
STRATEGIC GROWTH COMMUNITIES FUND: GARRISON PETAWAWA AS AN IMMEDIATE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Purpose

Establish a provincial **Strategic Growth Communities Fund** to support municipalities experiencing rapid infrastructure pressure from provincially or nationally significant investments, including defence, nuclear energy, housing, manufacturing, healthcare, and workforce growth.

As an immediate application, the County of Renfrew and the Town of Petawawa are seeking a provincial infrastructure partnership to ensure roads, water, wastewater, stormwater, transportation, emergency access, and community services are built in step with the federal plan for more than 1,100 new military homes and continued growth at Garrison Petawawa.

Why This Matters / Why Now

Ontario has a growing infrastructure gap in communities that are not simply trying to attract growth, but are already being asked to absorb it. Across the province, municipalities hosting strategic investments in defence, nuclear energy, manufacturing, housing, healthcare, and workforce expansion are facing pressure on roads, water and wastewater systems, emergency services, childcare, recreation, housing-enabling infrastructure, and local transportation. These investments create provincial and national benefits, but the local enabling infrastructure is often left to municipalities with limited revenue tools and property-tax-based funding capacity.

Garrison Petawawa is a clear and immediate example. It is a nationally significant defence installation and the largest employer in the Upper Ottawa Valley. The Government of Canada has identified Petawawa as one of the Canadian Armed Forces locations with the largest planned military housing growth, with more than 1,100 new residential units anticipated. This expansion will strengthen defence readiness and housing security for military families, but it will also create direct pressure on the municipal systems that support the Garrison community.

Petawawa is already Renfrew County's largest and fastest-growing urban community. The Town reports approximately 261 residential units under construction, another 905 planned, a rental vacancy rate of only 1.5 percent, and sustained population growth.

These pressures are not theoretical. They are active, measurable, and already affecting infrastructure planning, housing supply, transportation corridors, emergency services, childcare, healthcare access, and community capacity.

Growth at a Glance

- **1,100+** new military homes planned at Petawawa
- **1,166** local units under construction or planned
- **\$480M** estimated annual regional impact from Garrison salaries

The Infrastructure Gap

The federal investment into Garrison Petawawa will create homes and expand defence capacity, but municipal governments must provide the roads, water, wastewater, stormwater, transportation connections, emergency access, and community services required to support that growth.

While the federal and provincial governments continue to advance ambitious objectives in housing, defence readiness, workforce development, and community infrastructure, the associated municipal capital and operating pressures are increasingly borne by local governments.

Current provincial funding programs do not provide a predictable mechanism to align municipal infrastructure investments with major federal defence expansion projects, and municipalities have limited revenue tools available to respond. There are no County-level development charges currently being levied to support growth projects, leaving local taxpayers at risk of funding infrastructure required to achieve broader provincial and national objectives.

Communities such as Kingston and Quinte West have benefited from decades of infrastructure investment to support economic expansion. Renfrew County now faces similar pressures, but without access to comparable fiscal capacity. Provincial partnership is required to ensure housing, transportation, water and wastewater systems, and community infrastructure can support the residents, workers, and industries choosing to build their future here.

Renfrew County's infrastructure challenge should be understood as a growth-management issue, not a traditional rural-development issue. Statistics Canada shows Renfrew County, including the City of Pembroke, grew to 106,365 residents in 2021, while Petawawa grew by 5.7%, nearly matching Ontario's 5.8% growth rate and sitting in the same broader pattern as Eastern Ontario growth centres such as Kingston CMA, which grew by 7.1%, and Quinte West, which grew by 6.8%. The difference is that Renfrew County's growth is tied directly to strategic national assets, including Garrison Petawawa and Chalk River Laboratories.

(Note: Average CVA growth within the County of Renfrew (exc. Pembroke) over the past 10 years has been 1.53%, and 20 years at 1.57%.)

Garrison Petawawa is expected to receive nearly \$600 million in new military housing and infrastructure, with more than 1,100 new units planned and more than 650 Canadian Armed Forces members already waiting for housing. Locally, the brief identifies 1,166 housing units under construction or planned, a 1.5% rental vacancy rate, and an estimated \$480 million annual regional impact from Garrison salaries. Chalk River Laboratories adds a second major anchor, employing more than 2,700 people, generating approximately \$380 million in annual wages and benefits, and contributing an estimated \$724 million in GDP and \$1 billion in revenue impacts to Renfrew County.

This is not speculative growth. It is active, measurable pressure on local systems. Without a coordinated provincial infrastructure partnership, municipalities will be expected to carry the local costs of housing, servicing, transportation, emergency response, childcare, health access, and community infrastructure required to deliver federal defence, nuclear, housing, and economic priorities.

Priority Infrastructure Investments

- **County Road 51 (Petawawa Boulevard) corridor:** Advance the expansion of County Road 51 from Paquette Road to Doran Road and plan the next phase from Doran Road to Murphy Road. This corridor carries significant daily traffic and is the principal connection between residential growth areas, the Garrison, Highway 17, commercial services, and the broader County Road network.
- **Water, wastewater and stormwater capacity:** Support the Town of Petawawa's implementation of its master servicing priorities, including trunk infrastructure, pumping, treatment, storage, and climate resilient stormwater systems needed to unlock housing sites and protect existing neighbourhoods.
- **Local transportation and active connections:** Invest in intersection improvements, sidewalks, active transportation, transit solutions, and safe connections between Garrison housing, schools, services, employment areas, and regional destinations.
- **Community and emergency infrastructure:** Recognize that rapid defence-related growth also increases demand for fire protection, emergency response, recreation, childcare, health access, and other facilities that support military families and the civilian community.
- **Regional access and economic capacity:** Consider investments that strengthen Highway 17 connections, the Pembroke and Area Airport, utilities, and regional workforce infrastructure so local businesses and trades can participate in the multi year construction program.

Request for Support

We ask the Province to establish a **Strategic Growth Communities Fund** to help municipalities plan, design, and build enabling infrastructure required to support provincially or nationally significant growth. The fund would support communities experiencing rapid pressure from defence expansion, nuclear energy, housing growth, major employment investments, manufacturing, healthcare, and workforce development.

As an immediate first application, the Province should partner with the County of Renfrew, the Town of Petawawa, National Defence, Canadian Forces Housing Agency, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, and other relevant partners to coordinate infrastructure planning and funding related to Garrison Petawawa growth, Chalk River economic activity, and associated housing and workforce pressures.

This approach would allow Ontario to move beyond one-off infrastructure requests and create a repeatable model for communities where senior government priorities are driving local capital and operating pressures.

In short:

- **Create a dedicated fund:** Establish a Strategic Growth Communities Fund for municipalities experiencing infrastructure pressure from provincially or nationally significant investments.
- **Apply it first in Renfrew County:** Use Garrison Petawawa and the County of Renfrew as an immediate partnership model because the growth pressures are active, measurable, and tied to defence, nuclear, housing, and workforce priorities.
- **Convene a joint planning table:** Bring together the Province, the County, the Town of Petawawa, National Defence, Canadian Forces Housing Agency, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, and other partners to coordinate growth forecasts, project sequencing, approvals, and funding.
- **Support early project readiness:** Provide planning and design funding now so priority infrastructure projects are construction-ready when housing and employment growth accelerates.
- **Share costs fairly:** Establish a funding model that recognizes that defence readiness, nuclear capacity, military housing, and economic security are provincial and national priorities, and should not be financed through the municipal property tax base alone.

- **Fair cost sharing:** Establish a funding model that recognizes that defence readiness, military housing, and economic security are provincial and national priorities. Municipal governments should not be expected to absorb the infrastructure costs associated with delivering senior government objectives through property taxes alone. Provincial support should reflect the broader public benefits created by Garrison growth and ensure costs are shared fairly among all orders of government.

Desired Outcome

A commitment from the Minister to direct staff to explore the creation of a **Strategic Growth Communities Fund**, designate a senior provincial lead, and convene an intergovernmental infrastructure planning table in fall 2026 with the County of Renfrew, the Town of Petawawa, National Defence, Canadian Forces Housing Agency, Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, and other relevant partners. The immediate goal would be to identify a first package of priority infrastructure projects linked to Garrison Petawawa growth and establish a scalable model that can be applied to other Ontario communities experiencing similar strategic growth pressures.

Why Your Support Matters

This is about more than one road, one subdivision, or one municipal budget. It is about whether Ontario has the infrastructure model required to support communities that are growing because they host provincial and national priorities. Garrison Petawawa gives Ontario an immediate opportunity to match a historic federal defence investment with the municipal infrastructure required to make it successful.

A Strategic Growth Communities Fund would turn that opportunity into a repeatable provincial model, helping communities build the roads, servicing capacity, emergency infrastructure, transportation connections, and community supports needed to convert strategic investment into lasting economic and social benefit.

Ontario needs a new infrastructure tool for communities carrying strategic growth, and Garrison Petawawa gives the Province a clear, urgent, measurable place to start.