

Fourth Annual Regional CAOs' Address: The Regional Advantage: Evidence of Impact in Changing Times

Speakers:

Gary Kent, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional Municipality of Peel

Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional Municipality of Durham

Erin Mahoney, Chief Administrative Officer, Regional Municipality of York

Andrew Farr, Chief Administrative Officer, Halton Region

Moderator:

Karen Chapple, Director, School of Cities

April 20, 2026

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Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



Food bank demand has nearly doubled since pandemic, Mississauga organization says

Food Banks Mississauga launches spring drive in hopes of raising \$800K by end of April

CBC News · Posted: Mar 16, 2026 8:59 PM EDT | Last Updated: March 16

CUSMA talks may run past July 1 deadline, U.S. trade envoy says

Jamieson Greer says U.S. might need to exit trade pact in order to continue negotiations

Thomson Reuters · Posted: Apr 07, 2026 12:46 PM EDT | Last Updated: April 7

Peel Region Mayors Oppose Ontario's Conservation Authority Merger Plan, Cite Risks to Housing and Public Safety

Apr 9, 2026



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POLITICS

Ontario city facing full \$18.3M cyberattack bill after insurer denies claim



By **Aaron D'Andrea** · Global News

Posted July 31, 2025 11:29 am · Updated July 31, 2025 6:51 pm · 4 min read

NEWS

Trump's Iran rhetoric on wiping out civilization faces deep backlash

39 BY JULIA MANCHESTER AND MALLORY WILSON - 04/07/26 5:25 PM ET

Link icons for social media sharing

Union's legal review challenges Ontario's promise that water corporations will be publicly owned

CUPE hired a law firm to analyze the new water and wastewater corporations



Jessica Smith Cross
Mar 12, 2026 11:48 AM



Pickering city council moving meetings online due to threats, mayor says

Kevin Ashe says councillors, city staff facing harassment stemming from Coun. Lisa Robinson's conduct

[Tyler Cheese](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jan 03, 2025 5:00 AM EST | Last Updated: January 3, 2025

THE CANADIAN PRESS 

Ontario to build on 'strong mayor' system by appointing 'strong' regional chairs

Allison Jones

Thu, April 2, 2026 at 3:36 p.m. EDT
3 min read

HEALTH

Peel's rapid demographic shifts spark significant investments in the paramedic sector

By Muhammad Hamza - Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Feb 02, 2026 - Brampton, Mississauga

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NEWS RELEASE

Ontario Proposing to Expand Strong Mayor Powers to 169 Additional Municipalities

Expansion will help municipalities deliver on provincial priorities like building homes and infrastructure

[Toronto](#) | News

Ontario reversing decision to dissolve Peel Region

By Katherine DeClerq

Published: December 13, 2023 at 11:12AM EST

'Decades of underinvestment' to blame for underfunded services in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon: Report

Mississauga | Brampton | Community | Latest News

By [Jonah Shinuda](#)

Published January 26, 2026 at 5:59 pm



Regional Governance in an Era of Disruption

Presented by: Gary Kent, Chief Administrative Officer


April 20, 2026



Governance under pressure



Building
Civility and Trust in
Local Government
A NATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATORS

CAMA  ACAM
Administrative Excellence

The graphic features a dark brown background with a green triangle on the right side. The text is in white and yellow. The logo at the bottom consists of the letters 'CAMA' and 'ACAM' in green, separated by a small green diamond icon with a white outline. Below the logo is the tagline 'Administrative Excellence' in a smaller green font.

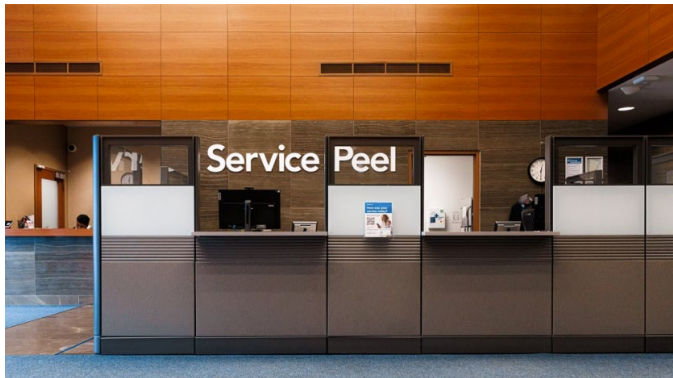
Community for life: Who does what?



Financial reality: Growth must be paid for



Affordability and structural gaps



People: The anchor institution



**Building on
shifting ground**

**The Regional
Advantage
- Evidence of
Impact**





Social and Community Services: The Advantage of Regional Scale

Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer

The Region of Durham

April 20, 2026

The Current Reality in Our Communities


Canada's social housing deficit is a crisis hiding in plain sight

Housing crisis is about the exclusion of deeply affordable, non-market housing in the national conversation

'Critical situation': Ajax encampment prompts call for more shelter space in Durham Region

Regional officials can't clear the encampment because shelters are at full capacity across Durham

Community health sector launches campaign profiling staffing challenges and impact to patient care

 October 17, 2024

Nearly 85,000 people homeless in Ontario, up 8% in one year: report



Delivering Social Services in a Legacy System



Beaverton Heights – Supportive Housing



Primary Care Outreach Program





CSWB Micro-Grant Program



Paramedic Surge Capacity

Ontario Moves to Centralize Regional Governance with New Legislation



BY SOPHIE MITCHELL – APRIL 3, 2026 NO COMMENTS 4 MINS READ



The Regional Advantage

Image: Toronto Society of Architects, c/o Regional Municipality of York



Social and Community Services: The Advantage of Regional Scale

Elaine Baxter-Trahair

Chief Administrative Officer

The Regional Municipality of Durham

durham.ca

@RegionofDurham





THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE: LEVERAGING SCALE, INNOVATION AND DEPTH

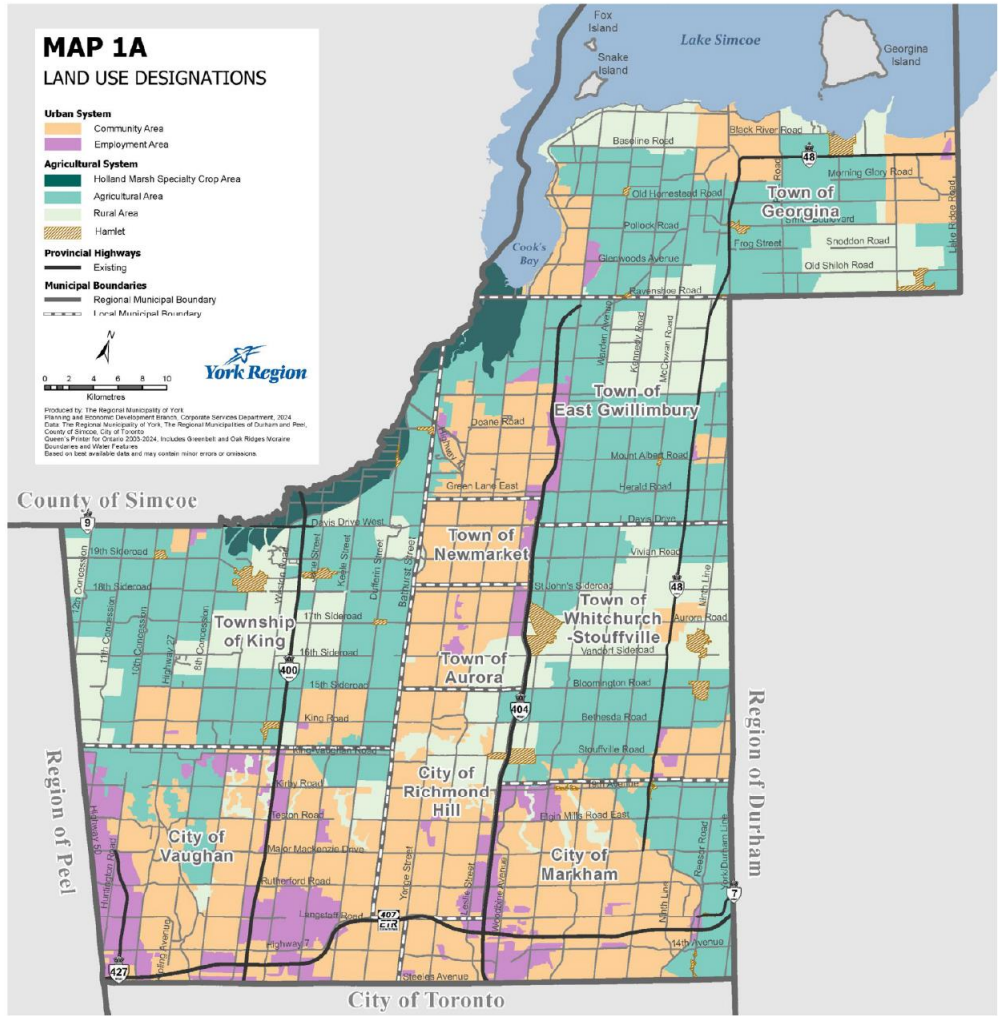
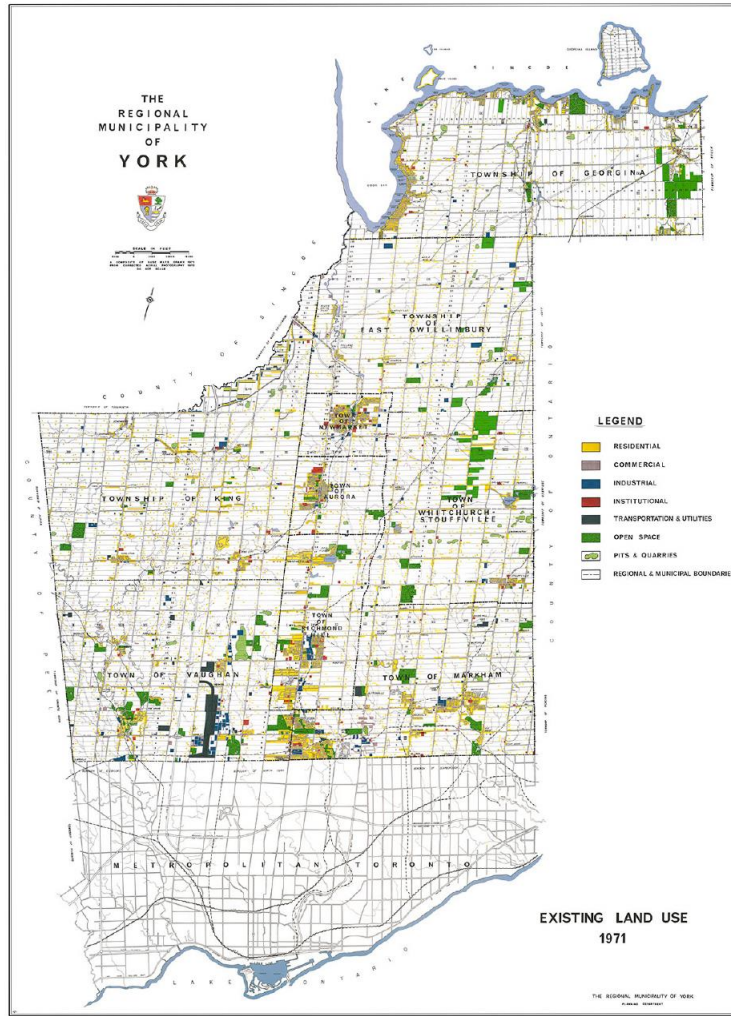
Presented by
Erin Mahoney

Presented on
April 20, 2026



WHY THE REGIONAL MODEL EXISTS

1971
Population of
169,00

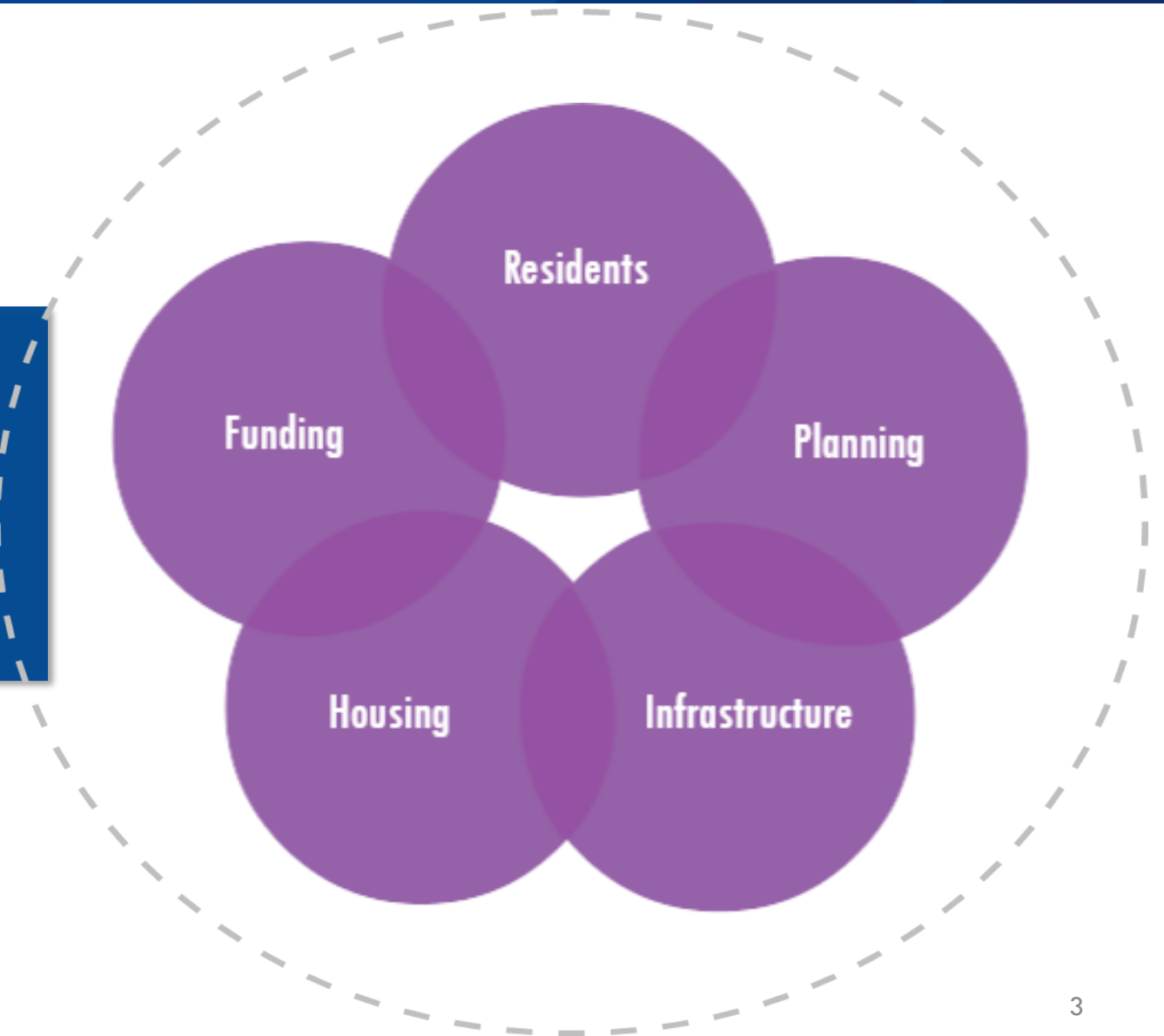


2025
Population of
1.3 million

OUR CHALLENGE: COMPLEX SYSTEMS UNDER GROWING PRESSURE



Workforce Scale,
Innovation and Depth
Address Pressures



WHAT WE ARE HEARING FROM OUR COMMUNITY



TOP ISSUES

27% Public Safety

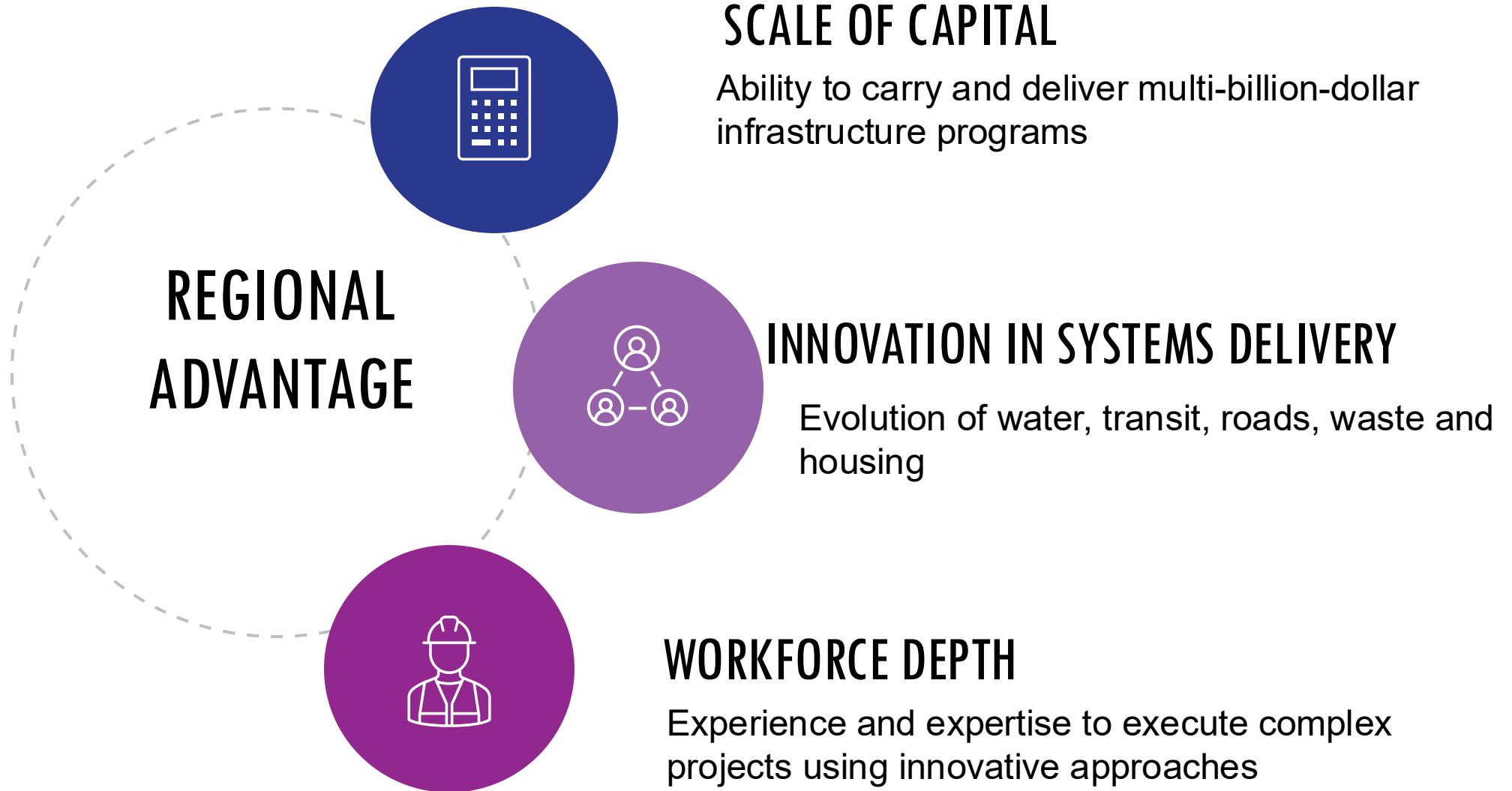
14% Housing

11% Traffic

9% Growth

6% Transit

THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE



WHY SCALE MATTERS



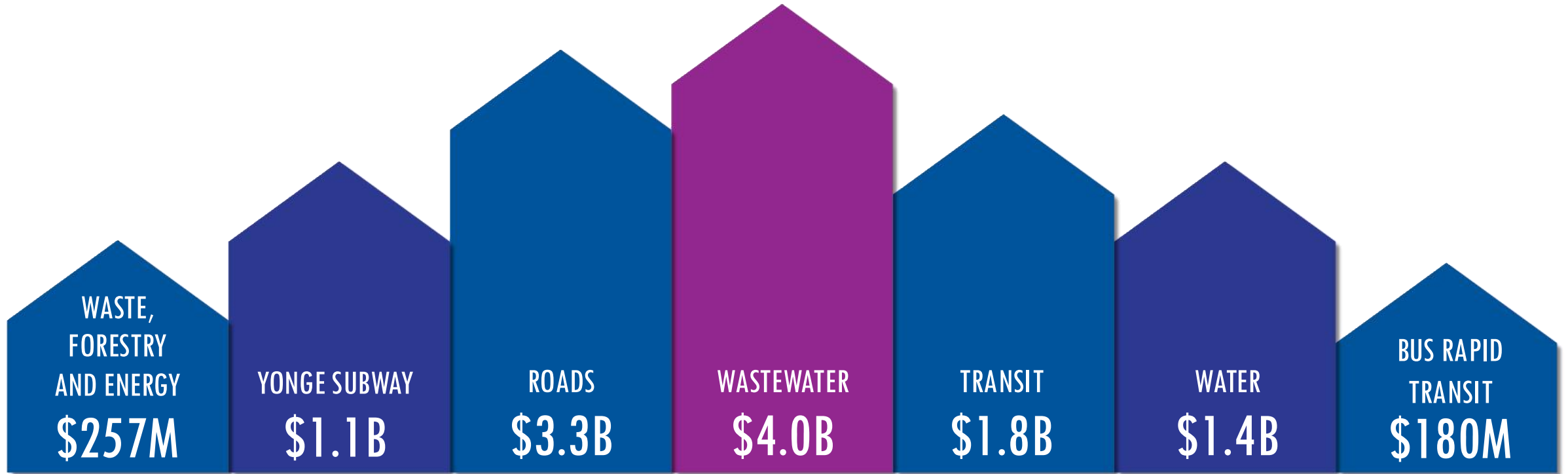
More Innovation

Lower Risk

Greater Efficiency

Increased Consistency

CAPITAL DELIVERY HAS CHANGED AND GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY



ADVANCED SKILLS OF NIMBLE WORKFORCE ARE THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE

5,409 employees across 15 core services

Majority of employees in professional and technical roles supporting advanced engineering and project management delivery



Capital delivery employees with P.ENG. designation managing global contractors and driving excellence

42% succession readiness for critical roles

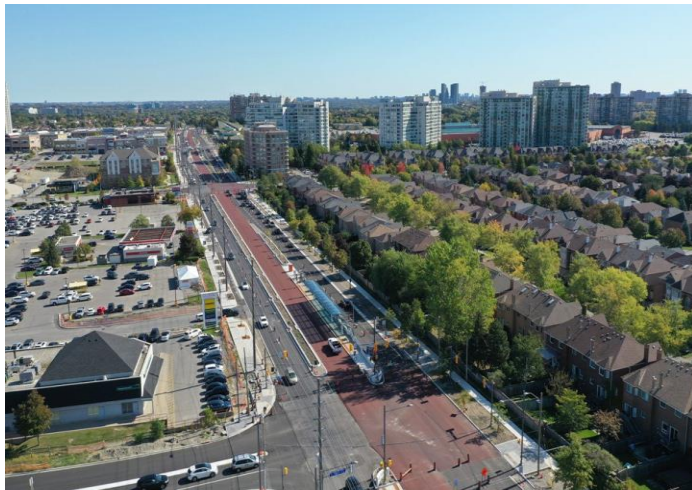
84% permanent workforce, enabling builder-owner mindset with long-term thinking



A SYSTEM AND WORKFORCE BUILT FOR EFFICIENT EXECUTION



Scale



Innovation

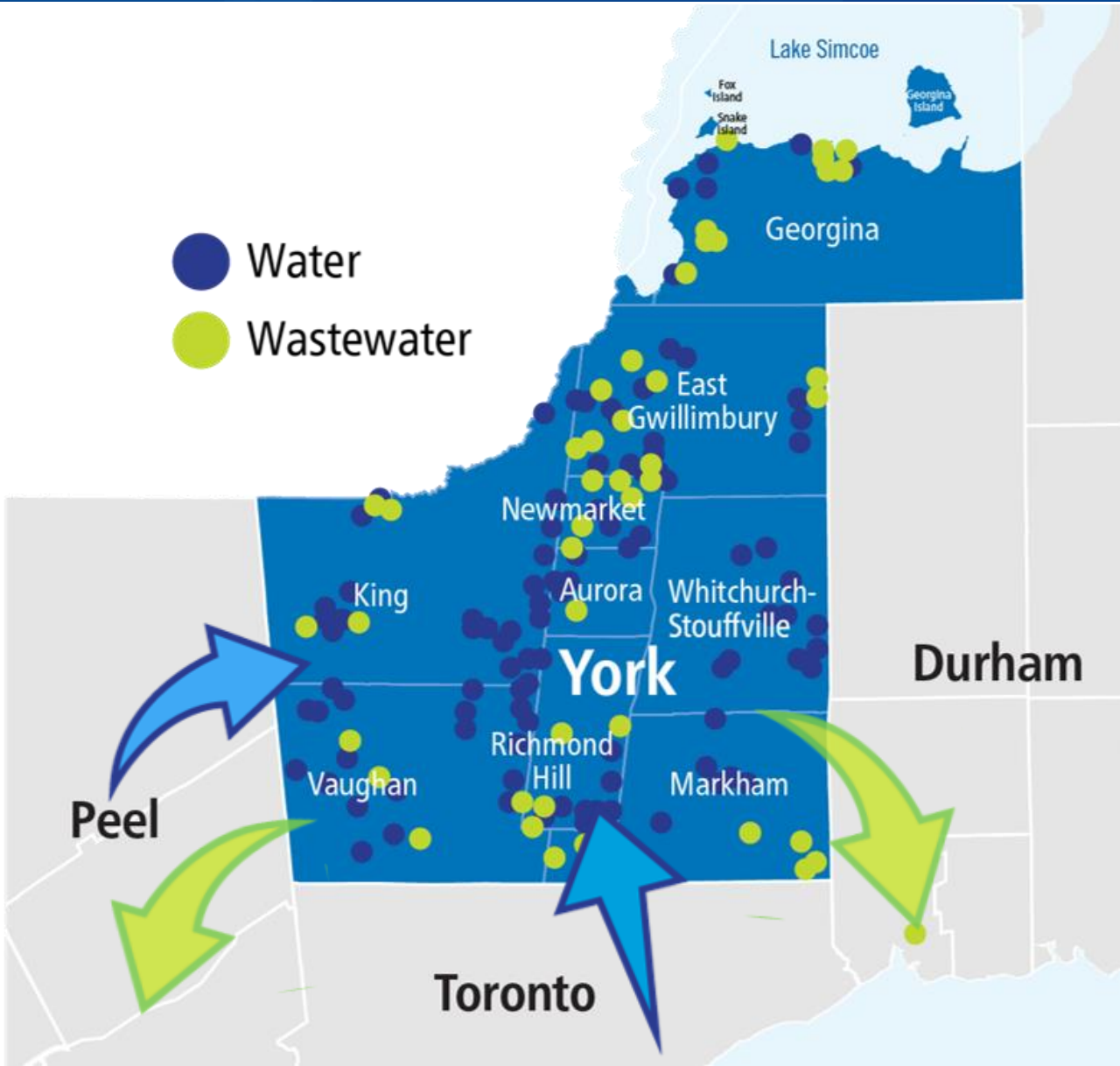


Depth



THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE

LEVERAGING SCALE, INNOVATION AND DEPTH



York Region is a Leading Utility of the World



THE REGIONAL ADVANTAGE IN ACTION: EVIDENCE OF IMPACT



MARKHAM DISTRICT ENERGY

Largest global wastewater energy recovery project

Low-carbon energy system

Supports sustainable intensification

Public/private partnership-delivered infrastructure

Unlocks external funding and expertise

Built for scalable growth

Financial Sustainability in Municipal Government

Presented by Andrew Farr, Chief Administrative Officer, Halton Region

April 20, 2026

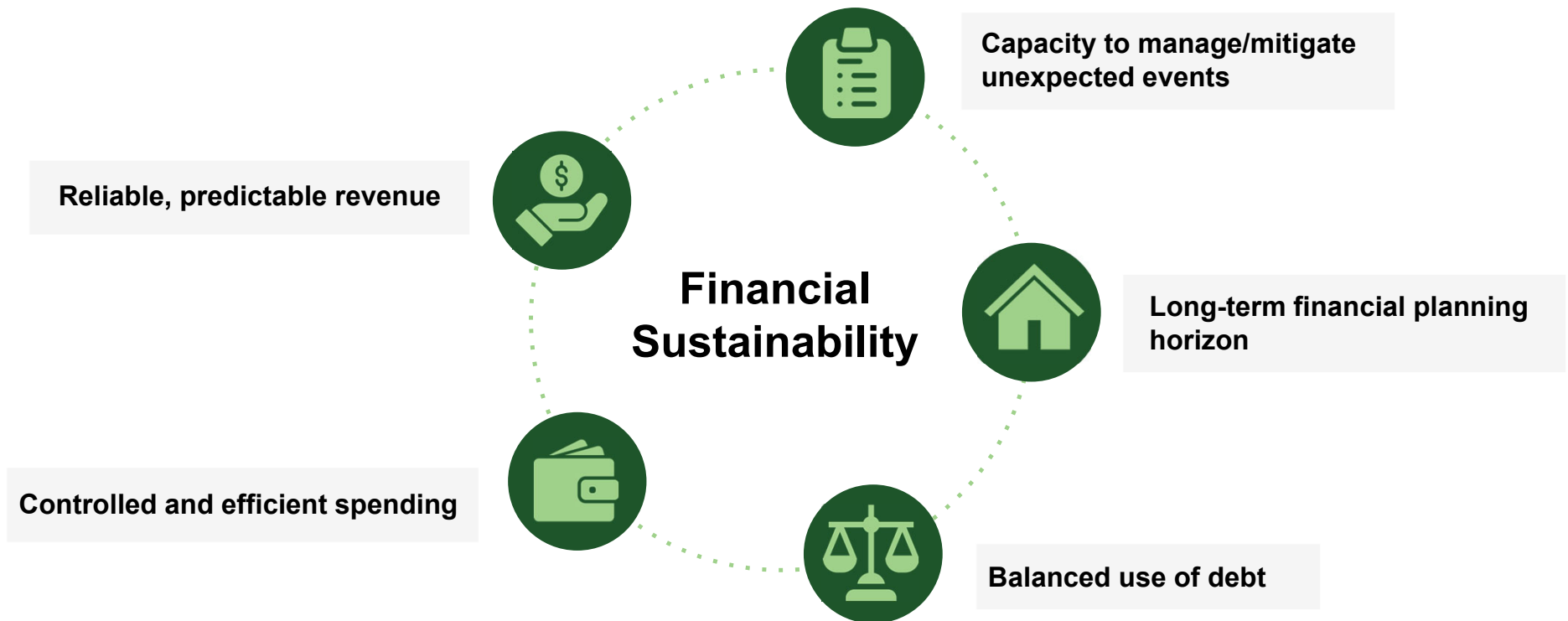


Live.
Grow.
Thrive.

Financial Sustainability

What is Financial Sustainability?

To meet service and financial obligations today and into the future.



Service Delivery in a Regional Context



Enables larger, integrated service delivery across multiple communities



Helps deliver services more efficiently and supports long-term financial sustainability



Supports prescriptive and standardized services where consistency matters



Reduces duplication while allowing for economies of scale

Financial Sustainability Being Re-Defined

Municipalities have to explore a new sustainability model that includes adaptability, resilience, and long-term risk management.



Fiscal Resilience

**Increased
Reliance on Debt**

**Unpredictable
Funding and
Economic Uncertainty**

**Accelerated Growth
and Revenue
Constraints**

Key Pressures Reshaping Municipal Finances

Growth

Population Growth Driving Demand for Services

Rapid growth increases need for programs and services including:

- Housing
- Infrastructure such as water, wastewater, roads
- Health and Social services such as assisted and supportive housing, Paramedic services



High Inflation

Inflation Raising Infrastructure Costs

Inflation boosts prices of construction materials, labour, fuel, and services, raising project costs significantly.

Financial Risks and Budget Challenges

Long-term budgeting risks rise as costs lock in early, and operating expenses grow faster than revenues.

Affordability and Tax Pressure

Residents face cost of living pressures, while property taxes are increasingly strained by growth and inflation costs.

Ongoing Economic Uncertainty

From the global pandemic to tariffs and conflict around the world – economic uncertainty continues to reshape our fiscal landscape.

Infrastructure and Housing

Aging Public Infrastructure

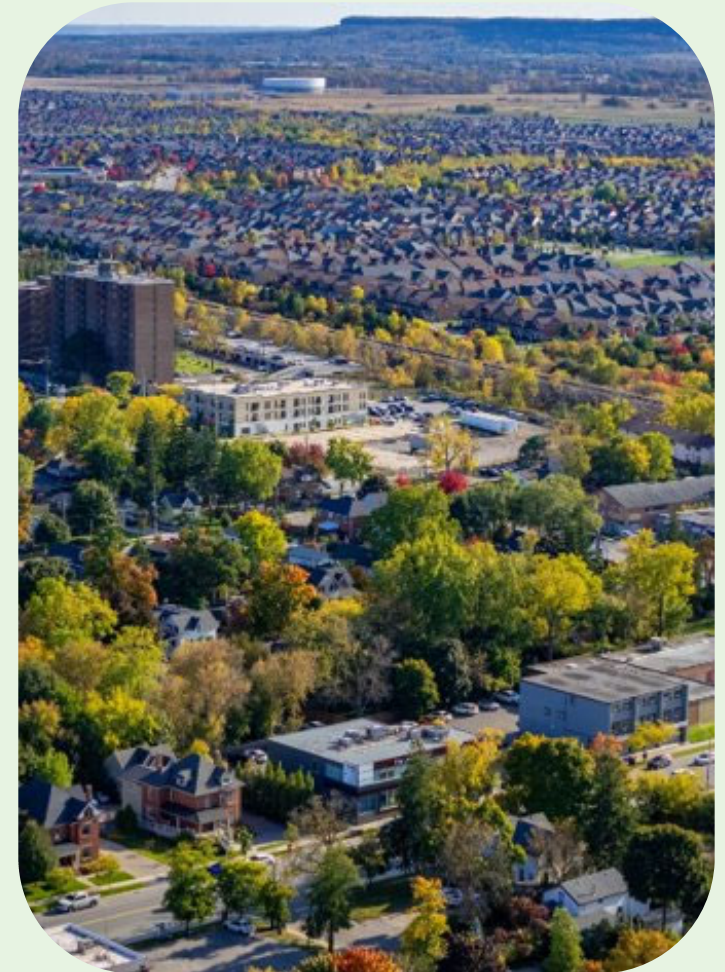
Municipalities manage aging infrastructure needing urgent rehabilitation or replacement to ensure service continuity.

Housing-Enabling Infrastructure

Accelerating delivery of roads, transit, and water systems is critical to meet housing development targets.

Sustainability

Maintaining existing infrastructure while expanding for growth is essential to prevent service disruptions and other impacts.



Debt and Long-Term Financial Risk



Municipal Debt Trends

Debt levels in Ontario municipalities vary, with some rising due to infrastructure and growth investments.



Financial Risks of Debt

Higher debt increases exposure to interest rate changes and limits future financial flexibility.



Sustainability

Sustainable debt requires strong revenue growth, disciplined asset management, and government support.

A Forward-Looking Lens

A Modern Framework for Financial Sustainability



Regional and Local Collaboration including Municipal Partners

Coordinated planning helps manage cost pressures and build resilience.



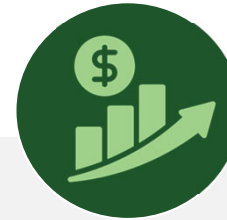
Partnering with Federal and Provincial governments

Municipalities work together with senior levels of government to invest in health and social service programs



Financial Management

Focuses on maintaining service levels, managing debt responsibly, balancing revenues and expenditures and investing in infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability.



Predictable Revenues

Predictable, stable funding relationships with senior governments and revenue tools that align with municipal responsibilities.



Ongoing Review

Continuous assessment of service necessity, operational efficiency, and financial affordability