



The Rural and Northern Lens

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) is committed to the betterment of Rural and Northern Ontario. ROMA acts as the rural municipal voice in Ontario when considering and responding to proposed legislation while proactively working with the Government on solutions. ROMA takes pride in promoting, supporting and enhancing strong and effective rural governments.

The ROMA discussion paper - A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario, serves as a reference point for future provincial policy development and implementation. The paper reflects the interests of rural and northern municipal governments in order to call attention to their communities' needs and requirements so they can thrive and succeed.

The paper provides a "lens" by which policy can be questioned, evaluated and decided upon.

The "Rural Lens" brings focus to the potential impacts of proposed policy, decisions and new actions on rural municipalities. It helps to ensure that questions are asked in a structured, objective and consistent manner. It helps to assess impacts in advance of decisions. It promotes education and understanding of issues by staff and elected officials at all levels of government.

ROMA requests that the Province filter all policy decisions and legislation through this lens to help ensure that rural and northern communities thrive and succeed. The Lens will also be used by ROMA and is provided to rural municipalities for their use.



The Rural and Northern Lens: A Dozen Questions

For Rural and Northern Ontario does the proposed initiative:



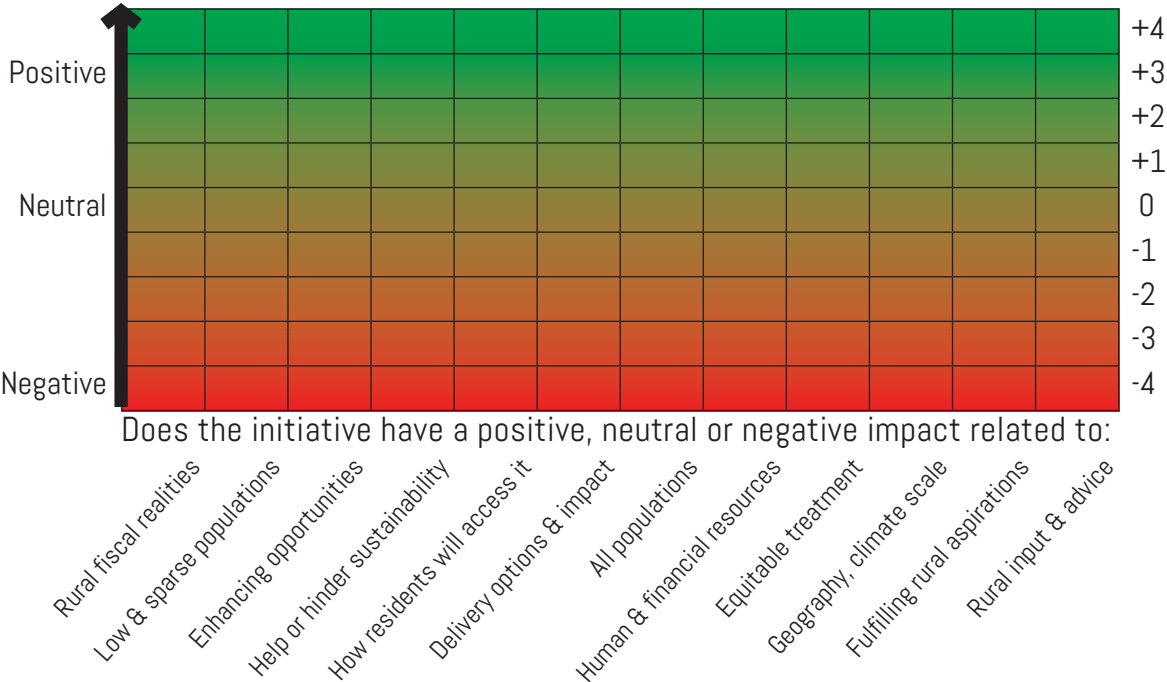
1. Benefit or hinder the fiscal realities of Rural and Northern Ontario?
2. Have a business case that accounts for low and sparse populations?
3. Enhance opportunities in Rural and Northern Ontario?

4. Help or hinder goals of sustainability blending environmental, social and economic factors?
5. Consider how and if rural people will be able to access it?
6. Consider all options for delivery, ensuring efficiency, the potential for co-delivery and an acceptable administrative impact on municipalities?
7. Account for the needs of special populations (such as youth, elderly and immigrants)?
8. Have adequate human and financial resources to be effective?
9. Ensure that Rural and Northern communities are receiving equitable treatment or services relative to others in the province?
10. Recognize the geography, weather and scale of Rural and Northern Ontario and include adjusted program criteria to accommodate these realities?
11. Accommodate the aspirations of residents from rural communities and the north?
12. Build upon the input and advice of rural residents, communities and municipalities?

Using the Lens:

Respond to the 12 questions.

Score your response as Positive, Neutral or Negative, using the +4 to -4 scoring system.



The Rural and Northern Lens: A Way Forward



At the end of the day the rural and northern lens is about people. It is about the livelihoods of nearly 2 million people who call rural and northern communities their home. It is about the communities these people live within, their jobs, their built and natural environment, the services they receive and the quality of their lives.

The Rural and Northern Lens provides us with an invitation. An invitation to all levels of government to do better with what they have and to ensure that the needs and requirements of rural and northern residents are met so that they may thrive and succeed. The Lens is particularly important for the provincial government. Various ministries must accommodate the needs of a large and urbanizing province and it is critical to ensure that Rural and Northern needs are not lost in the development of policy. This Lens can help.

It is a tool culminating in the sample chart below. It provides a quick visual representation of the positive and negative impacts of public initiatives. The need is obvious.

