

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

# Rural Roadmap: The Path Forward for Ontario

## Update

November 2015





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# Letter from the Minister



The Honourable Jeff Leal,  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Food and Rural Affairs

Welcome to the Rural Roadmap report for 2015.

In 2014, we released Ontario's first "Rural Roadmap: The Path Forward for Ontario." The roadmap outlined many of our priorities for the following year. It also helped Ontario and its partners to better understand how to provide rural communities with the tools they need. These tools help to support good jobs, attract investment, and ensure that rural Ontario continues to make important contributions to the Ontario economy.

The 2015 roadmap outlines our progress to date in a way that is transparent and accountable. It also outlines additional initiatives impacting rural Ontario, and sets the stage for ongoing dialogue and engagement with rural Ontarians.

Ontario is committed to:

- investing in the talents and skills of rural Ontarians and promoting economic development to help create jobs;
- investing in regions and businesses, and improving infrastructure in rural Ontario;
- working together with rural residents, businesses, community organizations and municipal leaders to ensure that they are supported in a way that will help them to prosper in today's economy;
- listening to rural Ontarians

There's more work to do to help strengthen rural Ontario and our government is committed to helping communities succeed now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Leal', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Leal,  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs



*Healthy, productive and educated Ontarians create successful businesses, drive innovation and contribute to thriving communities. By investing in rural residents — including youth, seniors, newcomers, immigrants and Aboriginal peoples, Ontario is investing in the future prosperity of the province.*

## Improving access to rural health care

Ontarians deserve high-quality health care wherever they live, and the province is ensuring they receive it.

Through the **Small and Rural Hospital Transformation Fund**, Ontario has committed \$80 million to foster innovation and encourage collaboration among small and rural hospitals and care providers in the community. Over the first three years of the Transformation Fund, more than 370 initiatives have been funded in 65 small and rural hospitals across the province.

Rural health hubs are a promising service delivery approach for small and rural communities. In May 2015, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Eric Hoskins, announced that his ministry would be working with health system partners to support the implementation of rural health hub models. These hubs will enable the development of new approaches to better patient care that link quality and funding, and are based on patient-driven needs. The ministry is currently working with a group of “early adopter” sites in Ontario’s rural and northern communities to discuss how to implement fully-integrated healthcare delivery systems. These systems will help to provide services such as emergency and inpatient care, comprehensive primary care (with a strong focus on population health and chronic disease management), home, community, and long-term care, and mental

health and addictions services. Better, more comprehensive care, closer to home.

As announced in the 2014 Budget, the province provided additional funding of \$300 million over 10 years to help shift care from hospitals to community settings and ensure adequate infrastructure capacity in the health care sector.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is working with its stakeholders to develop a revised community health capital programs policy to help identify financial support for: public health units, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics. Once the stakeholder consultation is complete, and the policy is approved, any health service provider organization or partner organizations, such as a public health units, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics that meet the eligibility criteria, would be eligible for capital funding consideration.

Meanwhile, the **Telehomecare Expansion Project** is reducing the need for rural patients with chronic health conditions to travel to receive health care. The project helps patients manage their health with the help of remote monitoring technology and the support of specially trained nurses. As of March 31, 2015, more than 5,000 patients with congestive heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease have benefited from the program.

## Reducing hospital admissions

The **Telehomecare Expansion Project** is now underway in 7 of 14 LHINs across Ontario. Telehomecare nurses or respiratory therapists coach patients in self-management and remotely monitor their health status. Patients take their vital signs every weekday with easy-to-use equipment. The introduction of Telehomecare has led to an approximate 50 per cent reduction in hospital admissions and emergency department visits.

## Addressing aging

Rural residents of every age should have the opportunity to enjoy healthy, active, independent lives.

Today, more seniors are receiving the care they need in their own homes. Since the 2013 Budget, Ontario has increased funding for home and community care by about five per cent each year. In the 2015 Budget, the province committed to continuing this funding and investing an additional

\$750 million across the province over the next three years.

At the same time, through **Age-Friendly Community Planning Grants**, Ontario provided 56 municipalities with \$1.5 million in funding in 2015. This initiative is accelerating planning to make communities more accessible to older residents and to help seniors participate in all aspects of local life.



## Meeting the needs of South Glengarry seniors

The Township of South Glengarry is one of 56 communities across the province that received an Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant in 2015. Like many rural communities, South Glengarry's population is aging, with 37 per cent of residents now over the age of 55. The \$23,500 grant will help the township convene a seniors' advisory committee, to assess the needs of local seniors and draft a plan to address those needs.

## Improving skills training and addressing youth employment

By investing in skills training and setting youth on the path to a good career, Ontario is investing in the province's future.

A part of Ontario's renewed Youth Jobs Strategy, the new **Youth Job Connection** program offers paid pre-employment workshops, job placement opportunities and mentorship, to youth between the ages of 15 and 29, who are not working, in school, or in training. The program also offers part-time after-school and summer job opportunities to high-school students between the ages of 15 and 18, facing challenging life circumstances. This intensive

program focuses on helping young people who face complex and multiple barriers to employment such as poverty, homelessness, living with a disability or a mental illness.

Meanwhile, more than 23,000 Ontarians gained new skills and accessibility training through the 2015 **Pan Am and Parapan Am Games**, returning to communities across the province as certified volunteers. The province also expanded the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program to accommodate an additional 200 to 300 participants, who had the opportunity to work on the construction of Games' facilities.

## Attracting and integrating newcomers

Many rural communities have seen their young people move away to pursue their education and careers. Attracting new residents can help these communities balance this trend, sustain their economy and ensure local businesses have access to a skilled workforce. That's why the province is helping rural Ontario welcome newcomers.

The **Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario guidebook** offers strategies and best practices to help communities attract and retain newcomers, ensuring they achieve success in their new home town. During the past year, more than 170 individuals, upper and lower tier municipalities, community futures development corporations, public health units and local immigration partnerships have accessed the guidebook.

The **Ontario Immigration Act**, which received Royal Assent on May 28, 2015, is helping Ontario to maximize the benefits of immigration by helping to attract skilled immigrants. The Act demonstrates Ontario's commitment to helping all communities share in the benefits of immigration.

Ontario also continues to promote the settlement and integration of newcomers to the province, including those in rural and northern Ontario. For example, the **Municipal Immigration Information Online Program** provides funding to municipal governments to build immigration portals that promote communities as destinations for immigrants to settle and work.

## Supporting Aboriginal people in rural Ontario

The province is working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and leaders to improve quality of life and expand opportunities for all First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Ontario, including those who live on reserves or in rural communities.

Introduced in the 2014 Budget, the **Aboriginal Economic Development Fund** is investing \$25 million in Aboriginal businesses and communities over three years. This funding is helping

Aboriginal communities increase access to economic development opportunities.

The Fund supports improved access to skills training, development and implementation of initiatives that diversify economic activity, as well as supporting Aboriginal financial institutions as they work to improve access to financing for high-potential Aboriginal businesses and community projects.

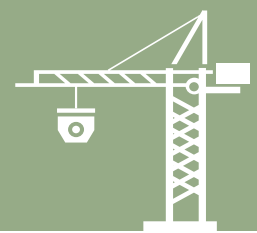
### Creating economic opportunities for First Nations

Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek was one of 22 communities and organizations that received funding in 2014-15, through the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund's Economic Diversification Grant. The First Nation received \$83,034 to develop a business plan for a sawmill in the community's new industrial park. It also received \$97,303 in 2015-16 to work with Wood-Mizer, a leading sawmill manufacturer, to train community members on all aspects of the sawmill's operations.



Anishinabek Employment and Training Services office





# Investing in Infrastructure

*Roads, bridges, water systems, telecommunication networks and other infrastructure create the backbone of a well-functioning economy and prosperous society. To keep that backbone strong, the province is investing more than \$130 billion over 10 years— the largest such investment in Ontario's history — to renew and expand crucial infrastructure. Total infrastructure investments are expected to support more than 110,000 jobs per year on average in construction and related industries, including over 20,000 jobs per year on average from investments made as part of Moving Ontario Forward.*

**Moving Ontario Forward** represents a major part of this investment, providing funds to build priority infrastructure and create an integrated transportation network across the province. This ambitious initiative encompasses several programs.

The **Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund** gives small, rural and northern municipalities \$100 million annually to revitalize core infrastructure

and support asset management planning. There are currently two components to the program: an application-based funding stream that addresses critical projects and a formula-based funding stream that helps communities address projects identified in their asset management plans. Since 2014, 78 projects have been approved for application-based funding and 425 municipalities have received formula-based funding.

## Better infrastructure for safer communities

Better infrastructure does more than just enhance Ontario's economy. The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund is also creating safer communities. For example, the Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, east of Peterborough, received more than \$1.6 million to improve existing water systems to ensure that firefighters have access to the water they need. Meanwhile, the Township of Armstrong in Timiskaming District is receiving more than \$200,000 to rehabilitate a culvert to shorten emergency response routes.

Rural communities are also benefitting from the **Small Communities Fund**. Through this initiative, the federal government and the province will each

provide \$272 million for infrastructure projects in rural municipalities with fewer than 100,000 residents.

## Better water and sewer systems

In July 2015, Perth, Pelee Island and Leamington, among other communities, received infrastructure funding through the Small Communities Fund. In Perth, the financing will fund new storm water control measures, septic repairs and a sump pump disconnection program to decrease pollution in the Tay River. Pelee Island will use the funding for drainage improvement projects to reduce the risk of flooding of local farmlands and vineyards. Leamington's funding will build enhanced sewer capacity to help to reduce the risk of overflow during periods of peak demand.

## Huntsville goes high-speed

Residents of Huntsville and Bracebridge can look forward to fibre optic cable through funding from the Small Communities Fund. Installing the cable will give residents, businesses and visitors access to high-speed e-mail, web browsing and e-commerce.

A new **Connecting Links program**, announced in April 2015, will provide \$15 million each year for the construction and repair of connecting links. Connecting links are designated municipal roads that connect communities to provincial highways and border crossings. This will help ensure that Ontarians can get around easily and safely, and that goods can reach markets more quickly. The application process for the program began on November 19, 2015.

A **Natural Gas Access Loan** and **Natural Gas Economic Development Grant** will help communities partner with utilities to extend access to the natural gas network. More access to natural gas will help attract new industry to rural communities, make commercial transportation and agriculture more affordable and provide more energy choices for businesses and families.

Ontario has earmarked \$1 billion for the development of **strategic transportation infrastructure** in the Ring of Fire region, including support for the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. This will help improve employment opportunities, grow the economy and build a strong transportation network in the Northeast.

Additional **investments in transportation** include:

- Constructing a new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph;
- Supporting the Maley Drive Extension project in Sudbury; and
- Expanding additional sections of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon.

The province is also responding to local needs that support *Building Together*, Ontario's long-term infrastructure plan, including:

- Investing up to \$11.3 million to expand and modernize Atikokan General Hospital. This funding will help to deliver better coordinated and integrated acute and long-term care, including providing four new acute care beds. This will bring the total of acute care beds to 15, while the addition of four more long-term care beds will bring the total of long-term care beds to 26.
- Investing in schools to help provide safe and healthy learning environments such as the retrofitting of:
  - Madawaska Valley District High School in Barry's Bay, to accommodate the consolidation of students from Sherwood Public School;
  - Land of Lakes Senior Public School in Burk's Falls, to accommodate incoming students from M.A. Wittick Junior Public School; and
  - Roland Michener Secondary School in South Porcupine, to support the consolidation of elementary and secondary school students.

The 2015 **Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act** ensures the province develops long-term infrastructure plans every five years, laying a strong foundation for sustained economic growth.



*Strong local and regional economies form the foundation of thriving communities. Through a variety of tools, resources, funding programs and initiatives, Ontario is helping rural communities seize economic development opportunities, attract investment and create high-quality jobs.*

**Analyst** is a web-based tool that provides economic data to communities and regions to help them make informed decisions about how to build a strong economy. Since the tool was launched in 2013, more than 650 Ontarians have used it to support 295 rural economic development initiatives across Ontario.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs **Foundations for Regional Economic Analysis Training** workshop, has helped 230 economic development professionals analyze regional data and pinpoint the most promising areas of

potential economic development. The workshop also helped to develop targeted strategies for job and income growth.

The **Business Retention and Expansion program** is a structured action-oriented, community-based approach to business and economic development. In 2015, 10 projects were undertaken or completed, helping communities and local businesses set priorities, promote job growth and plan ways to address local economic needs.

## Boosting business in Dryden

With the support of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Dryden District Chamber of Commerce led an ambitious regional business retention and expansion project. Volunteers interviewed 82 businesses in the Dryden area to determine the biggest challenges they faced. Now the Chamber has 30 action plans and five new projects completed or underway to help those businesses grow and create new jobs.

The recently updated **Downtown Revitalization Program** helps communities enhance one of their biggest assets: their downtown core. In 2015, 10 municipalities either launched or completed projects with the help of advisors from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and a suite of written resources.

The **Newcomer and Youth Community Indicators** is an analytical tool to help communities benchmark their attractiveness to newcomers and youth, relative to similar communities across the province. The online tool was developed in partnership with the

Rural Ontario Institute and the Conference Board of Canada. Since its launch in September 2014, more than 480 users have downloaded the tool.

The **Rural Economic Development Program** helps rural communities remove barriers to economic development and growth. Since 2003, Ontario has invested more than \$185 million in 598 projects, generating over \$1.2 billion in new economic activity as well as creating and retaining more than 37,000 jobs.

## Advancing water innovation

In the Town of Georgina, a local farm will become the site of a demonstration and learning centre to promote the wise use of water, as well as an incubator for new businesses. Thanks to a \$100,000 grant through the Rural Economic Development Program, the Ontario Water Centre will launch ClearWater Farm, a community facility that focuses on the role of water in sustainable food production, healthy communities and economic growth.

## Expanding business

Lindsay's award-winning Mariposa Dairy is getting much bigger, thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the Rural Economic Development Program. The expansion will help to increase sales and generate approximately 150 full-time jobs.

## Attracting tourism

Through the Rural Economic Development Program, the City of Brockville received \$47,500 to develop a marketing and outreach strategy for the newly opened Aquatarium, a 25,000-square-foot interactive discovery centre located on the shore of the St. Lawrence River. The strategy will support the long-term sustainability of this tourist attraction, creating jobs and supporting regional economic growth.

# Investing in rural economies

By investing in strategic funding programs, Ontario is helping rural business grow and prosper.

The \$30 million **Local Food Fund** was launched in 2013 to increase economic activity and encourage consumers to buy Ontario foods. Since then, the fund has leveraged a total investment of \$100 million for 163 projects that will create jobs and expand markets for local food.

**Growing Forward 2** is a federal-provincial initiative that encourages innovation, competitiveness and market development in Canada's agri-food and agri-products sector. Since Ontario's Growing Forward 2 program was announced in April 2013, it has provided \$7.8 million in funding for food-processing businesses.

Ontario has also provided significant support to Ontario farmers through farm income stabilization and support programs. Expenditures for these programs totaled more than \$2.8 billion over the 2003-04 to 2013-14 fiscal years.

The five-year **Horse Racing Partnership Plan**, established in 2014, is providing up to \$500 million to support a sustainable horse racing industry in Ontario. Measures include enhanced support for racehorse breeders, increased purses and race dates and support for race track operators.

Ontario is working with the wine and grape sector to increase competitiveness and innovation, grow the sales of Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) wines and boost tourism to Ontario's wine regions. As part of Ontario's \$75 million **Wine and Grape Strategy**, the province launched two programs on March 5, 2015. The **Marketing and Vineyard Improvement Program** will help increase the sale of Ontario wines both within Ontario and beyond its borders. It will also enhance the marketing of Ontario's wine regions as tourist destinations and support vineyard production improvements. The renewed **VQA Wine Support Program** will help increase LCBO sales of VQA wines, encourage innovation and improve exports and tourism.

The **Jobs and Prosperity Fund** is supporting projects that will increase productivity, bolster innovation and improve Ontario's international competitiveness. To enable the province to partner with more businesses, the fund will be enhanced by a total of \$200 million beginning in 2015–16, increasing the Fund to \$2.7 billion over 10 years. Part of this funding is earmarked for strategic investments in food, beverage and bio-product processors through the **Food and Beverage Growth Fund**. This fund supports growth in Ontario's

food and beverage processing sector, which is a major buyer of the good things that are grown in rural Ontario.

The **Eastern Ontario Development Fund** and **Southwestern Ontario Development Fund** are helping to create jobs and diversify the economy by encouraging regional businesses to pursue innovation and new markets. Together, these two funds have created and retained more than 29,000 jobs and attracted more than \$1.25 billion in investment.

### Creating 73 new jobs in Elmira

More than \$1 million in funding from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund has allowed Toyota Boshoku Canada to expand its Elmira manufacturing facility. This investment created 73 new jobs and supported new technology to enhance productivity and quality control. As a result, the company will be able to fill orders for many products that were previously imported.

The **Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation** has approved \$137.2 million toward 952 projects in Northern Ontario. These investments have

leveraged \$427.8 million in other funding and created or retained (including internship placements) 2,503 jobs.

## Creating connections

The fourth annual **Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference** held in Kingston in November 2014 attracted 200 participants. The event inspired participants to consider new business

opportunities expected to generate 15 new jobs and attract investment totalling \$925,000. The fifth annual Eastern Ontario Local Food Conference was held in Belleville on November 4th and 5th, 2015.

### Boosting employment in Oldcastle

Oldcastle's Aalbers Tool & Mold Inc. is growing its business with more than \$1 million in funding from the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. This investment will enable the company to purchase state-of-the-art machinery and engage in employee training to enhance productivity. The investment will also allow Aalbers to pursue opportunities in Ontario's growing aerospace sector and create 33 new jobs.

## Reducing red tape

Ontario's strategic approach to streamlining regulations has created significant savings over the past four years. According to **Building a Better Business Climate for Ontario**, the annual report mandated by the **Burden Reduction Reporting**

**Act, 2014**, Ontario slashed \$50 million in costs and 2.5 million hours for businesses across the province since 2014. In 2015, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business ranked Ontario among the top three provinces reducing red tape.

Through the **Open for Business Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Consultation Forum** process, stakeholders are working with the province to identify ways to clear the path for business success. For example, feedback from the process led Ontario to give greenhouse operators more options to manage waste water. Forum outcomes have also helped to streamline the approvals process for

on-farm anaerobic digesters, as well as amend meat regulations to promote competitiveness and innovation.

An eighth consultation forum was held in May 2015, to discuss issues across the sector. Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, co-chaired the forum. The ongoing dialogue and discussion had significant value for stakeholders and the province.

## Going global

Ontario's **Going Global Trade Strategy** is helping the province's companies export to global markets. In 2014-2015, the International Trade Branch helped 1,700 new and experienced exporters to prepare for international markets and brought 625 executives

from Ontario companies on international trade missions to foreign markets. These companies anticipate \$680 million in potential sales from these missions.

### Tapping the Chinese market

In April 2015, Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, co-led the province's first-ever agricultural trade mission to China. The 10-day event introduced delegates to more than 300 Chinese agri-food companies and government officials, resulting in \$9 million in trade agreements. To further help Ontario businesses and organizations expand into the Chinese market, the province is hiring an agri-food trade advisor, developing a Food Export Roadmap, and opening a new International marketing centre satellite office in Chongqing.



Minister Leal speaking during the Ontario Agri-Food Mission to China

## Addressing rural planning challenges

The **Provincial Policy Statement 2014** details Ontario's policies with respect to land use planning. It provides clear policy direction to promote strong communities, a strong economy, and a clean and healthy environment.

The policy, which came into effect on April 30, 2014, better recognizes the unique challenges faced by rural communities. It provides more flexibility for development in rural areas, permitting additional agriculture-related and diversified on-farm development that ranges from grain drying to agri-tourism. These are types of development that will generate farm income,

create jobs and provide more rural services. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is also developing a **Permitted Use Guideline** to help municipalities achieve consistency with the Provincial Policy Statement and help farmers understand the new opportunities that the Provincial Policy Statement creates. The province's goal is to maintain Ontario's best agricultural areas for agriculture, as well as support a thriving agricultural industry and help improve rural economies. Ontario also hopes to successfully meet the **Premier's Agri-Food Growth Challenge**, to double the growth of Ontario's agri-food industry and create 120,000 jobs by the year 2020.





# Additional initiatives to benefit rural Ontario

The 2014 Rural Roadmap laid out Ontario's priorities for strengthening rural communities in 2014-15. As well as focussing on these goals, the province continues to move forward with new initiatives that promise to benefit rural Ontario.

By converting public buildings such as schools and recreation centres into **community hubs**, Ontario sees an opportunity to break down service silos and better meet the needs of people in their local communities. The Premier's Community Hub Framework Advisory Group, chaired by Karen Pitre has developed a framework to establish these hubs where residents can access a variety of services such as education, health care and social services. The report entitled, *Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework and Action Plan*, was released on August 10, 2015. The action plan lays out eight overarching recommendations that the province has accepted and will begin to implement, including:

- Creating a provincial lead for community hubs
- Fostering integrated service delivery
- Developing a provincial strategy for public properties
- Removing barriers and creating incentives
- Supporting integrated and long-term local planning
- Ensuring financial sustainability
- Increasing local capacity
- Evaluating and monitoring outcomes.

Without adequate transportation, rural residents can't access health care and social services, get to work or school, or take advantage of community amenities. Under the **Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program**, 22 municipalities across all regions of the province have been selected to receive up to \$100,000 each to help provide better transportation services for residents. Many of these projects will help build capacity to better meet local transportation demand, where it is challenging to support transit service due to the size and/or density of the population. The program provides funds for partnerships with community organizations such as health and community agencies, transit agencies, school-bus operators and private transit operators. By co-ordinating local transportation services, more rides can be provided to more people and to more destinations.



## Transit projects get rural residents where they need to go

New daily, fixed route shuttles and weekly bus routes will be introduced to serve rural and remote communities in Muskoka. A new service will also connect five communities to Thunder Bay for medical appointments. Rural residents in York Region can take advantage of a new dial-a-ride service that connects to regional transit buses.



Ontario is committed to giving students the best possible learning environment. In August 2014, the province announced investments in **six schools serving rural communities**. Elementary students in Severn, East Gwillimbury, Collingwood and Fort Erie will soon attend new schools, while those in Chatham and Brantford will benefit from renovated facilities and additions. These projects will create local construction jobs.

In September of 2015, the province announced the opening of 12 schools that serve rural communities. Thanks to a significant investment from the province, students in Lincoln, Brooklin, Sault Ste. Marie, Cobourg, Pickering, Cumberland, Caledon, Severn, Innisfil and Bradford, will

attend new schools, while students in Chatham, Tecumseh, Pickering and Bowmanville will benefit from renovated facilities and additions

Finally, Ontario's **Open Government** strategy is creating a more transparent and accessible government by making Ontario's data "open by default." Since the initiative was launched in 2013, over 400 provincial data-sets have been posted on the Open Government Catalogue. Over the coming months, the Treasury Board Secretariat will be working with all ministries to implement Ontario's Open Government strategy and action plan, giving Ontarians more opportunities to provide feedback and input into government decisions.

# Continuing the Conversation



*As the province continues to forge a promising future for rural Ontario, your ideas, challenges and opportunities are an essential part of the conversation. That's why the province is committed to an open dialogue with rural stakeholders across the province.*

In March 2014, the first-ever Rural Ontario Summit was held in partnership with the Rural Ontario Institute. This was an important chance to discuss the challenges and opportunities rural Ontario faced and help set our goals for the future.

The next summit, to be held in 2016, will provide an excellent opportunity to continue ongoing dialogue with rural partners and capitalize on the momentum and progress from the first summit.



Minister Leal speaking during the 2014 Rural Summit

# The Road Ahead



*Ontario is committed to creating conditions where the province's towns, rural businesses and regional economies can grow and prosper. Strong rural communities contribute to good jobs, bright prospects and an enviable quality of life.*

Ontario's approach is simple: we're listening.

Good public policy must be collaborative and focus on your ideas, needs, challenges and opportunities. That's why the province is holding consultations, convening roundtables and sitting down one-on-one, so that we can implement strategies that work for Ontarians living and working in rural communities.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is providing a rural lens at the Cabinet table to ensure that provincial programs and policies meet the needs of all residents, regardless of where they live.

Ontario is also strengthening relationships with rural stakeholders and working together to create thriving communities across the province.

The province looks forward to work with you to ensure that rural Ontario continues to be one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise a family.



Downtown Minden, Ontario

