



News Release / Communiqué

**Office of the Cabinet du
Premier Premier
ministre**

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STRENGTHENING RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR A STRONGER ONTARIO

Premier McGuinty Commits \$300 Million To Achieve True 50-50 Partnership For Land Ambulance Services by 2008

TORONTO -- The Ontario government is building stronger rural communities by increasing land ambulance funding, proposing changes to improve local councils and calling for a tri-level commission on fiscal issues on which municipalities would sit as equals, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced today.

"We're strengthening our people in rural Ontario so they have every chance at future success," said Premier McGuinty. "Our goal is to give municipalities the respect they deserve -- and the tools they need to become more accountable, responsible partners with Queen's Park and the federal government."

The Premier called for a federal-provincial-municipal commission to fully examine fiscal relations between the three levels of government and make recommendations that will benefit all Canadians.

"Municipalities deliver a range of important public services that Canadians value," said Premier McGuinty. "It just makes sense that they be at the table from the very beginning."

The Premier also said the province would spend an estimated \$300 million over the next three years to achieve a true 50-50 sharing of the cost of municipal land ambulance services by 2008.

The previous government transferred responsibility for land ambulance services to municipalities in 1998 and agreed to fund 50 per cent of the costs, but municipalities have long contended that current funding does not cover all costs.

As a result of the Premier's commitment, annual funding for the land ambulance service is

estimated to reach \$280 million this year, \$333 million in 2007 and \$385 million in 2008.

"Municipalities have been patient but this is an issue of fairness," said Premier McGuinty. "I'm pleased that we are finally going to achieve a true 50-50 partnership."

To make municipal governments stronger and more effective, the government will propose four-year terms for local council members and school trustees, putting local officials on par with their provincial counterparts. If this change were adopted, four-year municipal terms could start this fall.

The Premier made these announcements at the combined conference of the Ontario Good Roads Association and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, an annual event that brings together over 1,200 municipal elected officials and staff.

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing John Gerretsen and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman were among the cabinet ministers who joined the Premier at the conference.

"Ontario's municipalities are the heart and soul of this province," said Gerretsen. "Our government and municipalities of all sizes are working together, consulting together, moving forward together -- for the benefit of all Ontarians."

"We have listened to the concerns of municipalities about land ambulance services and we have responded," said Smitherman. "We will continue to work with municipalities to enhance the delivery of land ambulance services for the benefit of all Ontario residents."

"If we continue to work together on behalf of Ontarians, we can have strong rural communities today and even stronger ones tomorrow," said Premier McGuinty. "We can ensure success for our people and build a bright future for their children and grandchildren."

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Ministry Pages:

- **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**
- **Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care**

See Also:

- **Speech: Remarks To The Rural Ontario Municipalities Association And The Ontario Good Roads Association**
- **Video: Strengthening Rural Communities For A Stronger Ontario: Premier McGuinty Commits \$300 Million To Achieve True 50-50 Partnership For Land Ambulance Services by 2008**

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