

# PARTNERSHIP

*for*

## North Carolina's Future

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### **GROUP URGES N.C. GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO PREPARE NOW FOR IMPACT OF 'POPULATION TSUNAMI' ON STATE'S ECONOMY, QUALITY OF LIFE**

**RALEIGH** – North Carolina is facing a “population tsunami” that the General Assembly must meet with significant new capital investments to protect the state’s economy and quality of life, according to a new coalition called Partnership for North Carolina’s Future.

At a news conference today in Raleigh, Tom Lambeth of the partnership urged the General Assembly to take “bold steps to protect the basic foundation upon which our communities’ quality of life and economy is built – schools, roads, clean water and land protecting natural resources.” Lambeth is chairman of the Rural Economic Development Center board of directors and former director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Members of the partnership are advocates for increased state investments in school construction, affordable housing, roads, land and water conservation, and water and sewer services.

“We stand together to say to the public: Your future is at risk,” said Lambeth. “If the General Assembly doesn’t address these critical needs now, it will cost our state jobs, damage our economy and adversely affect the livelihoods of families across North Carolina.”

Lambeth said North Carolina is facing a “population tsunami” of four million people arriving between 2000 and 2030 for a total of 12 million, or a 50 percent increase. That will make North Carolina the seventh largest state, ahead of both Michigan and Ohio, and up from the current ranking of 10<sup>th</sup>.

Such a population increase will be nearly equal to South Carolina’s current population of four million. “We’ve got to build the equivalent of a new South Carolina within this state,” Lambeth said.

“We are falling behind,” Lambeth said. “Existing sources of revenue are not enough to keep up with the combination of aging facilities and extraordinary population growth.” He pointed to:

- More than 178,000 K-12 students go to school every day in mobile units.
- More than 3,000 miles of streams and rivers do not meet clean water standards.
- More than 100,000 acres of forests, farmlands and natural areas are lost annually to development.
- Jammed roads and long-delayed highway construction plague cities and towns statewide.
- Rural communities with inadequate and aging water and sewer services that create potential public health hazards.
- More than two million people living in substandard housing or housing they can’t afford, which contributes to health problems in children.

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Other speakers at the news conference included Steve Zelnak, chairman and CEO of Martin Marietta Materials, and former chair of NCCBI; Dr. June Atkinson, state superintendent of public instruction; and Asheville Mayor Terry Bellamy.

“School, road, and water and sewer construction might be boring topics for some, but it’s the stuff on which a good business climate is built. We need more of it and fast, or the momentum we have will disappear almost before we notice it – and with it will go the jobs that are so important to our quality of life,” said Zelnak.

According to Dr. Atkinson, North Carolina school systems need to build 258 schools, or one per week on average every week for five years. Another 1,000 schools need renovations and still another 1,000 will need renovations during that five-year period, she said.

“Whether it’s rapid growth, poor roads, worn-out school buildings, or aging sewer lines and the lack of clean water, this state needs to make the necessary investment to repair, replace and get ready,” said Mayor Bellamy.

The partnership said that all funding options should be on the table to address the needs. Those include bond referenda, the local option land transfer tax, impact fees and the highway use tax. More than 50 bills have been introduced recommending new sources of capital investment funds for schools, roads, affordable housing, water and sewer, and land that protects natural resources.

Member organizations of the Partnership for North Carolina’s Future include Land for Tomorrow, the North Carolina League of Municipalities, the North Carolina School Boards Association, the North Carolina Association of School Administrators, the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, the North Carolina Housing Coalition, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, NC Gol, and the North Carolina Metropolitan Coalition.

For more information about the Partnership for North Carolina’s Future, visit [www.ncfuturenow.org](http://www.ncfuturenow.org).

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