



OCA's Leadership Development Program Announces First Class Graduates

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2012 (Guelph, ON) – In collaboration with the Rural Ontario Institute (ROI), the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA) committed in the fall of 2011, to the development and implementation of a pilot program to recruit and train a group of visionary organization leaders who are capable of moving the Ontario beef industry forward. The first class of the program commenced in January, 2012 and OCA is pleased to announce that upon completion of the spring session in mid-April, 15 participants have successfully graduated from the program.

"We are extremely pleased with the success of this pilot program and I congratulate our graduating class. I was encouraged by their enthusiasm and willingness to apply and commit their time and energy into such a valuable program," states Dan Darling, OCA President. "I strongly believe this program will provide positive ambassadors for the beef industry and the entire agricultural sector in this province."

The pilot program consisted of three sessions held in Cambridge, Toronto and Peterborough from January to April of this year. Participants of all ages and travelling from various regions in the province, had the opportunity to network with fellow producers and current industry leaders, travel to Queen's Park and meet with local MPPs and the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, and gain a greater understanding on effective communications, meeting management, organization governance, creating effective policy and procedures and empowering and motivating others.

"Our beef industry and agricultural industry needs to be proactive in developing future leaders who will be tasked with handling a great deal of external pressures on our industry over the next 20 years," shares Jeff Christopher, a graduate of the program. "Having a course like the OCA Leadership Development Program, teaches us where we need to develop our leadership skills, as no one skill will make any one of us great leaders, but rather a combination of skills are required. This is what you learn through this program with both practical in class discussion and real world application."

The future of any agricultural sector relies heavily upon the strong leadership abilities of those within the sector. This long-term strategy will work to ensure that participants of this program will gain the skills, confidence, and expertise to create important alliances and foster innovation and creative thinking within and beyond OCA, for years to come.

"We are very delighted with the results of this pilot," says Kathie MacDonald, of the Rural Ontario Institute. "We look forward to continuing to move this project forward with OCA in the development of more advocates for Ontario's beef industry and agricultural sector."

The fall program is scheduled to begin with three multi-day sessions over a period of four months beginning in September, 2012. Applications and curriculum information can be found on the OCA website. 20 participants will be selected to participate in this session. Applications will be accepted until 4pm on August 24, 2012.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA) is a grassroots organization that provides leadership to cattlemen from all sectors of the industry. OCA is involved in a wide range of issues and initiatives that matter to Ontario's beef producers. These include industry sustainability, trade, animal health and care, environment and food safety. In addition, OCA works closely with other sectors of the agriculture and food industries on areas of mutual concern.

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is a not-for-profit organization formed in 2010. ROI has a mandate to provide leadership development, initiate dialogue, support collaborations and promote action on issues and opportunities facing rural Ontario. The vision of ROI is: Building Vision, Voice and Leadership for a strong and vibrant rural Ontario. www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca

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