



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ROI builds capacity to support communities in rural Ontario

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is pleased to share its initiatives to build, connect and inform rural leaders and decision makers as they embrace opportunities for community innovation.

ROI develops top leaders through the **Advanced Agriculture Leadership Program (AALP)** an 18-month experiential executive leadership program for those who want to shape the future of the agriculture and food industry and make a positive difference in rural communities. Together the province, agriculture industry, organizations and private donors have supported over 500 ag sector leaders to graduate from the program since its inception in 1984. Class 19 has just returned from their North American study tour. Rural youth aged 18 to 30 provided input to a program designed to meet their needs. The result is that ROI's **Rural Change Makers** program participants said they are more likely to stay in rural communities because they have the confidence and skills to make a positive difference.

"I appreciate how the Rural Ontario Institute continues to provide programs and initiatives that support our rural communities to ensure they continue to thrive and grow," says Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. "With the introduction of their new data dashboard, as a component of the ROI's Rural Ontario Facts series, businesses and families alike will have access to important data that will prove how communities throughout rural Ontario are viable with valuable infrastructure and perfect locations for businesses to grow and families to call home."

Launched this year, **Rural Ontario Facts** is a series of interactive dashboards that complement ROI's long-established and well-regarded fact sheets, presenting statistical information and relevant trends for rural Ontario. Provincial support means rural stakeholders can quickly and easily make sense of the fast-moving demographic changes impacting our regions. **ROI Connect**, also launched this year, offers a space for social connectivity with members in the agriculture and rural space and offers community dialogue, interaction, civic participation, and supports community development projects.

"ROI builds capacity and supports communities, families, and businesses, with the help of collaborating partnerships such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs," says Joe Dietrich, Chair of the ROI board. "We're proud of the work we do and we're grateful to OMAFRA for their stalwart support of rural development."

The Rural Ontario Institute is a non-profit organization committed to developing leaders, informing decision makers and facilitating collaboration on issues and opportunities facing rural and northern Ontario communities.

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