

\$2.8 million in federal funding committed to rural development

The federal government will provide \$2.8 million to support community projects that will enhance the quality of life for rural Canadians, the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), announced recently. The funding will come from the Rural Development Initiative announced by Mr. Mitchell at the National Rural Conference in April 2002.

The federal Rural Development Initiative provides funding assistance for community development activities in rural and remote Canada. There are two main areas of funding: community development and research.

Under the community development component, community, regional, provincial and national groups or organizations may receive funding for activities which fall under one or more of the following activity areas:

- human resources development, community consensus building, asset identification, planning and implementation of a community plan. Funding will normally not exceed one-third of their total project costs, and is limited to a maximum of:

- for single communities: \$50,000
- for inter-community partnerships: \$100,000
- for national projects: \$100,000

Under the research component, academic institutions and researchers with appropriate community support, funding may be provided for activities falling under the areas of: information gathering, analysis, synthesis, and the development of recommendations and report writing. Funding will normally not exceed one-third of their total project costs, to a maximum of \$50,000.

The projects funded should support community learning, problem solving and information sharing within a community, elements which have proven effective in community development.

A "single community" proposal is one where the proponent represents and has the support of a community normally identified by municipal or geographical boundaries. Proposals under this definition would be aimed at moving the community toward having a developmental plan, and/or implementing activities which form part of their plan.

"Inter-community partnerships" are those where a joint partnership between two or more communities with common elements bring these communities together in the planning and execution of plans for development.

A "national project" is one conducted by national level organizations, in the context of addressing community issues which have application on a national basis.

The Rural Development Initiative will run for one year. Applicants will have until October 31, 2002 to submit their applications. Information relating to the program, including application forms, is available by visiting www.rural.gc.ca, by e-mail to crp-rural-dev@agr.gc.ca, or by calling the toll-free number **1 877 295-7160**.

Projects to enhance quality of life in rural Ontario

Seven new community projects to address the needs of rural youth, women and tourism operators, among others, were recently announced by the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario).

The projects will deal with everything from increasing the role of women in community, economic and business development to boosting tourism in rural Ontario, and will receive a combined total of more than \$200,000. All of the initiatives are funded through the Canadian Rural Partnership's Pilot Projects Initiative. The Canadian Rural Partnership is part of the framework of the government's rural development strategy.

With this announcement, a total of 321 pilot projects have been approved for funding in partnership with other departments, agencies and levels of government across Canada, over the last four years. 34 of these are in Ontario.

The Pilot Projects Initiative generally funds up to one-third of the cost of a project, normally to a maximum of \$50,000. Results are being shared with other communities across the country. The projects focus on addressing the 11 priorities determined by Canadians in rural and remote regions in various workshops leading up to the National Rural Workshop in Belleville, Ontario in 1998.

THE SEVEN PROJECTS IN ONTARIO ARE:

Access for Rural Women at Risk

This project will design, develop and test a model for delivering online counselling for women who are being abused. It will also provide a template for shelters across Canada to use in introducing online counselling services in their communities.

A boost for economic development

The Government of Canada's Community Futures program provides financial support to communities in rural and northern Ontario to strengthen and diversify the local economy, and to provide local investment, counseling and other services to small business. There are currently 60 local organizations called Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) in Ontario whose mandate is to support economic development in their communities.

CFDCs are incorporated non-profit organizations governed by a local volunteer board of directors that represent various community interests. **Web site:** fednor.ic.gc.ca

Calling all Rural Canadians

Here's your chance to represent rural and remote Canada.

Rural communities are filled with valuable information, stories, legends and characters. *The Rural Times* (a quarterly national newsletter publication provided to citizens rural and remote communities by the Rural Secretariat) is calling for Canadians from across the country to join their Newsletter Advisory Group. Membership is voluntary and will require participation in one conference call meeting per month.

For recent issues of *The Rural Times* or for more information on "joining the team" visit the Canadian Rural Partnership Internet site at www.rural.gc.ca or call toll free **1 888 781-2222**.

CARCI funds community projects

The federal government is providing more than \$400,000 through the Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiative (CARCI) to support nine new community development projects throughout Canada.

One new project will be funded in Ontario. "The Market Place," will establish a self-sustaining micro-business incubator to support the financial and social sustainability of the agricultural community, and rural women and youth.

CARCI will normally match up to 50 per cent of the eligible costs for:

- rural coordination organizations that are developing responses to issues faced by agricultural rural communities (up to \$80,000);
- partnership projects which respond to agricultural rural community development issues (up to \$60,000);
- workshops, conferences and seminars that address common agricultural rural community issues (up to \$20,000); and
- socio-economic research related to agricultural rural community issues (up to \$50,000).

Guidelines for applying are available at www.agr.ca/carci. If you would like to receive a print version of the guidelines, or for more information, please call toll-free: **1 877 295-7160**.

Making Change - Women and Community Development Project
This project will develop a Web site and brochure aimed at women, to address issues such as community, economic and business development, and demonstrate, through advocacy exercises and workshops, how to apply economic and community decision-making strategies.

Healthy Living for Persons with Disabilities

This project will identify the issues and needs relating to healthy living for people with disabilities, and address the gaps that exist in rural communities by preparing strategies to improve opportunities for education, employment, community inclusion and quality of life.

Rural Virtual School

This project will provide students and adult learners in the Frontenac, Lennox and Addington counties with the opportunity to acquire secondary school credits online.

Building Community Capacity in Rural Essex County

This project will work with two recently restructured municipalities to establish a process to bring together community representatives to identify strengths and work on solutions that make sense to members of both municipalities. This process will lead to a model that will be shared with the other municipalities of Essex County.

Peer Group Behaviour Awareness

Through this project, the Dryden and District AIDS Committee will support teenagers in promoting awareness of risk behaviour patterns among students in grades 7 and 8.

Rural Eastern Ontario Development

This project is to increase opportunities to attract visitors to the area by working with rural businesses and developing a signage program to better identify the local and national trail networks.

For more information on the Pilot Projects Initiative, log on to www.rural.gc.ca/pilot/pilot_e.phtml. The Rural Development Initiative has replaced the Pilot Project Initiative.

Government of Canada initiative will build and enhance co-operatives

The Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), announced June 28 details of a new five-year \$15 million partnership between the Government of Canada and the co-operative sector. This new Strategic Investment Fund will help create new community level co-operative partnerships that will contribute to addressing the needs of citizens according to their objectives and priorities.

The Strategic Investment Fund will partner with the co-op sector and citizens. Priorities will include promoting opportunities in the emerging knowledge-based economy, positioning co-operatives as a tool for communities to pro-actively adjust to economic or social change, and to develop co-operatives as a tool for communities to address service needs not met by existing service providers.

The fund will support three key activity areas: advisory services to create and support new co-operatives, innovations to expand use of the co-operative model by mapping new opportunities, and building awareness of co-op potential through community outreach and promotion of the co-operative model.

The Canadian Rural Partnership

The Canadian Rural Partnership is the key policy framework supporting federal rural policy efforts to date. The Partnership is about operating differently within the federal government to ensure that federal programs, policies and activities provide support to rural communities.

Listening to Canadians living in rural and remote areas is one cornerstone of the Partnership. Responding to their needs by building networks and providing support at the grassroots level is another. The Partnership has, since 1998, conducted an ongoing "Rural Dialogue" with Canadians from all parts of the country.

In Ontario, a series of Rural Dialogue sessions were held this past summer in Alfred, Emo, Guelph, Kemptville, New Liskeard and Ridgeway, as well as a youth forum in Dorset. Representatives from each of these sessions, as well as government representatives, attended The Ontario Regional Rural Conference held in North Bay from August 26-28. The purpose of the conference was to develop a vision and a shared agenda to ensure a bright future for rural Ontario.

THINKING Rural & Remote

SUMMER 2002

Rural health projects focus on 'bottom-up' approach

Health care is the most important issue in rural and remote Ontario, according to the people who live there. They also consider water, agriculture and the family farm, sense of community, jobs, education and training, and telecommunications to be important rural issues.

Rural citizens made their views known at a series of Rural Dialogue sessions held throughout the province last summer. The Rural Dialogue is an ongoing conversation between rural Canadians and the Government of Canada. Its purpose is to share knowledge, discuss opportunities and challenges, develop networks and help establish policy directions for the government. At each Rural Dialogue session, health was identified as the "number one" asset of rural and remote Ontario, as well as the "number one" challenge.

Finding new ways to protect and enhance health care is important to rural and remote communities and government alike. Two Government of Canada rural initiatives are supporting new projects looking at

innovative ways of improving rural health-care services in Ontario.

Health Canada's Rural and Remote Health Innovation Initiative is funding the development of:

- Continuing education courses for nurse practitioners across the province;
- Rural community well-being teams in Brant and Oxford counties;
- A telehealth-enhanced partnership for continuing education in aging and health supporting population aging in rural and remote regions (Chapleau);
- An integrated multi-sectoral approach to rural health care delivery in Grey/Bruce counties; and
- A model for a rural health support network in Peterborough.

The Canadian Rural Partnership's Pilot Project Initiative is helping fund the following projects:

- Northern Ontario Web-Networking Program in Chelmsford;

- Minoyawin Distributed Homecare Resources Pilot Project located in five isolated First Nations communities;

- The Farm Line - a crisis phone line for farmers and rural residents across the province;
- Access for Rural Women at Risk in Sioux Lookout; and
- Healthy Living for Persons with Disabilities in Thunder Bay.

All of these projects involve the communities to ensure rural health care is supported over the long-term and meets many needs. These projects are helping to find creative, self-sufficient approaches to health care delivery in rural and remote communities. And that will benefit all Canadians.

TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION ON THESE AND OTHER HEALTH-RELATED PROJECTS, PLEASE CONTACT:

RURAL SECRETARIAT HEALTH CANADA
519-826-2029 416-973-4389

\$180 million in economic development tools for rural communities

The Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario) announced June 26 a four-part plan, totaling \$180 million, to assist rural communities in finding local solutions to local challenges.

Through this announcement, the Government of Canada continues to demonstrate its strong support for rural Canada. The plan includes the renewal of the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP), a new Community-Capacity Building (CCB) initiative, a new partnership

with the co-operative sector and an accelerated plan for the deployment of broadband internet access to rural and remote communities. These component parts will help encourage new partnerships, not only with communities themselves, but also with other levels of government, stakeholders and the private sector.

This announcement follows the commitment made by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief on June 20, 2002, in announcing measures to support agricultural communities and to establish a new Agricultural Policy Framework.

"Rural communities need the proper tools to take full advantage of their assets and turn the challenges of today into the success stories of tomorrow," said Mr. Mitchell. "In order to have a successful Canada, it is important that both of its component parts, urban and rural, are strong."

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of rural and remote communities and their contributions to Canada. It is committed to enhancing the quality of life in these rural and remote areas to ensure that they remain great places to live and work.

Message from the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative For Northern Ontario)



This publication explores issues important to the people of rural and remote Ontario and outlines Government of Canada programs and services available in these regions. I hope you find it both useful and interesting.

As Secretary of State for Rural Development, I am encouraged by the progress being made to keep our rural communities vibrant. From my travels across Canada, and my discussions with people in rural and remote areas, I know people are committed to strengthening their communities and improving their quality of life.

A significant percentage of our country's population lives in rural and remote areas, but because these citizens are scattered across our vast country, they sometimes lack the voice of their urban counterparts. It is important to provide people from rural and remote areas with an opportunity to speak out on issues that affect them. The Government of Canada is working with rural Canadians to ensure that they meet their unique challenges, and to listen to their concerns.

The Government of Canada is responding to issues in rural and remote communities in a variety of ways. For example, feedback from rural Canadians led to the Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada, which outlines key policy priorities for the government in addressing its commitment to assist rural Canadians. The Canadian Rural Partnership, which is the government's strategy for supporting development in rural and remote communities, funded more than 300 community projects totaling approximately \$12 million over a four-year period. In Ontario alone, the Canadian Rural Partnership funded 34 projects totaling more than \$1.5 million over a four-year period. A series of Rural Dialogue sessions held last year between Ontario's rural citizens and various levels of government enabled rural citizens to discuss what they value in their communities, and allowed the federal government to stay in tune with local and regional challenges and opportunities.

One of my roles as Secretary of State is to raise the profile of rural issues both within the federal government and outside. I am working with my cabinet colleagues to ensure that all policies and programs are designed and delivered in a manner that makes sense for both rural and remote Canada. I will be visiting several Canadian cities this year to discuss the important role rural and remote communities play in our daily lives.

I believe a viable Canada is made up of both a strong urban component and a strong rural component. One cannot exist without the other.

By working together and sharing information, we ensure the rural and remote regions of Canada remain a vital and strong link in our great country.

Rural Campaign launched by TORC

The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) has launched the first phase of its "Rural Campaign" to improve public perceptions and attitudes.

The Rural Campaign aims to:

- create a realistic and positive image of rural Ontario,
- position rural issues as a model for innovative development,
- act as a catalyst to help decision makers make informed and appropriate decisions, and
- increase rural influence among government decision and policy makers.

The Ontario Rural Council brings together people who share a commitment to building strong rural communities and organizations. It provides a unique and important opportunity for multi-sector cooperation within the rural sector. Council members represent non-profit

rural organizations, private sector corporations, the public sector and individuals with specialized expertise and resources. Senior members of organizations contribute their in-depth understanding of issues and communicate information back through their respective organizations.

The Council has 40 seats and is working toward balanced representation from all sectors including economic and infrastructure, resource and environmental, community, human services and government. The federal and provincial government representatives are non-voting members who participate fully in activities and act as resources to the Council. Associate members represent a wide-ranging network of individuals and groups from across the province who are linked to the Council and its work. **Web site:** www.torc.on.ca/torceng/

Regional networks created for rural stakeholders

Representatives of rural stakeholder organizations and governments have come together to form regional rural networks in northern, southeastern, southwestern and central Ontario. The purpose of these rural networks is to encourage the exchange of information and perspectives on community development in rural and remote Ontario.

This follows up on a series of Rural Dialogue sessions held across Ontario last year. Participants at these Dialogue sessions indicated an interest in continuing the dialogue through regionally focused networks. The Rural Dialogue, led by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, is an ongoing conversation between the Government of Canada and rural citizens. It aims to help the federal government better understand local and regional challenges, and to develop community-based solutions through partnerships.

For further information, please contact the Rural Secretariat, Ontario Region at **(519) 837-5801, extension 2250**.

For information on Government of Canada programs and services:
1 800 O-Canada
(1 800 622-6232)
TTY / TDD: 1 800 465-7735

canada.gc.ca

Service Canada Access Centres/
Centres d'accès Service Canada



Enhancing seniors' health in rural/remote areas

A Government of Canada project in a northern Ontario town is striving for a better quality of life for older adults living in rural areas.

The project -- a partnership between Chapleau Health Services, the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto and the Department of Geriatrics at the University of Toronto -- will look at new approaches to health care for older adults.

Funded by Health Canada, the project is focussing on three main areas: community-wide education, visiting and virtual clinical service, and use of telehealth resources.

The Chapleau project will "wrap telehealth resources and a visiting professional team around this small community," says project leader Dr. David Ryan, Director of Education in Aging and Health at the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto.

Service gaps and learning needs among older adults in areas such as dementia, end-of-life care, continence, falls, geriatric dentistry, and laboratory testing were recently identified at public meetings with Chapleau health professionals and community organizations. The public meetings were organized by the project's partnership members and were held with local service clubs, aboriginal groups and other community groups. Over the next year, a busy schedule of real and videoconference workshops and lectures, clinics and staff exchanges, will be held to satisfy the community's identified learning needs and service gaps. Mentoring and distance supervision will be provided by Toronto project staff for local service providers.

Project staff in Toronto will use the video-conferencing resources of the NORTH Network, the Internet and email to stay connected with Chapleau in between visits to the community. The team will focus on helping Chapleau citizens become more familiar with these telehealth resources.

The community of Chapleau views the project as an excellent opportunity to better utilize telehealth services and improve the health status of its older adults, says Lucy Bignucolo, a volunteer with the District Health Council in Chapleau and past-president of the Board of Directors of Chapleau Health Services.

"Everyone will gain a better understanding of how to function together as a community, and older adults will be able to stay in the community," says Bignucolo.

Throughout the year, the project will be evaluated and surveys will be used to monitor increasing levels of awareness about health issues for older adults.

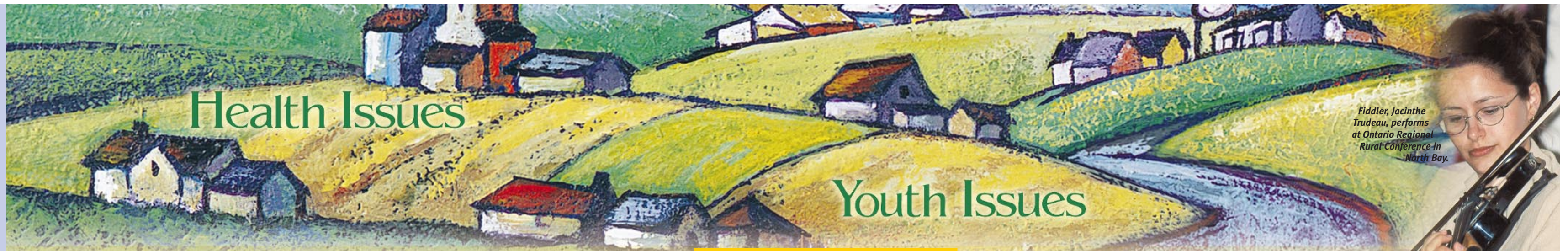
Community Dialogue Toolkit now available

A handy guide designed to help the residents of rural and remote communities initiate effective discussions on the issues that affect them most is now available.

Basically a "how-to" guide, which was written for use by community leaders, the Toolkit offers a flexible approach that can be easily adapted to each community's needs. By holding a dialogue, residents will be able to identify a shared vision and goals; build partnerships; identify issues and opportunities; develop creative responses to local issues and determine actions.

The Toolkit also contains a CD-ROM of the Pocket Directory of Rural Programs and Services, which lists about 200 government programs and services of interest to Canadians living in rural and remote Canada.

The Toolkit is available on the Internet at www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/tool/index_e_p.html, or by calling 1 800 O-Canada (622-6232).



New advisory committee on rural and remote issues

The creation of a new ministerial advisory committee on rural issues will help the Government of Canada ensure the sustainable development of rural and remote communities. The Advisory Committee on Rural Issues brings together a range of rural development expertise and will complement the Government of Canada's existing rural citizen engagement efforts.

The Advisory Committee on Rural Issues was set up to advise the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State for Rural Development, on challenges facing rural Canada. For example, the Committee will inform the Secretary of State of the impact of federal policies, strategies and programs on rural and remote communities, potential fields of research, and the best way of reaching these communities. The members will also provide advice to promote cooperation and build consensus between governments and various groups and individuals.

Rural "well-being" teams focus on health care access

"Well-being" teams for improving health care are being launched in four small communities in southwestern Ontario in a Health Canada sponsored project. The teams will work together to identify local health issues, promote healthy lifestyles, and build a network of services for residents.

The teams are being formed in the small rural communities of St. George, Princeton, Burford and Oakland-Scotland, in Brant and Oxford counties. They will focus on women and the elderly.

"They are four different communities and they will have different issues," says community development worker, Bev Aikenhead. "The teams will look at a complete range of community resources, from transportation to child care facilities to rural satellite health services."

The project builds on a successful model team that was developed six years ago in the town of Paris, Ontario by its local hospital. This hospital also serves the four communities involved in this latest project. Eventually, organizers hope the project will become a service model for small rural communities across Canada.

The rural well-being teams are made up of local residents, a community developer, hospital staff, and representatives of agencies such as Women and Rural Economic Development, Women's Farm Network and the Farm Safety Association. These teams will hold information sessions with community stakeholders to help identify local issues and determine needs and assets in each of the four communities.

The four teams will partner with the Brant Community Healthcare System, PrimaCare (a rural health provider network with a base of rural patients), the School of Nursing at McMaster University in Hamilton, and community partners to improve access to services and information. The project will also involve existing community groups such as women's institutes.

McMaster nursing students will work with the communities to identify their health care needs and will help the teams create a database. An advisory task force of community partners will enhance the goals of the project on an ongoing basis and assist with the evaluation process. The evaluations will be shared at community forums. Community leadership training will be offered to the well-being teams to assist with their sustainability.



The Committee consists of 16 rural residents and others from across Canada who are actively involved in the development of rural Canada, either individually or as part of an academic institution, government body or other organization.

The Committee has two members from Ontario. Mike McCracken of Ottawa is founder, chairperson and chief executive officer of Informetrica Ltd., a company specializing in quantitative economic research, and treasurer of the Canadian Employment Research Forum (CERF). He is also a member of Statistics Canada's National Accounts Advisory Committee and Trade Statistics Advisory Committee. James Aquino of Wawa is a retired Ontario government civil servant with over 30 years of service, including experience with the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. He is a member of the board of directors for Human Resources Development Canada's Regional Employment Help Centre in Wawa.

Rural health program offered

The University of Western Ontario's Bachelor of Health Sciences Program developed a Rural Health Stream three years ago. It was part of an overall strategy to teach students the realities of rural health and to help prepare them for eventually working in rural health as direct service providers, planners or administrators.

The BHSc Program provides undergraduate students with a holistic academic preparation in health studies. Graduates can find jobs in health policy, health administration and health promotion or enter graduate programs in epidemiology, health administration, and public health. Others are accepted into professional programs such as medicine, occupational and physical therapy.

More than 200 students have taken at least one of the rural courses and more than 40 will have taken the Rural Health Summer Practicum by the end of this year.

Students who complete the rural courses are exposed to creative rural health delivery programs and gain valuable first-hand experiences. Some are now working in rural communities while others will be able to reinforce their rural-focused learning in master's and PhD or health-professional programs after graduating from the Bachelor of Health Sciences Program.

The many rural partners who helped develop the Rural Health Stream provided generous and ongoing advice to make sure the program remains connected to the realities in a health system that is changing constantly and quickly. Some of these partners include The Ontario Rural Council, Women and Rural Economic Development, the Southwestern Ontario Rural Medicine Program at the University of Western Ontario, and the Thames Valley District Health Council.

(Special contribution from Steve Trujillo is a professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Western Ontario and chair of The Ontario Rural Council's Rural Health Working Group)

This newsletter was produced by the Rural Secretariat-Ontario Region, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. For more information on this and other rural initiatives, contact:
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Egalement disponible en français sous le titre L'Écho des ruraux des nouvelles des gens de chez nous.

Youth migration rising

The migration of young people from rural communities in Canada is the focus of a report commissioned by the Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. *Rural Youth: Stayers, Leavers and Return Migrants* is a profile of these young people and their migrations.

Data was assembled from the 1991 and 1996 Censuses, T1 tax records between 1986 and 1997, and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics of 1993-1997.

The following is a sample of the study's main findings:

- At the national level, rural areas lost 12-16 per cent of their population between 15-19 years of age to urban areas;
- British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec experienced a net gain of young people aged 15-19;
- Young people who moved out of their rural communities generally experienced higher earnings growth than their counterparts who stayed;
- At most, one in four individuals returned to their rural communities of origin 10 years later. This study will help policy makers establish the basic facts about the migration patterns of the rural youth population.

The study can be accessed through the Web site of the Rural Secretariat at: http://www.rural.gc.ca/researchreports/ruralyouth/ruralyouth_e.phtml.

Youth make recommendations at Rural Dialogue

What do young people value about rural Ontario? That was a key question asked at a youth forum held in Dorset last summer as part of the Rural Dialogue.

Approximately 25 rural youth took part in the forum organized by The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) and sponsored by Human Resources Development Canada.

Some of the recommendations for government and community strategies include:

- EDUCATION:**
- maintain satellite campuses of colleges and universities in rural and remote areas;
 - establish coop programs for rural students with locally based businesses;
 - focus on trades and locally specific training needs.
- AGRICULTURE:**
- establish community initiatives to provide financial opportunities for young farmers;
 - create a better understanding of agriculture among the general public;
 - offer business management training in high school.

- HEALTH:**
- provide community-based networks to support health-care workers;
 - attract, recruit and encourage high school students to enter the health-care field;
 - develop scholarship funds to support rural youth going into rural health-care.

- COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:**
- develop mentoring relationships between service clubs and youth;
 - form more partnerships within communities to address youth issues;
 - form a volunteer network to get youth to attend key community events.

Rural youth find a voice in their community

The key to attracting—and keeping—youth in rural areas is getting them involved in all aspects of the community. That's according to participants of the youth symposium held October 24, 2001 by The Ontario Rural Council (TORC).

The symposium looked at ways to keep youth connected to their rural roots, including more youth-adult mentoring partnerships and more support for youth business and employment. Many participants came away with a broader outlook and gained insight on ideas that could be implemented in their own communities.

Heather Weber, a second-year University of Guelph student from Ayton who remains loyal to her rural roots, says issues relevant to rural youth are often relevant to the rest of the community as well. "Working together to address common issues can help bridge the generation gap," she says.

Isolation is often a major challenge for rural youth, who view telecommunications and the Internet as a way to access education and business opportunities. However, many rural and remote areas lack high-speed or broadband access . . . or they have no access at all.

"Telecommunications puts everyone on a level playing field," says Crystal Godbout, project coordinator for Rainy River Future Development Corporation. "It allows youth to access so much: we can educate ourselves through the Internet, network, and advertise and sell products. The sky is the limit."

While many government-sponsored programs can help young entrepreneurs kick-start their businesses, accessing services is often frustrating and slow, says Scott Hill, an entrepreneur from Six Nations reserve near

Brantford. He owns and operates Hill's Native Foods, a supplier of corn and cornbread on Six Nations reserve.

"When I first started my business, I was dealing with voicemail whenever I phoned for financial assistance," he said. "It changed for the better when Aboriginal Business Canada set up an office on Six Nations."

The success of the TORC youth symposium has incited other organizations to involve youth in decision-making processes. Crystal Godbout helped organize a youth day at a World Health Organization (WHO) conference held in the Rainy River District in May.

The Government of Canada is also listening to youth. A youth forum hosted in February in Ottawa by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, sought the views of 100 youth across Canada about the future of Canadian communities. Throughout the rest of the year, youth forum delegates will have the opportunity to share what they learned by acting as advisors in planning upcoming youth activities in their regions, including roundtables and other events with young people during the Governor General's regional visits to their communities.

Youth also played a key role at the 2002 National Rural Conference, hosted in Charlottetown, PEI in April by Secretary of State Andy Mitchell (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario). Information gained from this event will be used to work across government and directly with rural communities to provide opportunities for youth in their own communities.

The TORC report can be found on the Internet at: www.torc.on.ca/torceng/conf/youth.htm

National Rural Youth Conference

Young Canadians will be given a new platform to express their views on rural issues at the first National Rural Youth Conference in 2003, the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State for Rural Development, announced in April. He also announced \$25,000 in funding to develop a National Youth Network.

The objective of the Network is to provide a mechanism for young Canadians to share information and perspectives on issues important to rural youth. As a first step, a youth steering committee will be created to discuss how best to form a national network of young Canadians living in rural and remote areas of the country. Ontario members of this steering committee include Christine Black of Guelph and Joel Beland of Clarence Creek. The committee will include one youth from each province and territory.

The Network will also serve as a consultation tool to help the Government of Canada gain a youth perspective when developing policies on rural Canada.

Youth Canadians—this tool's for you!

Youth Link is an excellent tool to help young people between 15 and 30 make the transition from school to work. There are over 250 programs, services and resources to help youth plan their careers, find work experience, get a summer job, or select the perfect training opportunity. Youth Link includes information on financial assistance, entrepreneurship, and work experience in Canada and abroad, job-search tools, career information tools and the Canadian outlook on jobs. **Telephone: 1 800 935-5555**
Web site: www.youth.gc.ca

