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Rural Ontario Foresight Papers launch event kicks off rural dialogue

GUELPH, ON, Oct. 20, 2017 – The Rural Ontario Institute released the [Rural Ontario Foresight Papers](#) at a public launch event and reception at the Arboretum Centre - University of Guelph.

Attendees were welcomed by ROI Board Chair, Suzanne Trivers, who spoke to the purpose of the papers in providing insight to rural leaders to help them consider the implications for their communities and organizations in positioning themselves for the future.

Three of the authors presented key messages from their Papers. Tamara Fernandes, Acting Director, Rural Policy Branch, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and Ron Holman, Chair of the Board of the [Rural Ontario Municipal Association](#) (ROMA), offered responses to the Papers and their potential value in stimulating informed dialogue about rural policy development challenges and opportunities.

Ron Holman noted in his remarks that, “Having this type of research adds reliability and authenticity to [ROMA’s] policy discussions with other levels of government. Political leaders at all levels must address these challenges for the benefit of all Ontario.”

Event participants represented diverse stakeholders from provincial and local government to civil society/non-profit organizations, as well as economic development and private sector organizations. This diversity corresponds to the range of issues discussed in the Papers.

“The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is pleased to see these papers underscore the importance of our rural communities. Many of the perspectives in the Foresight Papers support OFA campaign goals on Producing Prosperity in all regions of Ontario. We hope the provincial government pays attention to the policy ideas put forward here,” said Keith Currie, President of the [Ontario Federation of Agriculture](#), who was in attendance.

The Rural Ontario Foresight Papers are a collection of six papers on selected themes as prepared by expert authors. Each has a corresponding northern commentary prepared by the [Northern Policy Institute](#).

Each Foresight Paper explores a particular topic in view of the current situation in rural and northern Ontario and looks ahead to what directions various stakeholders, governments or non-profits might follow in order to foster vital rural development in light of the trends and opportunities the authors foresee. The Paper topics are:

- Growth Beyond Cities: Place-Based Rural Development Policy in Ontario
- The Impact of Megatrends on Rural Development in Ontario: Progress through Foresight

- Broadband Infrastructure for the Future: Connecting Rural Ontario to the Digital Economy
- Rural Business Succession: Innovation Opportunities to Revitalize Local Communities
- Rural Volunteerism: How Well is the Heart of Community Doing?
- The Visitor Economy and Rural Cultural Amenities

Recognizing the long-term nature of many rural development challenges, the Rural Ontario Institute hopes to commission another set of papers with appropriate authors for release in 2019.

Each of the six Papers, as well as the complete print edition, can be found at www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/foresightpapers.

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