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ROI's Census Update Highlights Latest Changes in Ontario's Rural Population

GUELPH, ON, May 2, 2017 – The Rural Ontario Institute is sharing an overview of population change as drawn from the February 2017 release of 2016 Census data with the release of [Rural Ontario's Demography: Census Update 2016](#). The analysis looks at which counties, regions and communities across the rural geographies of the province are showing growth or decline. The Rural Ontario Demography: Census Update 2016 is jam-packed with tables, charts and maps and is downloadable free at the Institute [website](#).

The data show that overall Ontario's rural population has been growing consistently over time. The Ontario population living in a rural context is substantive and numbers 2.5 million – that is larger than the population in any of Canada's six smaller provinces. Approximately one in five Ontario residents lives outside of a metropolitan region. However, the proportion of Ontario's population that lives in a rural context dropped slightly between the censuses of 2011 and 2016 from 20% to 19%. This is a result of several factors: 1) rural areas tend to grow more slowly than urban areas; 2) population growth in large rural centres over time results in some of them being reclassified as urban. Thus, the drop in the proportion of rural residents in the province is not due to an across-the-board exodus of population from rural areas. Between 1971 and 2016, 1.2 million formerly non-metro residents were reclassified.

"The value of this report is that people interested in how their area is doing can compare themselves to overall trends," says Norman Ragetlie, Director of Policy and Stakeholder Engagement at the Institute. "We see regional differences in rates of growth and decline and differences within regions, where some communities next door to one another are growing and others declining."

The Census Update tells a story of change, illustrates patterns of growth and documents the trends in metropolitan regions versus non-metropolitan areas. The report will help in understanding the pace of urbanization and the consistency of the rural population base.

The Census Update is part of the Rural Ontario Institute's [Focus on Rural Ontario Fact Sheet Series](#), with the 2016 Fact Sheets on employment trends released earlier this year. A list of all Fact Sheet titles with links to each document can be found [here](#).

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