

WORKING TO ENSURE THE **RURAL VOICE** IS HEARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2007 | 2008

TORC

THE ONTARIO RURAL COUNCIL



www.forc.on.ca

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In reflecting upon the new TORC Vision, Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives that we, as members, collectively developed and introduced this year (outlined in the following pages), it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge just how on the mark we remain with those guiding principles. TORC continues to increase the understanding of rural Ontario and stays focused on influencing provincial policy, program and research development by acting



as a catalyst for dialogue, collaboration, action and advocacy. The response garnered from this year's Forum events, Member/Regional Outreaches, Roundtable discussions and Rural Development Conference (also highlighted in the following pages) speaks not only of our effectiveness as facilitator but our ability to continue to raise our profile and be recognized as a relevant and valuable "rural voice" on emerging issues and opportunities affecting rural Ontario.

In its report entitled "*The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance*", the international think tank Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that for governments around the world, a "place-based approach at the local level helps foster public-private partnerships and the integration of new stakeholders and resources into the [rural] development process". Such an acknowledgment perfectly supports and validates TORC's role as convener for securing local knowledge, expertise and input as a key means of contributing to the overall rural policy and program development process.

As TORC continues to grow, so, too, does our organizational influence. Since September 2007, TORC has welcomed 17 new members and answered a wide range of invitations to present our TORC Roundtable/Forum findings and recommendations to regional, provincial and even international event audiences. What's more, The TORC Report - our flagship proceedings document emanating from each TORC Forum - has evolved into a critical source of rural "ground intelligence" by government policymakers and key stakeholders responsible for articulating the future of our province.

Still, as with all small NGOs, we continue to be challenged by long-term financial sustainability. TORC is intent on addressing this challenge and securing its role as a multi-sector provincial rural organization. Towards that goal, TORC is currently engaged in a collaborative process with The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) for the purposes of exploring new organizational model(s) that might better serve both groups and, in turn, rural Ontario. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is actively involved as a supporter in this process. As members, your voice is valued at every juncture and we ask that you stay tuned as we will be seeking your input.

We are convinced that TORC has a vital role to play in the development of a healthy and vibrant rural Ontario. Your continued support and engagement is valued as we endeavour to build on our successes as a "voice" for rural Ontario.

Jim Whaley
Chair, The Ontario Rural Council

TORC aims to **broaden understanding** of the **rural perspective** and provide a **'rural lens'** for policymakers articulating and influencing the **future of rural Ontario**.

TORC PROVIDES A FORUM FOR ALL RURAL VOICES...

As a vehicle for rural engagement, TORC offers a vital venue for the province's collective rural voice. Individually, each of our members shares a commitment to healthy, vibrant rural communities, businesses and organizations. Collectively, we come together to identify and discuss emerging rural issues through a collaborative approach that ultimately serves to strengthen the rural voice in Ontario. It is the aim of TORC to work toward ensuring that collective voice is then heard by the province's policy- and decision-makers.

THE ONLY FORUM FOR ALL SECTORS...

By bringing all of us together, TORC provides a unique and vital opportunity for **multi-sector cooperation**. Whether it be a Public Issue Forum, Regional Outreach, Roundtable discussion or Rural Development Conference, a TORC-scheduled event is the only venue dedicated to drawing the collective rural voice. We aim to break down the silos between the sectors and encourage effective **partnerships for progress** as we work to help **inform and influence rural policy programs and research development**.

THE ONLY FORUM FOR ALL RURAL STAKEHOLDERS...

TORC members represent **non-profit** and **private sector** organizations, the **public sector** and individuals with **specialized expertise** and resources in rural matters. In our role as **convenor**, TORC brings together these divergent interests and perspectives to offer valuable **networking opportunities** to link people, information and activities in support of rural community development, leadership and capacity building.



TORC HIGHLIGHTS 2007|2008

FORUM EVENTS

TORC RENEWABLE ENERGY FORUM

November 2007: (Stratford) The staggering 250 participants who end up walking through the doors of the TORC Renewable Energy Forum in early



November are proof positive the time has come to move beyond fossil fuels and lend serious consideration to the alternative energy opportunities now emerging. Farmers, rural landowners and rural communities may have been the target group, but many more converge on the Stratford Rotary Complex, including a host of regional and provincial media, offering TORC its greatest public relations platform to date. It also represents the greatest number of presenting partners for a Forum event: 19 corporate, public and organizational supporters. The resulting **TORC Report on Renewable Energy** (www.torc.on.ca) captures the day's emerging themes and recommended policy actions. At the forefront of stakeholder input is the apparent disconnect between current provincial policy (doubling the use of renewable energy by the year 2025) and its practical, on-

the-ground implementation for landowners struggling to generate additional electricity and keep the profits in Ontario. TORC disseminates a post-forum Press Release urging government to work with its bureaucracy in an effort to reduce this gap and remove perceived barriers. The TORC Report on Renewable Energy is disseminated to an extensive list of key government stakeholders in an effort to help inform and influence energy policy moving forward. In June 2008, TORC is asked to present at the 7th World Wind Energy Conference in Kingston, a gathering of some 600 high-level delegates from 40 countries, offering an unprecedented international audience for TORC's Forum findings and insights. Looking ahead, the overwhelming response to TORC's initial Forum addressing wind, water and biogas technologies spurs interest in a follow-up Forum focusing specifically on large-scale wind projects.

TORC LOCAL FOOD FORUM

December 2007: (Port Perry, Milton) Great attention has been focused on the Local Food movement in recent years but largely from a consumer perspective. The supply side of the equation recognizes the opportunities but struggles to meet the demand, working within a system that is neither holistic nor sustainable. In early December 2007, TORC designates two Forum days and two separate locations to exploring the successes and challenges currently faced by producers and suppliers in getting locally-grown and locally-produced foods to retailers. "*From the Earth's Floor to the Retail Store: Capturing Local Food Opportunities*" attracts a wide range of participants keen on working together to build a sustainable Local Food

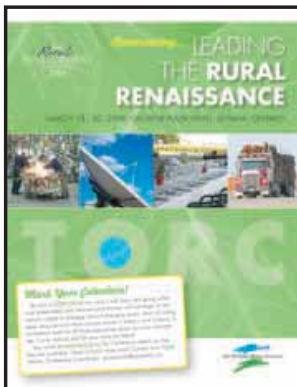


system, from farmers and producers to distributors and government officials. Emanating from the discussion are eight very distinct emerging themes and a substantial list of recommendations captured in **The TORC Report on Local Food** (www.torc.on.ca). Chief among the proposed actions is the call to establish a working group of relevant stakeholders to develop a Local Food Joint Strategy. Provincial government is asked to take the lead in investigating the barriers Local Food producers currently face, with the intent of working towards effective solutions. It is also suggested the Province take the lead in drafting Local Food policies for public institutions. Following the Forum dates, TORC is asked to work with others to ensure the issues remain front and centre. TORC Executive Director Harold Flaming is invited to speak at the Niagara Local Food Action Forum in August 2008 alongside provincial Minister Leona Dombrowsky and Niagara Regional Chairman Peter Partington.

CONFERENCE

LEADING THE RURAL RENAISSANCE

March 2008: (Ottawa) A late-season snow storm may have left him suddenly stranded in Newfoundland, but TORC Conference 2008 keynote speaker Dr. Rob Greenwood of The Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and



Development packs a powerful punch nonetheless. Stationed in his east coast home office, Dr. Greenwood's voice reverberates throughout the Ottawa conference ballroom (thanks to modern technology) and his message to conference participants comes through loud and clear: "Rural regions have to make the most of their relationships with their urban neighbours," he advises. "They must educate them...and the federal and provincial governments...and the media...on the fundamental contributions rural areas make to the economy, society and the environment." A community that fails to acknowledge and adjust to change today is a community that will not succeed in the future, maintains Dr. Greenwood. And so it is that the

theme of change – and adjusting to change – abounds during the two-and-a-half-day agenda of the TORC 2008 Rural Development Conference. Participants are engaged in session topics that speak to the diversity and relevancy of today's rural community environment. Many of the conference sessions build on previous TORC event topics – rural broadband, healthcare, local food, youth, entrepreneurship, rural-urban relations – in an effort to provide updates and keep the subject front and centre. Still others carry the potential of becoming topics for future forum events: the 'greening' of Ontario, downtown revitalization, volunteer engagement and capacity building. A special Leadership Challenge Workshop presented by The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) is especially well-received, lending promise for communities who understand the need for change...and the need for local champions to help lead the way.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

TORC RURAL POVERTY ROUNDTABLE

January 2007 / June 2008: (Ottawa) The issue of poverty in rural communities has been front and centre on the national agenda for the last two years...and TORC has been with it every step of the way: In January 2007, TORC hosts a Rural Poverty Roundtable to respond to a just-released national report on poverty in rural regions. Some 25 stakeholder organizations from across Ontario join TORC in Guelph. The feedback and recommendations culled that day make their way to Ottawa in March 2007 with TORC Executive Director Harold Flaming presenting at a Senate Committee consultation. When the Standing Senate Committee later releases its final document in June 2008, TORC's recommendations are duly noted in the report entitled "*Beyond Freefall: Halting Rural Poverty*" (www.torc.on.ca). Chief among the 68 recommendations is the call for a national poverty reduction strategy, the exploration of a guaranteed income for struggling families, and the creation of a national Department of Rural Affairs. Of particular interest to TORC and its Environmental Working Group members is the recommendation to provide compensation to farmers as 'stewards of the land' – a driving theme at the TORC 2005 Environmental Forum. The same month the report is released, TORC is asked to speak on the issue of rural poverty at the annual conference of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

TORC HEALTH AND LEARNING ROUNDTABLE

December 2007: (Seaforth) TORC's growing profile as an adept facilitator and convener on issues affecting rural Ontario captures the attention of the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre (HLKC) of the Canadian Council on Learning. The proposal is a one-day roundtable to address the issue of health and learning among adults living in rural and remote areas. TORC is to be the only Ontario group approached for input in what is slated to become a national study informing research priorities and healthcare policy. TORC assembles a planning committee to identify key community leaders and service providers whose collective knowledge and expertise can provide valuable insights from an Ontario perspective. Key to the success of the day is the involvement of Gwen Devereaux and the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance in the early planning stages. TORC Chair Jim Whaley and TORC Rural Health Working Group Chair Brian Innes are named co-facilitators of the session. The consensus around the Seaforth table points to the need for communities to take ownership of health, healthcare and health policy. The resulting report (www.torc.on.ca) identifies factors contributing to poor health in rural and remote areas (poverty, transportation and isolation) and captures stakeholder recommendations for improved healthcare services. Many of the entries cited echo concerns first heard at the TORC 2006 Rural Health Forum when the provincial Local Health Integrated Networks were becoming mobilized.



MEET OUR CURRENT MEMBERS

The key to TORC's success rests with our cross-sector rural representation. The valued input and expertise represented below brings a collective strength to ALL our members:

SECTOR:

ECONOMIC & INFRASTRUCTURE

Barrett Xplore Inc.
Bell Aliant
Maddock Group Inc.
Economic Developers Council of Ontario
Harry Cummings & Associates
LaCloche Manitoulin Business Assistance Corporation
Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations
Ontario Co-operative Association

Town of Caledon
Township of Mapleton
Township of Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS*

Alpha Projects (Elinor Humphries)
Suzanne Ainley
Wayne Caldwell
César Caneo
Christine Dukelow
Nichole Fraser MacDonald
Tony Fuller
Al Lauzon
Robb MacDonald
Municipality of West Elgin
Jim Nubel
Carolyn Pletsch
Mary Robertson Lacroix
Frances Shamley
Elbert van Donkersgoed
Brenda Wilson

* includes students and youth

SECTOR:

RESOURCE & ENVIRONMENTAL

Centre for Applied Renewable Energy
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Conservation Ontario
Credit Valley Conservation Authority
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Ontario Stewardship
South Nation River Conservation Authority

SECTOR:

COMMUNITY & HUMAN SERVICES

4-H Ontario
Administrators of Rural Urban Public Libraries of Ontario
Association of Ontario Health Centres
Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario
Johnson Associates
Rural Ontario Medical Program
The Centre for Rural Leadership
University of Guelph – School of Environmental Design & Rural Development
University of Western Ontario – Faculty of Health Sciences
Wise MOOVE Communications

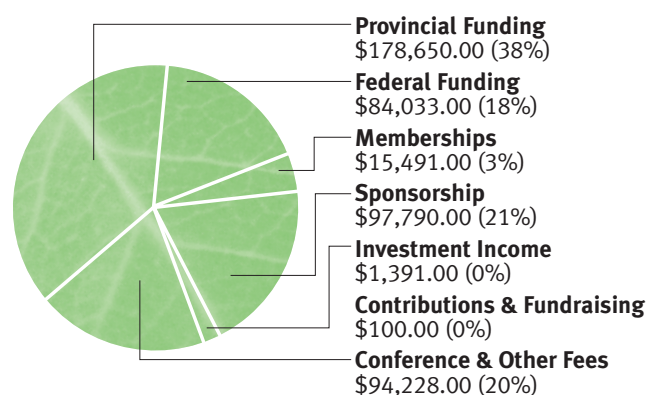
SECTOR:

GOVERNMENT

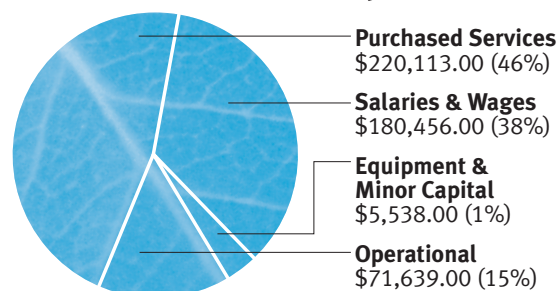
The Corporation of the Town of Peterborough
FedNor
Municipality of Trent Hills
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Ontario Ministry of Transportation
Rural Ontario Municipal Association
Rural Secretariat – Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

FINANCIALS 2007|2008

2007-2008 TORC Revenue



2007-2008 TORC Expenditures



TORC VISION

A relevant,
collaborative
rural voice
that contributes to
a vibrant Ontario

TORC MISSION STATEMENT

TORC **increases**
the understanding
of rural Ontario and
influences policy,
program and research
development by acting
as a catalyst
for **dialogue,**
collaboration,
action and **advocacy.**

TORC STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. *Identify emerging issues, challenges and opportunities to enhance the understanding of rural Ontario*
2. *Foster dialogue and communication that influences rural policy, programs and research development*
3. *Establish TORC as a respected source and broker of information on emerging issues and opportunities affecting rural Ontario*

2007 | 2008 TORC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR

Jim Whaley
Individual Member

VICE CHAIR

Valerie Ryan
Economic Developers Council of Ontario

PAST CHAIR

Tom Prout
Conservation Ontario

TREASURER

Jim Nubel
Individual Member

SECRETARY

Harold Flaming
TORC Executive Director

DIRECTORS

Valerie Ryan
Economic and Infrastructure Sector

Mitch Baldwin
Resource and Environmental Sector

Patty Pizziola
Community and Human Services Sector

Chris White
Government Sector

Jim Nubel
Individual Members Sector

Karen Landman
Environmental Working Group

Jim Whaley
Rural Health Working Group

Nichole Fraser MacDonald
Rural Youth Working Group

Christine Dukelow
Board Nominee



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