns
Market and promote positive role models

PREPARE CANDIDATES & NEW COUNCILLORS

Develop mentorship and networking among current and future municipal leaders
Improve/expand access to pre-candidacy and new councillor training
Make adaptable educational tools and resources available to clerks across Ontario

ENCOURAGE MUTUAL RESPECT

Develop a public education campaign around the value of local government and the realities councillors face
Collectively as a council, review a code of conduct for council operations
Establish common “aspirational values” for council operations and interactions

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, go to www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca and download the Measuring Rural Community Vitality: Municipal Councillor Profile