



PHOTO BY SCOTT TRACEY/METROLAND

Road maintenance and resurfacing is getting done less often.

York residents carrying 2nd-highest debt per capita

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A METROLAND MEDIA SPECIAL REPORT

CONCRETE PROBLEMS

How to fix our crumbling infrastructure

structure repairs and upgrades:

- Mississauga, which hasn't had to borrow since 1978, projects \$446 million in debt over the next 10 years. Brampton, debt free at the moment, expects to start incurring debt as early as 2012;

- Almost half are carrying debt loads in excess of \$600 per resident.

The consequences are significant.

In Wainfleet, more than 1,000 homes are entering the sixth year of a boil water advisory after Niagara Region decided against the \$120-million cost of connecting the community to Port Colborne's water system.

To close the local infrastructure gap, every Toronto resident would have to pay more than \$1,000 extra on his property tax bill. In Prince Edward County and Perth, the figure is closer to \$2,000.

In Hamilton, roads that are supposed to be resurfaced within 35 years are now on a 110-year cycle.

Sinkholes are more common, opening huge gaps in roadways when broken underground pipes collapse or the surface gives out.

'Our infrastructure is in very dire straits and we need to act urgently.'

Severe weather and crumbling storm drainage systems make certain older neighbourhoods across Ontario more vulnerable to basement flooding.

In Durham, traffic on a badly deteriorating heritage bridge has been curtailed until the \$800,000 in required funding is found.

In Huntsville, where more than \$100 million flowed in funding for the G8 summit and federal-provincial stimulus, no assistance was available to renovate several small community halls to make them handicapped accessible.

Part of the problem is recent government stimulus funds went to "shovel ready" projects, rather than those most in need of attention, says Saeed Mirza, professor emeritus of engineering at McGill University.

"The stimulus (program) was to create jobs, not to spend money where we needed," he said. "Our infrastructure is in very dire straits and we need to act urgently."

The balance of Ontario's infrastructure is now of an age where it needs replacement or

repair. About 60 per cent of buildings, roads, water and other systems are more than 50 years old. Almost a third of the province's infrastructure is more than 90 years old.

Guelph is a good example of what that means. About 40 per cent of the city's \$1.3 billion worth of infrastructure is at the end of its life cycle.

Almost every community has a Centennial building of some kind, a library or arena, built in a massive construction boom during Canada's 1967 celebrations. About 2,500 such buildings are now in need of — but not funded for — repairs.

"There are really harsh, stark realities coming soon," said Pat Vanini, executive director of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

If Ontario was your house, it would be on the verge of falling apart.

The roof needs reshingling, the electrical system no longer meets standards and the furnace is on its last legs. Forget about the fact the bathroom hasn't been redone since the 1970s and that you'd like to replace the previous owners' shag carpeting with hardwood.

You're more concerned about making mortgage payments, but you can't be sure there will still be paycheques coming next year. You're taking out loans, using your line of credit and maxing out credit cards to pay for what you know you need.

That's the situation most municipalities find themselves in today.

But it's about to get worse because the population of the Greater Golden Horseshoe alone is growing from 8 million just five years ago to 11.5 million by 2031. That means you're probably going to have to add an extra floor to the house on top of everything else.

The fast-growing population will require larger public buildings, better transit and new schools. The province's Places to Grow plan sets ambitious population targets for the region's municipalities and guidelines on constructing efficient, compact communities.

But there is no corresponding offer by the province, or Ottawa, to help specifically with the costs of everything all those new residents will need.

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

► Provincewide spending on 1,400 municipal projects from all three levels of government totalled about \$3.4 billion over the last two years.

► This included the \$1.85 billion (split between Ontario and Ottawa) doled out in Ontario through the infrastructure stimulus fund (ISF). Other investments included \$408 million through the communities component of the building Canada fund and the recreational infrastructure Canada (RINC) fund that

allowed for \$500 million of renovations at hockey arenas and other recreational facilities across the country.

► To qualify for the ISF, projects had to be "hard" infrastructure (roads, pipes, water treatment facilities, etc.) and be "shovel ready". Though the fund was not finalized until mid-2009, projects were supposed to be complete by March 2011, a deadline that has since been extended to October.

CONCRETE PROBLEMS

The cost of maintaining, renewing and rebuilding Ontario's crumbling infrastructure is staggering — well into the billions of dollars for some of the communities surveyed for this Metroland Special Report. While recent infrastructure stimulus funding spread \$3.4 billion across Ontario in the past two years, the programs made only a dent. This chart provides an overview of debt and capital needs.

m = million b = billion	2011 capital budget	Long-term capital budget	Debt	Population 2011 projected	Debt per capita
Barrie	\$125.4m	\$1.91b (to 2020)	\$189m	141,000	\$1,340
Brampton	\$215.7m	\$2.1b (to 2020)	\$0	510,000	\$0
Burlington	\$40.5m	\$493.6m (to 2020)	\$100m	175,800	\$569
Durham	\$290.6m	\$1.7b (to 2015)	\$246m	660,000	\$373
Guelph	\$44.8m	NA	\$92.8m	118,000	\$787
Halton	\$214m	\$2.6b (to 2020)	\$151.1m	503,000	\$300
Hamilton	\$212m	\$1.9b (to 2020)	\$360m	540,000	\$667
Huntsville	\$2.2m	NA	\$13m	18,280	\$711
Kawartha Lakes	\$24.2m	\$367.6m (to 2020)	\$61m	80,000	\$762
Kitchener	\$118.4m	\$866.7m (to 2020)	\$98m	229,400	\$427
Mississauga	\$232m	\$1.97b (to 2020)	\$0*	738,000	\$0
Niagara Region	\$135.7m	\$1.6b (10-year)	\$294m	442,000	\$665
Oakville	\$88.6m	\$871m (to 2020)	\$40m	183,700	\$218
Peel	\$897.2m	\$5.2b (to 2020)	\$890m	1,323,000	\$673
Peterborough	\$42.7m	\$776.5m (to 2026)	\$72.6m	79,000	\$919
St. Catharines	\$25m (2010)	\$93.6m (to 2014)	\$60.2m	133,600	\$451
Simcoe County	\$62.2m	\$379m (10-year)	\$34m	484,000	\$70
City of Waterloo	\$38m	\$289.4m (to 2020)	\$66.4m	123,000	\$540
York	\$1b	\$8b (10-year)	\$1.4b	1,060,000	\$1,321

* \$446m in debt projected over the next 10 years

SOURCE: Municipalities