



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Rural Ontario Institute invests in leadership and rural economic development capacity through funding from the Ontario government.**

GUELPH, ON October 8, 2025 - The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is pleased to announce a provincial investment of \$1,722,639.50 over three years in its leadership, data and economic development programs.

"As rural communities seek innovation and new opportunities to address economic development needs, this funding from the province enables us to expand support for leaders and decision makers with tools and programs that strengthen communities," said *Dan Borowec, ROI Chair*

"ROI is fiercely proud of the programs and services it offers to rural Ontarians. With the generous support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agri-Business, we are growing our investments in rural communities," said Ellen Sinclair, ROI Executive Director.

ROI develops agile leaders through its world-class **Advanced Agriculture Leadership Program (AALP) and Rural Change Makers** youth leadership program who shape the future of industries and agriculture and build economic prosperity within rural communities. Through advancement of critical, evidence-based data tools for community planning and wellbeing, ROI and Ontario are ensuring decision makers are well informed and prepared.

"Our government is proud to support rural communities and the Rural Ontario Institute. By ensuring that Ontario has strong leaders and experts from rural communities across the province, we are increasing the capacity of our agri-food sector and protecting the future of our growing rural economies," said Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Provincial funds will advance ROI's capacity to inform and mobilize communities around economic opportunities and rural sector priorities through its leadership programs and data resources including the **Community Wellbeing Dashboard** and **Fact Sheets** and **Rural Housing Information System**. These investments in strong leaders and evidence-based tools will help move communities forward as they embrace innovation and opportunity.

"As economic climates change, it is critical to ensure rural communities and leaders are equipped with advanced tools and training to adapt, accelerate innovative ideas and rural development initiatives that build stability and growth," said Gabe Ferguson, ROI Leadership Programs Director. "Community wellbeing and sustainability depends on investments in leaders to ensure healthy communities for generations to come. Emerging and executive leaders are responding to current challenges, shaping industries, creating new enterprises and investing in rural Ontario – ensuring future ready communities," added Peggy Brekveld, ROI's new Leadership Programs Manager.

## ABOUT

ROI leadership programming is designed to reflect the diversity of participants and the development of peer-to-peer mentorship, interrelationships and broad networks with associated sustainable development outcomes for communities and rural sectors. The [Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program](#) (AALP) is 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 across Ontario. AALP has graduated more than 500 agriculture leaders. The [Rural Change Makers](#) Program equips young leaders with critical skills to identify and overcome challenges with their communities. More than 80 young leaders, from over 50 rural locales, have graduated from the program since 2020.

ROI data tools provide rural decision makers with salient, local data and visualizations making it easy for rural communities to understand and interpret complex data and identify opportunities for planning and development. ROI engaged rural communities in the creation of the [Community Wellbeing Dashboard](#) - a data tool displaying standardized indicators of health and wellbeing within the rural context. Indicators selected from a new national standard (CSA R113-22) and other locally available data sets, allow communities to assess their wellbeing, as well as make cross-community and interregional comparisons. Accompanying [Fact Sheets](#) provide communities with a deeper understanding of rural data trends. ROI has incorporated hundreds of rural municipalities within its [Rural Housing Information System \(RHIS\)](#) through Eastern and Western Warden's Caucus and recent expansion to Northern Ontario. The RHIS is an automated and easy to use tool that supports municipalities, developers, and homebuilders in the planning and development of housing solutions and helps decision makers overcome data barriers to housing in rural communities.

## CONTACTS

Ellen Sinclair, ROI Executive Director

[esinclair@ruralontarioinstitute.ca](mailto:esinclair@ruralontarioinstitute.ca) | 519-826-4204

## MEDIA RELATIONS

Rural Ontario Institute

Guelph, Ontario

519-826-4204

[info@ruralontarioinstitute.ca](mailto:info@ruralontarioinstitute.ca)

[www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca)