

# **Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program**

## **Research Summary 1998 - 2008**



## **Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program**

This report is intended to be a summary of the research projects undertaken by researchers at the University of Guelph under the direction of the Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program. Abstracts and the significance of the projects are included for the 2000-2008 time frame while there is also a list of additional projects completed during 1998-2000. For projects scheduled to be completed in 2009, the abstracts are included in this report and additional information is available on the OMAFRA/UofG Research Partnership website.

**Report compiled by: Dr. Bronwynne Wilton**

### **Mission Statement**

To contribute to the sustainability of rural Ontario by undertaking research that is effective in improving the economic, social and environmental conditions of rural communities.

### **Message from the Director – Dr. Wayne Caldwell**



*Greetings, on behalf of the Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program, I am pleased to present this compendium of research summaries and highlights from the years 2003-2008. As you can see from the project highlights included in this report, the Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program has supported a diverse selection of research projects covering the broad spectrum of rural economy, rural society, and rural environments. As exemplified by research projects such as “Community Impacts of Foreign Farm Workers in Ontario Communities: A Comparative Analysis”, “Conflict Resolution in Rural Ontario: Responding to the Intensification of Agriculture”, “Concern, Conflict and Costs of Environmental Regulation for Agriculture”, and “Building inclusive governance structures in rural Ontario: Assessing the capacities of the socially marginalized”; we can see the interesting and unique intersection of agricultural, economic, social, and environmental issues in rural research.*

*The Sustainable Rural Communities Research Program has supported an important contribution to the dynamic conversation related to rural development, both in Ontario and around the globe.*

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## **Rural Economies**

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***Assessment of the Current and Future Farm Economy of the Ontario Greenbelt.  
(Project number: 026612) \****

**Completion Date: 2009**

**Project Leader: Dr. Stew Hilts**

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The Greenbelt has succeeded in setting aside a large tract of land (1.8 million acres) surrounding the GTA. The purpose of the Greenbelt is "to protect key environmentally sensitive land and farmlands from urban development and sprawl". There is considerable agreement that the Greenbelt has succeeded in protecting the land. However, in the agricultural community it is seen as being driven by the environmental prerogative; whether agriculture will flourish in the future Greenbelt remains an important open question.

The purpose of this proposal is to provide a baseline data set matched to Greenbelt boundaries, which will enable future studies of agricultural land use and the farm economy in the Greenbelt.

Describing agriculture accurately is complicated by the boundary problem. Greenbelt boundaries don't correspond to municipal boundaries or the boundaries used by statistical agencies to report on agriculture and employment. In this research project we intend to prepare an accurate picture of agriculture (# farms, farm types, value of production, acreage in each farm type, farms by size category, etc) and agriculture related business (food manufacturing, agriprocessing, feed mills, etc). This will be done by comparing the map of the Greenbelt to maps used by agencies like Statistics Canada to report their data and then estimating the portion of each reporting unit that falls in the Greenbelt. The resulting picture of agriculture and closely related activity will form a basis for the development of policy to promote financially viable agriculture in the greenbelt.

***\* Projects are yet to be completed – further information is available at  
[http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/sustainable\\_rural\\_communities/index.shtml](http://www.uoguelph.ca/research/omafra/sustainable_rural_communities/index.shtml)***

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***Measuring Urban Pressure on Rural Communities: A Key Variable to Understanding and Anticipating Change in Rural Areas. (Project number: 026608) \****

**Completion Date: 2009**

**Project Leader: Dr. Brady Deaton**

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Understanding ‘rural’ requires a corollary understanding of urban. Rural communities are shaped, in part, by urban communities just as urban communities are profoundly shaped by rural issues. This reciprocal relationship is well understood in Ontario where the link between rural residents and urban areas are well know and documented. For example, urban areas provide direct employment and final good markets for rural residents. Similarly, rural areas influence the environmental character, local food attributes, and spatial pattern that influence the well being of urban residents.

The problem of defining rural-urban areas confronts community members, policy makers, and researchers. One common definition of rural areas is to use a measure of population density. Another, is to define it in direct relationship to urban areas; i.e., ‘nonmetropolitan.’ Another empirical measure of ‘ruralness’ is to determine the distance between a community and some specific city (e.g., Toronto) or cities. In each case differences in these measure may have consequence for how the relationship between rural and urban is understood and how we characterize urban pressure (e.g. residential housing development, legal concerns regarding the right to farm law, etc.) are understood. For example, the distance between Guelph and Toronto may have stayed constant over the last twenty years but the rural-urban relationship has evolved.

To address this problem we intend to carefully research various measures that might be used to characterize urban pressure on rural areas from 1980 to 2007. Hereafter, a “measure of urban pressure”, “urban pressure”, or “measure,” refers to an empirical variable that distinguishes Ontario townships by their proximity to urban centers, population densities, distance to primary employment centers, etc. The variety of different measures and the consequences thereof, are the subject of this proposed research. Specifically, we will compare and contrast different measures and examine to what extent there are empirical differences between different potential measures. In particular, we will compare more conventional measures (e.g., population density) with measures that can be derived using remote sensing techniques. (GIS and remote sensing techniques are discussed in more detail in the literature review.) Finally, we will develop an empirical measure for each Ontario township and make this variable available to the public in excel spreadsheets and GIS formats (e.g., maps).

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***Understanding the Economic and Social Impacts of Horse Farms in the Urban-Rural Fringe Regions on Ontario. (Project number: 026610)\****

**Completion Date: 2009**

**Project Leader: Dr. Wayne Caldwell**

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Horse farms are one of the least understood forms of agriculture in Southern Ontario and yet from an economic development perspective, they bring a multitude of economic benefits and spin-offs that create employment, encourage investment and protect the rural landscape. This project is aimed at understanding the impact that horse farms may bring to the rural-urban fringe of urban centres in Southern Ontario. As the demographics of society shifts towards one of more affluence and leisure time, there has been a corresponding increase in the popularity of owning horses and horse farms in Ontario. While anecdotally, there has been an awareness of this increase in the number of horse farms in Ontario, there has been little quantitative analysis of the role of these horse farms in relation to the economic and social quality of the urban-rural fringe areas. This project will examine these issues through an initial quantitative analysis of the economic impact of horse farms and their role as an important rural land use. It will also consider the nature of their capital investment and innovative business ideas that promote the link between urban 'consumers' and the rural countryside. This project will also compare and examine the character of horse farm ownership in the United States and Ontario through a comparison of Kentucky, U.S.A., and Southern Ontario. Overall, this project will contribute an important analysis of the role of the horse farm in the urban-rural fringe areas of Southern Ontario. It is believed that the pursuit of this industry represents a legitimate economic development strategy. Finally, the research will identify the merits and opportunities for local economic development strategies that encourage the equine industry in Ontario.

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***Labour Market Experiences of Recent Dependent Female Skilled Immigrants in Smaller Communities and Rural Areas. (Project number: 026628) \****

**Expected Completion Date: 2009**

**Project Leader: Dr. Harold Bauder**

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Immigration can make a vital contribution to the labour market of small and rural Ontario communities. The proposed research examines recent female immigrants who accompany their husbands selected to come to Canada under the skilled-workers immigration program. Many of these so-called "dependent immigrants" enter the Ontario labour market. Yet little is known about their skills, education and experience of these immigrants and whether they suffer from de-skilling when they begin working in Canada. Therefore the proposed project examines the labour market experiences of dependent female immigrants and what challenges, obstacles and opportunities they face. The investigation includes family and household roles that affect labour market participation and career advancement.

The existing literature documents the labour market experiences of skilled immigrants and immigrants who settle in urban areas. Little is known about the labour market experiences of the female dependent immigrants or how they perform in the labour markets of rural and smaller communities. To close this gap, the research will sample immigrants from South Asia. This region is an important source of both skilled and agricultural labour to Canada. A multi-disciplinary and multi-university study will provide policy recommendations in the areas of the Provincial Nominee immigration program, and provincial and municipal settlement policies.

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***Issues Analysis and Policy assessment on the Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts of the Bio-Economy (Project Number – 026527)***

**Completion Date - March 15 2008**

**Project Leader – John FitzGibbon**

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**Highlights of Results**

The Bio-economy will have important impacts on agriculture and the rural economy. At the present time the issue that are of importance are linked to the development of the bio-fuels industry and to the concerns that have been raised with respect to genetically modified crops and animals on food, the environment and the potential benefits to the economy. In some areas, the concerns expressed are common to all of the four stakeholder groups who were involved in the study. In other cases there were significant disagreements.

In the area of bio-fuels impacts the greatest concerns were with respect to the impacts on the costs of production including potential increases in the costs of land, animal feeds, as well as the potential need for increased inputs. Second in priority were the impacts on the structure of the agricultural industry including; concerns with respect to the stability of the policy environment especially as it relates to support for bio-fuels production, development of new markets, farm consolidation and centralization of processors. Environmental concerns related to bi-fuels were primarily with respect to extending production to marginal lands and impacts on loss of organic matter and impacts on mono cropping. In the area of genetically modified crops and animals the major concerns were the impacts on biodiversity, non GMO crops and on mono cropping and crop rotation. Impact on the community related to the potential for increased employment in better paying jobs. However there were concerns with respect to the requirements for increased knowledge and skill in the workforce. The final set of impacts was those on the institutions that related to agriculture and the food system. These concerns included the issues of impacts on food quality and safety and requirements for new regulations and the requirement for identity preservation of food products. It was also noted that the need for regulation and control extended to all products entering our market.

In comparing the positions of the different stakeholder groups it was found that except in a few key areas the concerns were shared. Often the basis for the concern differed between groups. The greatest differences related to the impacts on the environment and on the safety and quality of food as related to GMO production.

The need for better information and communications concerning the development of the bio-economy was noted and supported by all groups but to the greatest degree by non expert groups. This indicates that there is not a clear understanding of the nature of the

science by the public and there is a need for better communications and a more active dialogue with respect to the issues.

### **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The development of the bio-economy represents a major opportunity for the development of both agriculture and the rural economy in Canada. Except for the development of the bio-fuels industry it appears to have been delayed or has stalled because of a number of factors, public concern related to genetically engineered organisms and their products, uncertainty with respect to government policy and its continuity, uncertainty with respect to its real impacts on the rural economy and those involved in primary production as well as uncertainty with respect to impacts on the environment.

This work provides some insight into the nature of the issues as they are perceived by the different stakeholder groups and provides a comparison of the different positions and levels of concern. It also provides some insight into the reasoning behind the opinions and perceptions that have become the basis for their opinions. This knowledge should provide a basis for the development of strategies for development of policies that deal with these differences. Thus contributing to an improved public dialogue and providing some resolution of the issues. This may advance the process of development of the bio-economy by reducing the public conflict.

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***Policy Recommendations and Final Report on Agricultural Viability in the GTA Greenbelt Region (Project Number – 026382)***

**Completion Date - April 3, 2008**

**Project Leader – Dr. F.H. Cummings**

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**Highlights of Results**

In this component to our report, we intend to focus the range of opinions and concerns raised during the course of our research into farm viability in the GTA Greenbelt area. The challenge is in how best to translate ideas into practical and policy relevant directions. Ultimately, we intend for this final report to contribute to expanding knowledge and awareness about information gaps, planning and policy requirements, knowledge training and financing to implement new development projects for our host communities and the region as a whole. The following three policy recommendations emerged as the highlights of our research project.

**1. Land Use, Farming, Legislation and Regulations**

This report encourages further exploration of a shift in how environmental and agricultural policies are developed, especially in a near-urban setting such as that in the GTA Greenbelt. If there is a broad public consensus that we seek healthy ecosystems that provide clean air, water and quality of life, than we can provide the financial support to those at the forefront of managing and enhancing those systems, primarily farmers. Implementing a preliminary program of supports for farmers undertaking ecological services in the GTA Greenbelt would follow the example set in various jurisdictions across North America.

**2. Location Specific Planning**

While our research into farming viability in the Greenbelt area found similarities across the three communities where we held our workshops, there were also important differences. The dynamics of land use holdings, dedication to farming in the community at-large and existing infrastructure that remains were quite varied. Relationships between farmers and their elected municipal government play a serious role in providing a voice for agriculture at the local level. Governments need to know, care and value the protection of farmland and actually work to defend it in light of other forces of development. It is commendable that the latest opportunity for potential expansion of the Greenbelt as proposed by the provincial ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is restricted to those municipalities that choose to include themselves. With a revitalized role for municipal and community capacity in farming, the development of agriculture in specific locations with its natural advantages and unique circumstances may have a more adaptable and motivated force for viability.

### 3. Changing Farm Business Planning to Meeting Changing Markets

The demographics of the GTA region are changing constantly and rapidly. Communities are more multicultural, intergenerational, educated and increasingly health conscious. These consumer demands can also serve as an opportunity for GTA area agriculture, however many farmers have not changed their marketing strategies in years while the costs of conventional commodity production are rising, especially in land-scarce near-urban areas. If agriculture in the GTA Greenbelt is to remain viable, the process of innovation and change need to be understood in the context of actual on-farm business decisions. As important as individual farmer decision-making is, infrastructural investments have to be considered and then made in relation to a vision for a different GTA Greenbelt agriculture. Equally important will be policies in training and investment for farm business planning to identify knowledge gaps and to further understand when changes are most likely to happen.

#### **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This project has been particularly helpful in addressing a very specific circumstance in Southern Ontario. The area around the Greater Toronto Area is very different in its circumstances because of the combined pressures of urban development and provincial legislative protection of recognized, highly valuable farmlands that are unique in their characteristics and capacity.

We have focused a research and a series of workshops on the unique requirements for farming under this prevailing situation in the region. Environmental legislation provides the first step; the results of our work with address how farmers, their municipalities, and the overall organization and innovation present in these communities can foster the changes and adaptations for progress.

The beneficiaries of our project will be numerous; especially for the farmers who consider the potentials in new markets for niche products. We also see the benefits for the overall regional economy, if the innovations required utilize the resources and collaboration of local governments, development agencies and the broader farm and food sector. Prevailing throughout all of this will be the need to understand the layers of interaction between local, regional, provincial and federal governments and the regulations and policies that need to be coordinated for agricultural viability in this part of Ontario.

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*Diverse Workplaces, Homogeneous Towns? Exploring the linkages between rural labour markets and (im)migration in Ontario* (Project Number - #026328)

**Completion Date – 30 October 2008 (end date for workshops)**

**Project Leader - Dr. Kerry Preibisch**

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**Highlights of Results**

A number of communities in rural Ontario remain ethnically and racially homogeneous. While Canada as a nation and Ontario as a province have grown through immigration, rural communities face challenges in attracting newcomer settlement

Rural jobs, however, are attracting newcomers. Within the principal drivers of rural economies, manufacturing and farming and food processing, newcomers are found at opposite ends of the occupational ladder. In manufacturing, newcomers are more likely to be employed as skilled workers and professionals, with jobs in production tending to be filled by predominantly White, Canadian-born rural residents. Conversely, a greater proportion of newcomers are finding employment in lower-paying, seasonal jobs in agri-food operations.

Good jobs are the major driver of rural in-migration by immigrants. Many immigrant workers are reluctant to resettle to rural areas due to the unstable, short-term, and low-wage nature of rural jobs. Although jobs like these also exist in cities, the density of immigrants' kinship ties and personal support networks in urban areas help cushion the risks and consequences precarious work entails.

Employment opportunities are a major inducement to newcomer settlement, but rural communities will have to develop the public and private infrastructure required to support diverse communities. Chief among these are better public transit, affordable housing, good daycares and schools, and immigrant services.

Rural employers are facing challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, an issue that requires urgent attention if rural communities are to grow and prosper.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

If rural Ontario communities are to continue to grow and flourish economically, they must be able to attract new investment and retain existing opportunities. Employers who invest must be sure that there is a ready supply of labour willing and able to work, with the appropriate skills. Immigration is a critical path through which the Canadian government is meeting this challenge. Our research identifies what rural communities need to do to encourage immigrants to work and settle in their communities. This includes identifying the contributions that can be made by government policy, non-profit and private labour market institutions, community groups and local government to the successful attraction

and integration of immigrants into rural communities. An improved, integrated labour market strategy, linked to an immigrant settlement strategy, will enhance communities' capacity to attract permanent immigration.

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***Rural Immigrants in Ontario: Labour Force Development, Settlement & Community Services.***

**Completion Date: March, 2004**

**Project Leader - Harold Bauder**

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**Highlights of Results**

Less than two percent of Ontario's immigrants who entered Canada between 1996 and 2001 settled in predominately rural areas. The distribution of these two percent across rural Ontario varies considerably, with some areas having a healthy share of recent immigrant population while in other areas newcomers are almost absent.

A project website ( <http://www.uoguelph.ca/geography/research/ffw/index.htm> ) features preliminary results and is continuously upgraded as the project nears completion.

Emerging findings from the ongoing research fill large gaps in the existing literature, but they also raise important, previously unasked, questions that offer the opportunity to expand the current project.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The findings of this project are significant to the growth of the rural economy and the well being of rural communities in Ontario in several ways:

- They assess settlement patterns of immigrants and recent immigrants in rural Ontario.
- They illustrate the relative absence of recent immigrants in Ontario's rural communities.
- They demonstrate the uneven spatial distribution of recent immigrants in rural Ontario.
- They raise important questions about the lack of appeal of rural areas for immigrant settlement.
- They emphasize the need for more research about settlement choices among immigrants and the role of ethnic identity formation and foreign credential recognition.

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***Agricultural Labour Markets in Ontario: the role of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program in an expanding provincial economy. (Project Number - #025988)***

**Completion Date - 31 March 2004**

**Project Leader - Dr. Kerry Preibisch**

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**Highlights of Results**

This research finds that:

- Agricultural producers continue to face serious problems in recruiting and retaining domestic workers.
- Formal and informal labour contractors fill some of the sector's labour requirements, but this labour supply does not solve the high turnover producers experience.
- Agricultural employers find the C/MSAWP to be a premium labour program, ensuring continuity in labour supply and reducing turnover.
- Further research to address the implications of labour shortages in agriculture is necessary and should explore the associated costs to producers, food safety issues for consumers, as well as occupational health and safety issues.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This project received a small amount of funding as a seed grant. The project identified a number of issues that could serve as a basis for future research and policy-making that may well enhance agricultural and food industries or rural living. These include a continued need to address labour issues in agriculture and the implications they hold for both producers and rural inhabitants as stakeholders. The inability of producers to recruit and retain labour poses significant costs to their operations. While some industries such as greenhouse vegetables are expanding and appreciating high profits, agriculture labour remains an unattractive employment option for rural residents. This is reflected in a growing reliance on foreign workers supplied through the C/MSAWP who have become central to some agricultural enterprises. These initial findings suggest that seasonal agricultural workers and domestic workers supplied by labour contractors represent a growing share of employees serving agriculture and food industries. Future research that would address the implications of a changing labour force composition for agricultural and food enterprises as well as rural community life appears warranted.

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***Automobile Parts Industry and Rural Community Sustainability:  
Production and Livelihoods on the Move***

**Project Leader:** *Belinda Leach*

**Completion Date:** *April 2005*

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**Highlights of Results**

1. A ruralization of the automobile industry is taking place. A growing proportion of new automotive investment is taking place in rural and small town Ontario (78% of Japanese investment since 1986).
2. This generates welcome economic opportunity for rural communities, but also brings problems. Workers may be commuting from proximate cities leave rural unemployment rates high, commuting and just-in-time production increase rural traffic volume, and the volatility of this globalized industry may make it an unstable source of employment and municipal investment.
3. State investments are powerful incentives for location decisions, but the full costs to municipalities of service provision may not covered by local tax structures. Less well-off municipalities unable to provide incentives and services cannot compete with larger and better off communities.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This project has demonstrated the ruralization of the automobile industry in the last several years. This represents a sizeable investment by industry into rural communities in Ontario, and has revitalized the declining rural manufacturing sector. While the positive effects of rural industrial location are apparent (jobs, tax revenue, spin off services, construction, etc.) other factors (skill deficit, the use of urban labour, gender breakdown of the workforce, environmental and social impact) require further examination. Attention of rural municipalities to the factors we identify will improve local policymakers' abilities to manage and negotiate change in their communities and the role of automobile plants in it. Further research into the nature of the work and its impact within communities would help to complete the picture.

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***Industry and Community Internships for Horticulture Students (Project Number: 26012)***

**Project Leader - Ken Nentwig**

**Completion Date - April 30, 2005**

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**Highlights of Results**

- a) Skills lists and Competencies have been identified, are extremely vast, and are definable and measurable. There are competency areas not presently covered that need to be developed in concert with existing information.
- b) Consolidation and standardization of job descriptions, skills sets, and competency requirements across several business types are essential. This requires cooperation of government ministries, industry sectors, and education/training providers.
- c) Industry has already begun to address the next steps – development of laddering, certification and registration formats, and the accreditation of training providers and institutions – to be based on the work of this project.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Streamlining of human resource management aspects of this fast-growing, major sector of the agriculture industry, will eventually be undertaken and provide an excellent basis for positive continued growth. Internships as such (as in the original intent of this project) may not be the answer. The background work and coordination of involved groups and individuals that has begun to take shape as a result of this project, is a solid and useful base for further work.

All of this means a major step forward in the (ornamental) horticulture industry in Ontario, and hence in Canada. Moving from small, owner-operated, family-based businesses into more streamlined, well-trained, efficient, and business-oriented operations is a big change that has been looked forward to for many years already – the time has come.

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***A Framework for Innovative Rural Communities (Project Number - #026091)***

**Completion Date – October 2006**

**Project Leader – Dr. Tony Fuller / Dr. Mary Robertson Lacroix**

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**Highlights of Results**

Rural Ontario is innovating. Rurality is a driver rather than a barrier to innovation. Innovation in the rural context is broad-based, complex, and is occurring across social, economic, cultural and environmental sectors. Very few rural innovations are of a ‘break through’ nature, but rather would be described as incremental, introducing new services, facilities or programs to a region. Innovation is occurring in all parts of the province including urban adjacent areas, purely rural and remote locations. Proximity to large urban centres is not a prerequisite for innovation to occur.

Innovations and innovation champions are at the centre of innovation in rural and northern Ontario. There is a strong and direct link between creative people and innovative activities.

Innovators and innovations depend on rural social and knowledge networks. In turn, innovations reinforce and strengthen these networks contributing to stronger rural communities. Networks linking innovators within a region and to sources outside the community form a crucial part of the infrastructure needed to advance innovation within rural areas.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Public perceptions often question the capacity of rural to be innovative and relevant in an urban-based society. This research demonstrates rural Ontario’s ability to be innovative and progressive and highlights rural contributions to the overall prosperity and competitiveness of the province as a whole.

The training and resource materials based on the learnings from the study will support efforts of rural champions and leaders from all sectors to enhance local innovation culture and build innovation for community betterment. This project has shown that rural innovation is having positive impact upon economic development, social and cultural services and environmental management.

This research will lead to policy discussions related to the conditions that foster innovation. The lessons learned from the project also inform community, municipal, provincial and federal policy and program developers by applying a rural innovation lens to issues related to labour market development, capacity building and leadership development.

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***Community Impacts of Foreign Farm Workers in Ontario Communities: A Comparative Analysis (Project -025763)***

**Completed April 30, 2003**

**Project Leaders: Harald Bauder and Kerry Preibisch**

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**Highlights of Results**

A website ([www.uoguelph.ca/geography/RESEARCH/ffw/index.htm](http://www.uoguelph.ca/geography/RESEARCH/ffw/index.htm) ) features a discussion paper with the main findings of the project as well as related research.

Our key finding is that economic and social impacts of foreign farm workers are profound in the two communities we surveyed. Grocery stores, banks, hardware stores, building material suppliers and even restaurants benefit from the seasonal presence of the foreign workers. The added consumer power is particularly valuable for rural communities where the local service and business sectors have been contracting in recent years.

A second interesting finding relates to the role of language in community interaction. Although workers from the Caribbean tend to speak English this relative advantage does not necessarily translate into more interaction compared to Mexican workers. As a policy recommendation, we suggest that community-based institutions in both Simcoe and Delhi engage in cultivating positive images of migrant workers as economic and social assets rather than a cultural threat, host more intercultural community events, and create an infrastructure for the regular intermingling between locals and migrant workers.

**Significance to Rural Ontario**

The project significantly contributes to rural Ontario in several respects:

- It highlights the linkage between the agricultural labour force and the social and economic well being of communities.
  
- It evaluates the impact of farm labour on local businesses.
  
- It identifies locally differentiated economic and social impacts of foreign workers.
  
- It bridges academic research with practical application through the close co-operation with rural NGOs and community organizations.

- It provides concrete policy recommendations for local agencies and the provincial government.
- It identifies concrete opportunities and challenges to accommodate foreign farm workers in rural communities.

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***The Investigation of cooperation and Integration of Community Tourism in Amalgamated Municipalities* (Project Number – 025715)**

**Completion Date - March 31, 2003**

**Project Leader - Donald G. Reid**

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**Highlights of Results**

1. Amalgamated municipalities suffer from the lack of social and psychological integration even though they have been amalgamated legislatively.
2. The partners in the community tourism enterprise need to determine how each level will contribute to the overall enterprise. This requires coordinated and cooperative organization at all levels of local government and with community institutions, including volunteer and business organizations.
3. Amalgamated municipalities are at different stages of integration with regard to the tourism and recreation system. Some have moved along this path and others are still resistant.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

While municipalities across Ontario have been amalgamated legislatively, they are still acting as separated communities in many ways (based on their former jurisdictional structure), chiefly at the service delivery level and particularly from a social and psychological perspective. This study seeks to investigate the constraints and barriers to full integration mainly from the social and psychological point of view. This investigation will result in the creation of an “integration index” which will provide a guide and evaluation tool to municipalities in order for them to judge their progress on integration. The results of their self-examination on this index will allow them to determine in what areas they need to concentrate any remedial activity and focus. This work will advance the amalgamation and integration process.

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***Genetically Modified Organisms and Emerging Life Science Economy:  
Implications for Sustainable Rural Communities in Ontario. (Project Number  
02577)***

**Completion Date April 30, 2003**

**Project Leader - Dr. Rakhal C. Sarker**

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**Highlights of Results**

While the first wave of biotechnology generated some cost savings, farmers did not realize significant increase in yields for corn, cotton, soybean and canola on a consistent basis. While the second wave of biotechnology offers farmers the possibility of substantially higher profit margins, it remains to be seen if the farmers would be able to enjoy an equitable share of the benefits of this technology.

Is biotechnology scale neutral? The scale neutrality of biotechnology along with the retention of a large share of potential benefits from the emerging life science economy can have significant implication for sustainable rural communities. There have been only a few empirical studies and they report conflicting results on scale neutrality of biotechnology. Similarly, no research effort has been devoted to establish the linkages between biotechnology adoption and sustainable rural communities.

GIS technology can be used to monitor input uses on farm and the scale of biotechnology adoption along with the management of the recommended “buffer strip” management to reduce the possibility of insecticide resistance. This information can be used to formulate a very effective environmental policy.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

A good understanding of the economic issues, consumers’ concerns, environmental and ecological issues related to biotechnology in agriculture is essential for harnessing the full potential of the most important technology of our times. Similarly, a good understanding of the nature of adoption and factors influencing the adoption decision of this technology by primary producers can help us formulate appropriate policy designs to improve the competitiveness of the agri-food sector in Ontario. The results from this study will help us in both areas.

Given the size of our domestic market and the potential for growth in this market, the future prospect in Ontario agri-food industry depends on how successfully our farmers,

processors and exporters can exploit the potential benefits of this technology. A good understanding of consumers' concerns, environmental concerns and their origins will help these stakeholders to make informed choices. Finally, the results from this study can be used to identify potential research topics in this area which will have beneficial effects on long-term sustainability of rural communities in Ontario.

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***Toward More Effective Rural Economic Development in Ontario (Project Number 023510)***

**Completion Date – (Revised) May 2003.**

**Project Leader - Professor David J. A. Douglas**

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**Highlights of Results**

The pivotal highlight from this research, which has never been attempted in North America, is that a significant proportion of rural communities in rural Ontario are at risk. This level of risk has come about as a result of a combination of factors. These factors include persistent conditions of economic stress (e.g. unemployment, low levels of investment, population decline), increased reliance on the part of the rural Municipality on the health of a small and at times stagnant local economy, in part as a result of the Provincial withdrawal from financial support of municipalities, and the fact that there are very significant capacity deficiencies in both rural community and Municipal to undertake local economic development initiatives. This confluence of conditions and factors means that many rural communities, particularly smaller communities (i.e. below 6,000) and those in rural regions with structural difficulties, have significant constraints on livelihood choices and potentials. Notwithstanding the many players active in rural local economic development issues, Ontario faces a very significant challenge. Broad-based, concerted and collaborative initiatives are required to develop and sustain the local economic development capacity in rural Ontario.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The results and analysis from this applied research project have very important implications for rural development in Ontario. The capacity issue must be addressed. New ways of conducting local economic development have to be addressed. The role and responsibilities of the Provincial government have to be addressed. A re-engagement of major players, such as the Community Futures Development Corporations, has to be addressed. The no-existence or relatively passive approaches to plan making, strategy formulation and the implementation of economic development plans is an issue. The research is addressing the highly complex array of players and roles in local economic development in rural Ontario. It provides a set of recommendations for rural municipalities, for AMO, for the Province of Ontario, the Federal government, for EDCO, the private sector and for universities and community colleges in Ontario.

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***Socio-Economic Capacity Building for Horticultural Civic Beautification: A Model for Small Ontario Communities (Project Number 025090)***

**Completion Date     April 2003**

**Project Leader - Ken Nentwig**

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**Highlights of Results**

Development of local COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEES to take on local horticulture projects from initiation to management;

Development of a local AREA-RATED TAX-BASED SYSTEM that provided 83% of actual funding;

An evolution and development of the KNOWLEDGE and CAPABILITY within the CBC groups to manage their own affairs, and a greater involvement of the community in municipal beautification projects, including provision of 17% of actual funding plus 35% of the project value (admin., supervision, volunteerism).

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The coordination of efforts and expertise created the model where for every dollar of tax-based funding raised or generated, an additional fifty cents was realized from volunteered involvements. For the small communities of Ontario, this leverage means that more horticultural beautification projects can be considered and undertaken, more extensive and elaborate projects can be dreamed of and completed, and projects can be established where nothing is presently taking place.

The model for this significant value-added component to local residents includes education in horticultural matters, the involvement of dedicated contract personnel, and initial leadership in dealing with municipal departments and committees. What has been lost over time and through cutbacks to municipal horticulture operations and funding, can be achieved through coordinated group involvement, and has been shown in the increased awareness and appreciation for horticulture beautification in these localities. Benefits accrue to the residents, businesses suppliers, workers, and visitors, all part of the rural component.

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***Horticulture Industry Value-Added Business Statistics for Ontario (Project Number 025220)***

**Completion Date    30 April 2004**

**Project Leader - Ken Nentwig**

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**Highlights of Results**

Research reports (as published) are available on the Ridgetown College, University of Guelph website ([www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/research/leaders.cfm](http://www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca/research/leaders.cfm));

A system for collecting and disseminating statistical information has been developed;

Results show a vibrant, multi-faceted, rapidly-expanding industry

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Statistical information on the size and components of the horticultural industry enables better management of marketing operations, and will assist in the development of more detailed reporting on the industry as a whole.

Average annual increases of 15% for both farm-gate and overall industry values demonstrate the vibrancy of horticulture in Ontario:

- creation of more jobs;
- need for coordination of education and training, and for business registrations.

Many of the businesses and job opportunities are located in rural areas adjacent to larger urban centers (not specifically documented in this portion of the research)

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***Sustainable Rural Systems in Ontario: (Re)Linking Agriculture and Community***  
**Project Number - 023540**

**Completion Date - 30 - April - 2003**

**Project Leader John Smithers**

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**Highlights of Results**

The documented existence of diversity in the business circumstances and trajectories of family farms in Ontario suggests the need for better understanding of the dependencies and sensitivities that are specific to these (or similar) farm groups. Analysis of that fraction of local farming characterized as expanding and intensifying may reveal quite different sensitivities to change (for example, concerns with non-farm residential development and environmental regulation) and dependencies on local communities than would a similar investigation focused on another trajectory of farm change. Such distinctions seem important for understanding in a more nuanced way the importance of, and prospects for, strengthened linkages between farm and town.

Family farms continue to exhibit significant preferences for local shopping and the support of local (community) businesses. However, the research suggests that such allegiance is contingent on perceptions that the community (and associated business) is still 'farm focused'. Study participants tended to differentiate clearly between communities that have gone in other directions and communities that have retained an agricultural focus

Farmers in South Huron, a site of recent municipal amalgamation, express concern for the diminished political importance of farming in local governance. Such concerns are symptomatic of a reportedly general tendency for farmers to harbour concerns for the role of farming in the political, economic and perhaps social futures of rural communities in Ontario and elsewhere.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The significance of the research lies in its attempt to shift attention away from specific 'flashpoints' of local farm/non-farm conflict and toward a broader understanding of the nature of change in family farming and rural communities. While it is possible, based on many specific instances of local conflict, to suggest that the two sectors are no longer connected in any meaningful or productive way, such suggestions mask the many positive interactions which exist between the farm and non-farm communities in rural Ontario today. They also provide little basis upon which to construct better and longer lasting

connections between farms and rural communities. Thus, there is merit in identifying how family farms and rural communities are changing BUT remaining linked.

The present research suggests that among farms adopting an expansion philosophy the continued availability of services (banking, extension, etc.) is important, while for others the presence of a diversified rural economy that provides opportunities for employment is critical. Further, there is evidence that some forms of farming do indeed have potential to generate local conflict; better understanding of these concerns is also needed. Progress along these lines contributes to a better understanding of the ways in which farms (and farm families) and rural communities depend upon one another, and ultimately will offer insights which contribute to the sustainability of both sectors.



## **Rural Society**

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### ***An Examination of Settlement Patterns and Psycho-Social Adjustment of Immigrants in Rural Communities (Project Number – 026325)***

**Completion Date – April 2007**

**Project Leader – Saba Safdar**

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#### **Highlights of Results**

It was found that immigrants who reported low levels of linguistic competence and social support had high level of socio-cultural difficulties. Therefore, it is of particular importance to facilitate language acquisition by offering programs of ESL classes and to provide a support system to those immigrants who live in isolated areas, such as rural settings, where informal support through ethnic networks is limited.

The cultural adaptation problems of rural immigrants were found to be similar to those of their urban counterparts, which indicate that services to support adaptation and higher levels of integration should also be offered to rural immigrants. It is interesting that few specifically rural characteristics emerge as significant in the adaptation process, other than the low density of immigrants. This would suggest that if few special problems are likely to occur for immigrants in rural Canada, then the strategies known to work in support of immigrants in urban centers could, or should, be applied in rural areas. Although these findings are preliminary, they do indicate that rural immigration is a feasible prospect in rural development policy.

Research on the patterns of psychological and social adaptation of immigrants in rural area is a significant step in advancement of our understanding of immigrants' acculturation. This knowledge will contribute to a new and exciting area within social sciences and will be used to inform policy makers at local, provincial and federal levels.

Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario

The literature review highlighted the contribution of our project to Rural Ontario:

- The potential contribution of immigration to the rural economy (human capital).
- The role of immigrant settlement in sustaining rural communities.

- The need to examine potential actions and policies to facilitate immigrant settlement in rural areas and smaller places.
- Making policy recommendations to the province of Ontario in light of federal initiatives.

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***Building inclusive governance structures in rural Ontario: Assessing the capacities of the socially marginalized and their relationships to rural society***  
**(Project Number - #026380)**

**Completion Date - 30-April-07**

**Project Leader - Donald G. Reid - U of G**

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**Highlights of Results**

The Waterloo region site of the project has produced the following draft report in collaboration with the Social Planning Council for Cambridge and North Dumfries.

Main results from the Niagara Region site included:

A description of the “Path to Paid Employment” which examines the relationship between employment and other determinants of health in local communities (e.g., housing, social supports, and culture and gender as a determinant of health)

A significant outcome of the project is that we captured the women’s voices about not only their challenges but also their strengths and visions for their lives- this section of the report is entitled, “Messages We Want to Send- In the Women’s Own Voices”.

A spring conference to disseminate the results of this research is planned for the Arboretum at the University of Guelph. The outline for the conference is presented below:

In May of 2007, Drs. Donald Reid (University of Guelph), Susan Arai (Brock University) and Heather Mair (University of Waterloo) will be hosting a conference tentatively titled, "Re-thinking work: The role of leisure in assisting access to community for individuals who are marginalized" at the Arboretum Centre on the University of Guelph campus (Friday, May 25) . We will be inviting a select group of distinguished leisure scholars (including ourselves) from across Canada to present papers on this topic area. It is our intention that these papers will form the basis of a book edited by the conference organizers (to be published by Fernwood Press).

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

For those who are on the margins of rural society (the poor), issues of barriers and constraints to engaging community institutions and structures to improve their situation and to allow them to contribute to society are fundamental. This work begins with the assumption that marginalized individuals have abilities and capacities that benefit the wider communities, and the structures of rural communities and governance need to

become more flexible to incorporate them. At the same time, work can be done with these individuals to help build their capacity to contribute to rural society by becoming more civically engaged. By developing new models for rural governance that take these issues into account more adequately, rural society can only be strengthened and its communities enhanced.

This work identifies some of the barriers faced by the rural marginalized as they seek to create an integrated community life without many of the resources that are common among the more affluent. Additionally, community structures that can facilitate that integration have also been examined.

Policy suggestions to deal with the barriers and constraints have been identified in the publications noted above. Case studies from around the region have been developed in hopes that they shed light on the problems that exist for the marginalized in rural areas.

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***Building inclusive governance structures in rural Ontario: Assessing the capacities of the socially marginalized (Project Number - #026326)***

**Completion Date - June 30, 2006**

**Project Leader - Donald G. Reid, Susan Arai and Heather Mair**

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**Highlights of Results**

The following brief points highlight themes that are emerging from the project:

- (1) The hidden face of rural poverty: Poverty, as measured by the Statistics Canada's low income cut-off, is extensive in rural communities, but is often hidden. People living in poverty don't have the same strong voice and connection to decision-makers and service providers as other members of the community.
- (2) Lack of transportation means lack of access: Issues such as transportation are central to any discussion of access to services in rural areas. While social services may be relevant and appropriate in terms of meeting the needs of marginalized populations, if there is no affordable transportation infrastructure, access to these services will be limited at best.
- (3) The organizations themselves are in trouble: Many of the voluntary agencies serving the rural citizenry, including people who are marginalized, are in need of assistance themselves. This is especially true with regard to funding, recruitment and training of volunteers, as well as in terms of determining the needs of particular communities and populations.
- (4) The important role (and potential) of leisure: From the perspectives of people who are marginalized in society as well as the agencies that provide services for them, leisure is seen as a useful tool for assisting with social integration. However, it is clear that the skill to maximize their use to this end is lacking.
- (5) Understanding the complexity of marginalized populations: Any consideration of people who are marginalized must reflect the complexity of gendered, race, disability, mental health, and class-based relationships that underscore their position in society.
- (6) The complexity of the system of social welfare supports: Federal, Provincial and local government and non-profit organizations create a complex system of institutions with which individuals must engage to address their health-related needs (housing, food, employment, health-care, child care etc.). A number of issues have been identified that

pose challenges to individuals and prevent anticipated improvements in their quality of life, including their lack of inclusion in governance and basic control over the decisions that affect their lives. Many issues are common to both urban and rural spaces, but are more pronounced and have a greater impact on individuals living in rural areas.

### **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Recognition of the results cited above by community decision-makers, is the first step in dealing with these problems and thereby strengthening decision-making and service provision in rural communities. The full potential of citizens who are marginalized by society due to poverty is often not recognized nor well understood. Thus, the identification of these problems is the first step in moving toward maximizing the potential of individuals living in poverty both to their benefit as well as the community and society more generally.

Community leaders will need to pay more attention to this population as their numbers grow and they become more visible and vocal in the community. With appropriate changes to the structures of governance in rural areas, these communities can become fully integrated into the rural community to the benefit of all concerned.

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***Rural Community - Migrant Worker Partnerships for Social Inclusion*** (Project Number – 026155)

**Project Leader** - Dr. Kerry Preibisch

**Completion Date** - 28 March 2005

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### **Highlights of Results**

- The project *Rural Community - Migrant Worker Partnerships for Social Inclusion* developed a directory of organizations targeting foreign agricultural workers
- The project *Rural Community - Migrant Worker Partnerships for Social Inclusion* found that although the organizations working with migrant agricultural workers differ widely in their mandates, they hold in common a set of resources that can have positive impacts on the lives of Ontario's foreign worker population and the rural communities that receive them
- The project *Rural Community - Migrant Worker Partnerships for Social Inclusion* will hold a workshop in February 2005 for organizations working with foreign agricultural workers to strengthen the capacity of their communities to respond to the challenges presented by a diverse and global workforce in agriculture

### **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This research has important significance to Ontario's agri-food industry and rural communities. Foreign agricultural workers play an important role in providing a reliable, stable labour supply to horticulture, allowing this industry to expand. Industry reports claim that without this labour supply, most of the seasonal labour-intensive crops grown in Ontario would cease to exist (Stevens Associates, 2003). It is not surprising that over the last four years the number of foreign agricultural workers employed in the Province has grown steadily, to over 15,000 in 2003. In addition to foreign workers, the labour force of many horticulture operations relies on newly-arrived immigrant labour supplies. Researchers have noted that a growing migrant population has important social impacts in rural Ontario (Bauder *et al.*, 2003; Preibisch 2004).

By furthering our understanding of community/migrant worker relations and strengthening the capacities of rural organizations to provide critical services and promote social integration, this research contributes to building healthy, sustainable communities. Improved worker/community relations will have positive implications on worker productivity workplace health and safety. It will also inform policy more widely that is aimed at sustaining rural communities.

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***Immigrant Settlement in Smaller Places: Employment Skills, Ethnicity and Community Services (Project Number – 026240)***

**Completion Date – 30 April 2006**

**Project Leader – Harald Bauder**

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**Highlights of Results**

Deskilling and settlement of immigrants should not be treated as separate issues. In fact, they are interlinked. Credential recognition is an important factor to achieve a more even geographical distribution of immigrant skills.

The inability to transfer their foreign credentials to Canada likely keeps highly-skilled immigrants from entering the labour markets of Ontario's smaller communities.

Lack of Canadian experience is a major barrier to both employment and settlement.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Immigrants who lose the value of their credentials and work experience through institutional regulatory processes cannot pursue employment opportunities for which they are legally ineligible. The result is that many of these deskilled immigrants will settle in gateway cities where accessible job opportunities – often in the low-wage and/or informal sectors – are more plentiful. The losers of credential and work experience non-recognition are smaller communities, which seek the skill-base immigrants have but cannot apply due to credential and work experience recognition barriers.

A particular opportunity for policy makers is that immigrants tend to be more geographically mobile and risk-taking than non-immigrants. They may be more than willing to move to smaller places if appealing jobs exist and if they are allowed to take these jobs. The research makes recommendations to address this problem.

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***Conflict Resolution in Rural Ontario: Responding to the Intensification of Agriculture* (Project Number – 025974)**

**Project Leader – Dr. Wayne Caldwell**

**Completion Date – SRC funding – April 30, 2005 (December 31, 2006 (project))**

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**Highlights of Results**

1) The following refereed article hopefully initiates a debate across Canada concerning the role of the planning profession in the mediation of agricultural land use conflicts:

Caldwell, W.J. and J. Ball. 2003. New Directions For Rural Planning: Community Based Approaches To Conflict Resolution. Plan Canada. 43(4): 24-27.

2) The following Manual will provide the framework for municipalities across Ontario to establish Local Advisory Committees:

Caldwell, W.J. and J. Ball. 2003. Ten Steps to Creating a Local Advisory Committee. School of Environmental Design and Rural Development. University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario

3) The following manual (nearly complete) will be used for the training of Local Advisory Committee volunteers across Ontario (with potential application across the country).

Caldwell, W.J. and J. Ball. 2004. Training Materials for Local Advisory Committee. School of Environmental Design and Rural Development. University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Increasingly, society will not tolerate the real or perceived impacts of agriculture on public resources such as air and water. To avoid endless debate, harassment and potentially law suits, mechanisms need to be implemented that effectively and efficiently resolve conflict. The sustainability of agriculture and the rural community depends upon the development of local capacity to resolve conflict beyond the formal mechanisms of the Ontario Municipal Board or the Farm Practices Protection Board.

This project offers environmental, economic and social benefits (e.g. enhanced management practices, reduction of community barriers to agricultural

production, development of more relevant policy and a higher level of co-operation and understanding in the rural community).

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***Working Group: Rural Supports and Work-Family Integration (Project Number - 026049)***

**Completion Date - April 30, 2005**

**Project Leader - Linda Hawkins**

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**Highlights and significance**

This project has made a significant contribution by establishing research partnerships to improve community sustainability and to improve rural family well-being. By identifying and addressing concerns of rural organizations seeking to improve the quality of life for women and families, this project has provided new linkages to disseminate valuable information about rural families and work, and concrete strategies for individuals and families. This agenda is building the capacity of rural organizations to meet their constituents' needs, and has potential for greater success over the next five years

In a funding arena which increasingly calls for “collaboration” and “partnership”, it is not always evident that University researchers, administrators or community members have the capacity to collaborate in long-term ventures, with the serious impediments such as a lack of confirmed resources, ill-fit with current research priorities, an environment which encourages timely individual achievement over slowly nurtured group efforts, inability or unwillingness to participate as part of a group, or simply an inflexible funding arrangement that does not reflect research and community needs.

Building the relationship among university and community organizations is clearly both exhausting and rewarding. We would argue that while it is possible to engage individuals or organizations in a “light” way in participatory research, attention to the cementing of these relationships encourages reciprocity and sustainability of the group over time, through commitment of energy and resources of the individuals and organizations. This only occurs with careful attention to process.

We have chosen to present the process of building the working group and the research agenda itself, as this was the most critical endeavor undertaken through the grant. While the following brief observations of the process are not unique to this project, then, they may be useful in developing other partnership for large research endeavors that require community university linkages. We believe these 3 elements are critical to success:

***Reviewing the Common Ground:***

Even partners who seem (and are) highly committed to the research agenda require continued review of common ground among the group. For our group, this needs to occur on a regular basis through the linking of organizational mandates, as even the commonalities arising from being a rural organization can be forgotten. Due to increased

workloads, underfunding or other, those at the table need to ensure that the devised research agenda meets identified priorities at the organizational level, and a clear and describable path must be made from their mandates to all activities.

### ***Ends to the Middle***

It was very critical for our partnership and the design of a large project was to begin both from the specific and the broader overall vision - the "fill in the middle" approach. The integrity of the project was built on addressing organizational issues, but this was not sufficient to meet the needs of the individual researchers, whether they be community members or University partners. Meeting individual researcher needs is also not sufficient in developing an integrated program and can be reactive and unmanageable ("sure, we can add that to the budget"), but still must somehow be incorporated. As a group then, we chose to prioritize structural/infrastructural factors which affect all partners as both individuals and in their roles as organizational representatives (the funding of women's and rural organizations, municipal government processes, rural governance), as well providing focus on smaller projects engaging subsets of the group by level of interest. We moved from very specific projects (e.g. "zines" for rural girls) to quite broad objectives, and back, eventually producing a coherent vision and activities. We believe that the end result of an integrated program was only possible as partners have extensive experience in knowing what needs to change in their organizations, communities of interest and geographies. In addition, they have the capacity and desire to serve both as advisors to the overall program and researchers on contributing projects.

### ***Attention to Intellectual Direction***

Our success in building the research agenda is the result of a very slow integration of intellectual and methodological approaches and the specific organizational and individual needs above. The strength of the method chosen has increased the likelihood of useable results from an academic standpoint as well as a programmatic response to issues identified, and will enrich both. This could not have happened without the support of the SRC.

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***Toward more inclusive and productive communities (Project Number #025982)***

**Completion Date – March 31, 2004**

**Project Leader - Dr. Donald G. Reid**

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**Highlights of Results**

The preliminary results of the project are listed below.

1. The socially, psychologically, and physically marginalized are often transparent in rural communities. This invisibility often results from depression/self-image and the embarrassment associated with being on some form of social assistance?

This often results in service to these people being fragmented and often located in urban regional centers. For those with public transportation problems this marginalizes those citizens further.

2. The downloading of many of the social services to the municipal level that were formerly provided by the provincial government has not improved the lives of the marginalized but has the potential to integrate service in the future which would be of benefit to those in need.

3. In addition to the mandated services by the provincial government at the municipal level, collateral services often provided by NGO's that would help to make the system work more smoothly also need to be stimulated by the local government in many cases.

4. The difficulties that remain for the rural marginalized are a result of social isolation and the lack of coordinated services at the local level. Given that rural local governments have not dealt with the subtleties of these types of need before program reorganization that speaks to this specific group needs to be implemented. Consultation by local representatives with this group is the recommended first step in that process. Prior to this consultation the marginalized in the community would need to be identified.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This research speaks to the issues and needs of the marginalized in society and the barriers and constraints to them in constructing a healthy life-style and, subsequently, to create a healthier family environment for themselves and children. Globalization, and the increased adoption of technology in the work place, places great strain on those who struggle to function in that environment. We believe that appropriate social service activity both local government mandated and by the NGO community can assist marginalized citizens

maintain integration with mainstream society. This may be particularly important for children living in single parent families dependent on social assistance or otherwise marginalized in society. Given that assumption, leisure and recreation among other social service activity and its contribution to family health is an important area for ongoing investigation and development. For these worthy objectives to be realized however, specific attention to educating the local government system, inculcating sensitivity to the inherent difficulties in servicing this group of citizens, and a concerted effort in organizing the system to deal with this new set of services needs to be in place before progress on this front can materialize.

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***“PACTS” for Rural Ontario: Partnerships, accessibility and connectivity transformation strategies for rural Ontario. (Project Number 023480)***

**Completion Date April 30, 2003**

**Project Leader Al Lauzon**

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### **Highlights of Results**

The following highlights are based upon the key informant interviews only.

1. ICTs for rural development, like the application of many technologies in applied fields, tends to be treated as a panacea. However, the key informant interviews have pointed to the current lack of empirical evidence that demonstrates that community networks are in fact benefitting communities in tangible ways. This appears to be particularly important in terms of the links between ICTs and economic development.
2. The key informant interviews also raise the issue of the digital divide and how are “marginal” community members served by community networks (or are they served by these networks)? There is little literature examining how community networks meet the needs of more marginal members of rural communities. Current literature from the developing world that looks at ICTs, rural development and public access suggests that the provision of public access does not guarantee equity (i.e. Parkinsinon, 2003).
3. The third highlight is the question of how policy shapes the development and application of ICTs in the context of rural development. There is some suggestion from key informants that policy may in fact skew or construct the applications of ICTs but that these particular applications may not meet community needs. This is related to how community networks can work together to influence appropriate policy development that is sensitive to the unique context and needs of diverse rural communities.

### **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

This research to date helps in articulating the research agenda which will serve rural community development. In particular, results to date suggest ICTs in rural development need to be viewed from a more integrated community development perspective. More will be said of this in the full final report.



## Rural Environments

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***Models and best practices for building effective local food systems. (Project # 026609) \****

**Expected Completion Date: 2009**

**Project Leader: Dr. Karen Landman**

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The local food movement in Ontario is fragmented and ad hoc. Unless there is a community-level champion who is willing to take on the work of creating a local food system, individual actions are limited. There are some examples of effective people working for the creation of local food systems; however, there is no broad-based facilitation of local food systems coming from either the provincial or the municipal level. This research proposes to help build that facilitation process by developing models and best practices for local food systems.

There has been a great deal of research devoted to the Greenbelt agricultural landscape of late. However, there are other areas in Ontario that would benefit from a synthesis of information on local food systems, particularly best practices. Areas like Greater Sudbury, the Northern Ontario Clay Belt, Prince Edward County and Renfrew County have begun to look at how to develop their agricultural base in a more sustainable way to increase benefits to their local communities. This research proposes to look at Ontario's broad agricultural context and respond in a format that will contribute to those sustainability goals, while informing and supporting OMAFRA's efforts to respond to these local goals for sustainable local food systems.

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**Municipal readiness for environmental planning: Innovation and best practices towards sustainability for rural communities.**

**Completion Date: 2008**

**Project Leader: Dr. Wayne Caldwell**

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Rural municipalities often face a dilemma. Increasingly, they are asked by ratepayers (and the province) to address environmental issues, while there are significant financial and staff limitations on their ability to respond. The relationship between environmental issues and public health also increases the relevance of these issues. Moreover, traditional and urban based approaches are not designed for rural communities and tend not to work. Rural issues, rural stakeholders and rural space demands unique and innovative strategies.

These concerns are compounded by the increasing importance of environmental issues in rural Ontario. The environment has gained attention for at least 2 key reasons. First, ratepayers are more aware and insistent on environmental action. Clean air, water and environmental protection are seen as a right. Second, the magnitude of environmental issues such as water and air quality and climate change continues to demand the need for appropriate responses.

Many rural municipalities are attempting to respond. Some focus on regulatory policy while others experiment with community based processes and the application of more innovative tools such as payment for ecological goods and services. Despite these initiatives there is limited innovation and sharing of success. This research promises tangible results that will benefit rural municipalities, communities and residents from across the province.

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***New markets, new farms (?): connecting immigrant farmers with ethno-cultural food communities in Ontario. (Project #026519) \****

**Completion Date: 2008**

**Project Leader: Dr. John Smithers**

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On the basis of the current demographic profile of the farm population in Ontario, and across Canada, agriculture faces difficult succession / intergeneration transfer issues in the coming decade(s). Indeed, the loss of existing farmers and the low rate of entrance into agriculture by young people may soon become a very real problem for domestic food supply - at least for that portion of the food supply that has come historically from small and medium scale enterprises. At the same time, in communities across Ontario, there are growing numbers of New Canadians from other cultural backgrounds, with training and experience in agriculture, who would welcome an opportunity to engage in farming - especially to grow culturally appropriate fresh produce; preferred foods, herbs and flowers. Presently, the distinctive food needs of growing ethno-cultural communities are being met daily by imported products from Asia, South America and the Caribbean, if they are met at all. Hence, in principle, a significant opportunity exists for import substitution for these ethnic specialty foods. Consumers and governments are also beginning to make a sustainable, healthy, regional food supply an economic and social priority. We propose that immigrants can provide innovation and new market development in this context. This research intends to explore the potential of new Canadian farmers to supply emerging local markets, and will contribute recommendations to help a developing coalition of agricultural, food and health organizations identify and create appropriate policies, training and support programs, agricultural opportunities and market access for new farmers in local food systems.

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***Rural-Urban Linkages for Local Food in the City of Guelph-County of Wellington Landscape (Project Number – 026523)***

**Completion Date – June 20, 2008**

**Project Leader – Karen Landman**

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**Highlights of Results**

The development of viable local food systems require action in the following areas: 1) education and awareness; 2) development of viable distribution or co-operative models; 3) coordinating and linking efforts to improve communication networks; and 4) improved policy and marketing strategies.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

It is hoped that the results of this research will contribute to increased capacity for local food production and consumption across Ontario, thereby benefiting rural communities and urban consumers alike. Our research participants have pointed to the impediments that limit their efforts, and we have conveyed these in this report. Policy changes can greatly assist these and other local food stakeholders in building on the consumer interest in local food, but there is much to be done.

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***Rural/Urban Brownfield Programs*** (Project number 026376)

**Completion Date - March 31, 2006**

**Project Lead – Dr. Wayne Caldwell**

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**Highlights:** The redevelopment of brownfields is an excellent way to reuse existing facilities (before they deteriorate completely from disuses) or meet intensification guidelines (if and when they become enforced). Rehabilitation is expensive, however, and until the relative cost of Brownfield versus Greenfield development is diminished, it is difficult to imagine what would entice a developer to lean towards brownfields. If, one day, greenfields become prohibitively expensive because of lack of available space or extra taxation, then brownfield redevelopment may become more attractive. Even then, however, it is simple economics that determine in what direction developers will move. It remains challenging to estimate the increase in value (which may be significant) resulting from the cleanup of a contaminated site. Still, brownfields that are not sufficiently encouraged (from a financial perspective) are likely to remain undeveloped.

**Significance (taken from proposal)**

Every community with an industrial history, however minor, needs to be concerned with the rehabilitation of those industrial sites, most of which would (upon environmental assessment) be considered brownfields. In essence, brownfields discourage development by creating, when compared to greenfields, the additional costs of liability and environmental clean-up. Owners who purchase brownfields assume a certain degree of liability. Although the Brownfields Statue and other provincial acts assist in relieving the owner of contamination that occurred prior to purchase, there is still an understandable hesitancy in purchasing brownfields. Potential purchasers are also discouraged by the cost of clean-up, a cost not assumed when purchasing greenfields. Though there are advantages to brownfields (usually an existing facility on the property and existing municipal servicing to the property), these advantages are often outweighed by the perceived extra costs and risks.

The increasing provincial emphasis on intensification also creates pressures for the rehabilitation of brownfields rather than the assimilation of new greenfields. Communities may, in light of potential intensification targets, find themselves increasingly pressured to remediate and adaptively reuse industrial brownfield sites in order to meet demands for residential growth.

The redevelopment of brownfields is a critical initiative that has the potential to significantly reduce urban pressure on agricultural land. For every acre of brownfields that are redeveloped there is a reduction in the need to consume greenfields (farmland).

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***A Review and Synthesis of Best Practices for Siting Wind Energy Facilities in Rural Ontario*** (Project # 026377)

**Completion Date – April 2006**

**Project Lead – Dr. Robert Corry**

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**Project Summary:**

The literature and examples reviewed demonstrate that of the myriad potential impacts of Wind Energy Facilities (WEF) development in rural Ontario, visual impacts are among the most immediate concerns voiced by residents and are perhaps the concern most leading to opposition. We have identified best practices to improve the visual assessment of rural landscapes and compare and mitigate the visual impact of WEF development, using examples from rural Ontario municipalities. Because of the environmental benefits of renewable electricity sources, it is hoped that best practices can make renewable energy a more socially-acceptable and common element of rural Ontario Landscapes.

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***A Best Practice Comparison of Wind Energy Policies in Denmark, Germany and the United States*** Project # 026378

**Completion Date - March 31, 2006**

**Project Lead - Tony Fuller**

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**Project Summary:**

In all, the field of alternative energy production in rural areas has much to offer and we can learn a great deal from the successful experience of others. The establishment of co-operative wind power initiatives in Ontario parallels the experience of Denmark. The rapid expansion of alternative energy production in Germany is impressive, but what is the cost and what differences exist in how the alternative energy argument can be made an imperative. The opportunity is there for making strategic choices as the technology has been developed and policy and programs tried out. In the absence of a national framework in Canada, Ontario might create one of its own for rural areas. After all, Rural Ontario is many times larger than Denmark, Netherland and Germany put together. Wind is a rural asset and is disproportionately represented in rural Ontario.

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***Concern, Conflict and Costs of Environmental Regulation for Agriculture.***  
**(Project Number 026381)**

**Completion Date: 2006**

**Project Leader Dr. Craig Pearson**

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**Highlights of Results**

Themes arising from 9 semi-structured interviews were environmental initiatives, the struggling agricultural economy, and societal perception of agriculture; there was little knowledge of the concept of environmental goods and services or support for payment for them. Interviewees believed that without a positive perception which builds the importance of agriculture to the entire society the sector will continue to face struggles, politically and financially. Thus a key issue for agriculture in Ontario is communication. Media analyses identified defensiveness in rural media and stark contrasts between reportage in rural and urban/national papers e.g., the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) was mentioned in 16.6% of environmental articles in the Ontario Farmer and 1.1% of those in general newspapers. This suggests that the general public do not see the positive initiatives and work that is being accomplished within the agricultural sector and when the general media focuses on topics such as “Walkerton”, “regulation” and “farm income crisis” it is no wonder the public questions the ability of the agricultural industry to care for the environment.

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***Assessing Alternate Policies to Support Farmland Preservation Programs***  
**(Project Number – 026327)**

**Completion Date – Apr. 30, 2006**

**Project Leader – Dr. Stewart Hilts**

**Associated Faculty – Dr. Wayne Caldwell**

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**Highlights of Results**

The website of the Farmland Preservation Research Network provides direct access to presentations the researchers have made related to the Greenbelt Act, Planning Reform, and the Agricultural Advisory Team, with the support of the Ontario Farmland Trust.

It also provides a factsheet developed by the research team, 'Farmland in Ontario – Are We Losing a Valuable Resource?'

It also provides direct access to a number of past research reports, including Professor Caldwell's significant research on rural severances.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Research undertaken in past projects by this research group, in particular the results of Claire Dodds-Weir's work on the prevalence of rural severances, has had a direct impact on amendments to Ontario's Planning Act over the past year.

Through the Ontario Farmland Trust, the researchers have provided significant contributions to the Greenbelt Act, to Planning Reform, to the Agricultural Advisory Team, and to current discussions on growth management.

Dr. Stewart Hilts was consulted directly by the Ministry of Natural Resources in the preparation of Bill 16, to enforce the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, and to establish agricultural easements under the Conservation Lands Act.

The annual conferences of the Ontario Farmland Trust have raised awareness of farmland preservation issues in Ontario; this year's event (last June) focussed specifically on the opportunities and challenges of near-urban agriculture.

We have also contributed from an Ontario perspective to a growing national discussion of farmland preservation, with particular links to Agriculture Canada in Alberta and Environment Canada.

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***Local Food Systems: Linking and Sustaining Agriculture and Rural Communities in Ontario.*** Project Number - 026235

**Completion Date - April - 2007**

**Project Lead - Dr. John Smithers**

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**Highlights of Results**

- An analysis of community connections in organic farming revealed the importance of scale and marketing channels in influencing the frequency and “strength” of linkages between organic farms and local communities. For that segment of the organic sector that is becoming more export focused the primary marketing mechanisms effectively reduce economic linkages to communities. Those farms that are producing for local (Ontario) markets benefit from closer economic integration. The presence of an education or “outreach” function was also found to be present in many organic farms – and this training role serves frequently as a core pathway for community participation.
- The organics – community linkages project was distinctive in its attempt to adapt supply chain mapping, an economic approach usually used to track inputs and outputs from the farm, to the social dynamics of organic farming. Organic producers, particularly those operating at smaller scales of production report a reliance on, and contribution to social and producer organizations that are part of a learning community relating to both production methods and the promotion of organic food in the marketplace. Hence, social connections are important both “upstream” and “downstream” from the farm.
- Various facets of the research, both in farmers markets and organic farming, are contributing to a wider and more nuanced view of producer and consumer constructions of quality and authenticity as features of both food and food systems. While data from Ontario Farmers Markets confirms the importance of health considerations and freshness for “good food”, constructions of quality implicate place of origin, confidence in producers, and beliefs concerning the wider conventional retail food system. Based on work to date, the research team sees value in exploring the presence of “local” food, and the nature of consumer perceptions within more conventional food retailing venues (e.g the supermarket).

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

The proposed project contributes to an improved knowledge of farm and rural community change – and its implications for promoting productive interactions and improving prospects for sustainability. Identification of the characteristics of local food systems that correlate with stronger community ties (especially in the realms of rural development and community capacity building) inform a wider appreciation of farm - rural community linkages and the factors or circumstances that promote sustainability. Such insights are policy relevant. In addition, attention to the presence and nature of structural diversity and

business development differences in the organic sector provides insights on the developmental trajectories of this increasingly noticeable segment of Ontario's farm and food system. Specifically, the results will contribute to testing and interpretation of the "conventionalization" hypothesis in organic agriculture - is the organic sector evolving in such a way as to resemble, in broad structural terms as well as community linkages, non-organic production?

The findings of the research will offer an important insight into the role and potential of farmers markets (and other direct sale avenues such as wineries) as mechanisms for "building community" and reducing conflict in the rural realm as it relates to the interaction of producers and non-farmers. Beyond this "social focus", research conducted during 2006 also led to a wider appreciation of the Farmers Market (and related ventures) as potential business incubators. This prospect has translated into a complementary research funding application concerning the initiation of farms and farmers to service the growing market for specialty and ethno-cultural foods in Ontario.

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## ***Ontario Farmland Conservation Research Program: Land Trusts and Policy Options***

**Project Leader – Dr. Stewart Hilts**

**Completion Date – April 30, 2005**

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### **Highlights of Results**

- 1) An intensive province-wide study of rural residential severances revealed that counties vary considerably in the extent to which they allow such residential intrusion into the rural landscape. At the worst, Essex County has allowed 3.65 severances per 1000 acres (a single concession block), over a ten-year period. In comparison, Perth County, at the other extreme, only allowed 0.07 during the same time.

In the long run, such severances severely restrict agricultural choices, particularly because of the influence of minimum distance separation rules. This study has been cited by provincial planners as part of the rationale for changing the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act.

A more specific study of retirement severances in rural areas revealed that up to 50% of retirement severances on farms were sold to other owners within three years.

- 2) The Ontario Farmland Trust is a new organization, formed during the course of this research project – an incorporated, charitable non-profit, a public good research spin-off. It has brought together the farm community and the conservation community to tackle the challenging issue of farmland preservation in southern Ontario. Though this initiative started three years ago, it has proven very timely, with the announcement by the provincial government of the proposed Greenbelt and Growth Strategy, both of which have major impact on farmland. The Farmland Trust is structured in such a way as to have representatives of major farm organizations on its Board of Directors, and has brought to these groups an awareness of, and outlet for, debate on farmland preservation issues.
- 3) The project has been able to provide major input to current provincial debate on the proposed Greenbelt and Growth Strategy. Deliverables of this research project were adapted over the research period to provide direct policy input to the provincial government on these issues. The input was in all cases submitted on behalf of the Ontario Farmland Trust, and therefore was reviewed by the Board of Directors of that organization, including several farm group representatives.

## **Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

In the short run, farmland preservation does not provide immediate economic return at the farm level, but in the long run, failure to take these issues into account could become a major restriction on individual farmers, and on agricultural production in the province. For example, eliminating the choice of livestock production at the farm level through allowing too frequent rural residential severances is a major constraint on individual farmers. At the provincial level, choices such as the location of a Greenbelt, and conversely of growth areas, will have a major impact on the future area retained for farming. There is a serious direct conflict in the long run between continued urban expansion and protection of prime farmland in southern Ontario.

A key result of this research has been the recognition that farmland preservation programs around large urban regions also require support programs for 'near-urban agriculture'. Many other programs in North America provide successful evidence of this. If applied to southern Ontario, such programs could provide direct farm level economic benefits for those who choose to maintain their farm operations in the near-urban region.

Finally, this project has contributed significantly to making farmland preservation an issue worthy of debate in the farming community. This will inevitably have benefits, even if not measurable, in that the more the farm viewpoint can be articulated and considered, the more likely that government programs will have a positive impact on agriculture. Further, this debate potentially provides an opportunity to link farm concerns with those of the urban food consumer. A positive relationship 'reconnecting' farmers and consumers can only be good for farming in the long run.

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*Improving sustainability and nutrient management of an agricultural watershed*

**Project Leader – Glen Filson**

**Completion Date – Apr 30, 2004**

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**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Evaluations are needed for scenarios in which BMPs, EFPs and new NMA regulations prescribe various kinds of conservation structures as well as conservation tillage, crops and crop sequences, and inclusion of livestock enterprises. We are trying to determine cost effective BMPs given particular landowner characteristics and different classes of land with varying soil erosion and sediment yield rates exceeding acceptable tolerance levels within the C. C. While farm practices generally are perceived to positively affect residents' quality of life, some practices are objectionable and are the source of conflict between farmers and non-farmers. We are assessing these by interviewing farmers in this area with known environmental problems, due mainly because of excess livestock per ha. The work connects hydrological engineering, soil science, agricultural economics and rural sociology and is an extension of the interdisciplinary research mentioned in the publication section.

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***The impact of Environmental Management Systems on Agriculture and the Environment in Ontario (Project Number 026092)***

**Project Leader – John FitzGibbon**

**Completion Date – April 30 2005**

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**Highlights of Results**

The pesticide applicators training and certification program is a successful example of a voluntary program that has evolved into a regulatory program focused on education and awareness.

Implementation of regulatory program is effective when a partnership is developed. The implementation of the milk act which protects the quality of milk through both environmental as well as production practices is an excellent successful example of the partnership between industry and government in implementing environmental and production safety regulation.

The environmental farm plan program is an excellent example of precautionary voluntary self-regulation by agriculture in the area of environmental management. It demonstrates the effectiveness of action by the community in advance of government intervention. The development of conventional command and control compliance mechanisms have the ability to undermine such proactive action unless these regulatory processes are developed to compliment the voluntary, precautionary self- regulation industry initiatives.

**Significance to Ontario Agriculture and Food Industries and/or Rural Ontario**

Current approaches to managing compliance have focused on the use of prescriptive regulatory codes of regulation and guidelines. These approaches have been met with significant concern from the farm community, because they have undermined the commitments of farmers to voluntary management of environmental issues

The successful transition from voluntary to regulatory programs such as the pesticide safety program have been the result a focus on the educational aspects of compliance management and not the compulsory elements.

The trend to greater regulatory involvement in agricultural practice is continuing. It is manifest in the implementation of Nutrient Management and will be present in the regulations and controls that will be implemented through Drinking Water Source Protection. The federal government's objective of certification/ licensing of farming would be a further step in this direction.

The development of an integrated approach to compliance management which involves a shared governance system will make the process of changing management of the environment a more collaborative process and will ensure that it is more effective, efficient and acceptable to those who are regulated.

There is a need to review current approaches to regulation in agriculture and consider an alternative approach that is more integrative collaborative and effective.

### ***Project Titles: 1998-2000***

***Earlier projects listed for information purposes only – further information available from the project leaders.***

- *Assessing community economic impact of agricultural exports.* H. Cummings 1999-2000
- *Leading and Lagging Area Analysis in Southern Ontario.* P. Keddie 1998-1999
- *The Collection of Marketing and Business Statistics Relating to the Value-Added Aspects of the Nursery, Landscape and Turf Sector.* K. Nentwig 1998-2000
- *Evaluation Methodologies and Modules for Maintaining Community-Based Projects and Programs.* H. Cummings 1998-1999
- *Managing the New Rural Economy (NRE) Research in Ontario.* E. Wall 1998-1999
- *Local Economic systems: Labour Dynamics.* A. Fuller 1997-1999
- *Agro- Tourism: Economic Impacts in the Counties of Prescott-Russell.* S. Lavoie 1997-1999
- *Rural Community Information Sharing.* J. Taylor 1998-1999
- *Rural Communities Information and Learning System.* D. Richardson 1998-1999
- *Rural Development Database.* F. Braga 1998-1999
- *Policing Spousal Assault in Rural Communities.* R. Hinch 1997-1998
- *Health Care Restructuring in Rural Ontario: Potential Implications for the Rural Economy.* A. Lauzon 1997-1998
- *Preliminary Investigation of Non-Farm Land Ownership and Land Stewardship Patterns in Rural Ontario.* S. Hilts 2002-2003
- *Modeling environmental consequences of residential expansion into the agricultural countryside.* R. Brown 1995-1996
- *GIS mapping of social science indicators of landscape quality.* J. Taylor 1995-1996
- *GIS-Based Sustainability Indicators and Information Sharing Within Watershed Management Units as a Basis for Community Sustainability.* J. Taylor 1997-1998