

New organization takes the lead on rural Ontario issues

Two provincial organizations have merged to create the new Rural Ontario Institute, a not-for-profit organization formed to provide stronger support for key issues facing rural Ontario. The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) and The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) will officially amalgamate on April 1, 2010 to form the Rural Ontario Institute, operating out of the Ontario AgriCentre in Guelph, ON.

Unanimously approved by the boards of both TCRL and TORC, the new Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) has a mandate to provide rural leadership development and a mechanism to engage rural and multi-sector stakeholders for the purposes of informing and influencing rural policy development.

“The Rural Ontario Institute will capitalize on the synergies and strengths that exist between our two organizations, to create a tremendous resource for the long-term sustainability of rural Ontario,” says Jan Varner, president of The Centre for Rural Leadership. “We saw a terrific opportunity to join forces to create the only multi-sector provincial organization that is building leadership capacity and opening more channels for dialogue on issues facing rural Ontario,” says Valerie Ryan, chair of The Ontario Rural Council.

Three core services will be provided through the Rural Ontario Institute – leadership training, stakeholder engagement and third-party program delivery. The cornerstone Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) will be delivered through the new organization, as well as the newer Steps to Leadership development program. Through existing forums, roundtables and new electronic tools, the Rural Ontario Institute will engage rural stakeholders to gather critical input on issues affecting rural Ontario to ultimately influence policy and program development. These rural issues cover areas as broad as health, energy, youth and agriculture. The Rural Ontario Institute will also offer efficient program delivery for third-party organizations and/or government ministries.

“ROI has the capacity to uncover issues facing rural Ontario and build strong, local, informed leaders to tackle them,” says Harold Flaming, executive director of The Ontario Rural Council. “Both TCRL and TORC saw an opportunity to take the best of each organization – keeping key elements and creating synergies with program offers – to more effectively and efficiently serve the needs of rural Ontario,” adds Rob Black, executive director of The Centre for Rural Leadership.

The Rural Ontario Institute will be governed by a 12-member board of directors, in addition to the CEO and staff members.

The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) offers programming to develop and support current and emerging leaders through a continuum of programs and resources to strengthen and diversify rural communities and the bio-resource sector. Programs include the long-running Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) and the Steps to Leadership series, launched in 2008. TCRL also supports and delivers a variety of personal and organization development training workshops.

The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) was formed in 1998 as a member driven, multi sector provincial rural organization with a mandate to act as a catalyst for rural dialogue, collaboration and advocacy. As a vehicle for rural engagement, TORC offers a vital venue for the province’s collective rural voice. It is the aim of TORC to broaden the understanding of the rural perspective and work toward ensuring the collective rural voice is heard by the province’s policy and decision makers.

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