



WORKING TO
ENSURE THE
RURAL VOICE
IS HEARD


THE ONTARIO RURAL COUNCIL




ANNUAL REPORT 2008 | 2009

www.torc.on.ca

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In reviewing the highlights of the past year, it's hard not to draw a parallel between events happening on the world's stage and events of The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) right here at home. The impacts and fall-out of the global economic crisis over the last 12 months has helped us all to realize there is strength and success to be had when we make the commitment to work together; to pool our resources and invest today in the interests of building towards our future tomorrow.

As the TORC Board and staff continued to work diligently over this past year addressing our long-term sustainability challenges, we have been inspired by, and grateful to, our many partners for their commitment to ensuring the collective voice of rural Ontario continues to be heard through an effective and viable rural organization such as TORC. Chief among them is the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, which provided TORC a one-time operating grant of \$110,000, in March 2009, to develop a long-term funding strategy and enhance our online communications capacity.

The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) and The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) have been engaged in partnership discussions since early 2008 in the interests of exploring new organizational models. A TCRL / TORC Transition Working Group (TWG) has been established for the purpose of creating a new provincial rural organization combining the strengths and assets of TORC and TCRL with an expanded mission to better serve the broad interests of rural Ontario. We will keep all of you apprised on the progress of this important initiative.

We have also been working hard to deliver on TORC's mandate as a *catalyst for rural dialogue, collaboration, action and advocacy*. Through our various rural stakeholder engagement strategies, TORC has provided much-needed "ground intelligence" on critical emerging issues. Our recent Forum and Roundtable events (described in this Annual Report in greater detail) have helped inform our government decision-makers on specific policies and programs affecting rural stakeholders.

The building of strong networks and relationships is often the genesis of effective initiatives. This past year, TORC has been successful in doing just this with organizations as diverse as

the Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership, The Law Foundation of Ontario, The Monieson Centre (Queen's University) and The Centre for Rural Leadership. Moving forward, we look forward to enhancing these relationships and continuing to broaden our rural stakeholder network towards enhanced effectiveness.

As a volunteer- and stakeholder-driven organization, TORC counts upon so many to fulfill its mandate. I would be remiss not to mention those whose contributions run particularly deep and are so deserving of my gratitude and thanks:

- My fellow TORC Board member colleagues, for their ongoing support and sage advice.
- The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, for financial support that has been instrumental in our successes to date.
- Our valued sponsors and non-government funders, for their contributions to our TORC events which are critical to overall success.
- Our current members, for their collective wisdom and insights on emerging issues facing rural Ontario. You have always been the lifeblood of TORC! Thank you for your commitment and contributions over the years. Even though TORC may change as a result of our partnership discussions with TCRL, we believe there will be many opportunities for you to stay engaged in a new provincial rural organization.
- TORC staff, Harold Flaming and Michele Hill, for your immeasurable contributions to TORC. On behalf of all of us, "thank you" to the two of you for your unwavering dedication and "doing what you do" ...you make us all look good!

I believe TORC's role as a "voice" on rural issues is as relevant today as it was ten years ago. As we move forward with the development of a new provincial rural organization, I believe the mandate and good work of TORC can continue as we strive to achieve the broader objective of being a key partner in the building of a strong and vibrant rural Ontario. Thank you again to all our partners and stakeholders. Your continued support and engagement in the work of TORC is fundamental to our success.

Jim Whaley
Chair, The Ontario Rural Council



WORKING TO ENSURE THE RURAL VOICE IS HEARD!

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

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 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 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 MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLANNING FORUM ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION: LEVERAGING CULTURAL ASSETS FOR PROSPERITY November 2008 (Brockville and Chatham) and March 2009 (Minnett/Muskoka)



The concept of Municipal Cultural Planning (MCP) and a 'creative rural economy' has in recent years been garnering the increased attention of a number of rural communities and organizations committed to capitalizing on their cultural assets.

What happened? To address this emerging opportunity, TORC hosted a series of three Forum events across the province over the last year, attracting a total of 284 participants. Those in attendance represented a broad range of sectors and profiles, and included elected municipal officials and staff (78 municipalities), cultural and community organizations, federal and provincial government departments, private business, non-government organizations and engaged residents.

Serving as a Premier Partner in this successful initiative was the Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership (MCPP), a coalition of provincial government ministries, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, cultural service organizations and the University of Waterloo. The group plays a major role in raising MCP awareness and understanding across all sectors, working in partnership to support Ontario municipalities in adopting cultural planning approaches.

What did we hear? The TORC MCP Forum presenters and participants provided a wealth of insights into the current practice of Municipal Cultural Planning, offering up the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with MCP as a means of supporting rural community revitalization efforts. The resulting Recommendations for Action, as identified by Forum participants, fell into two key categories:

1. Building and Sharing the Case for Culture
 2. Supporting the Process of Municipal Cultural Planning
- Participants further earmarked 13 specific, action-oriented recommendations to slot under these categories which, if implemented, would form a feasible framework for communities to effectively engage and prosper from a creative rural economy.

What was the outcome? The resulting **TORC Report on Municipal Cultural Planning** (www.torc.on.ca) captures these highlights, as well as all Forum presentations and information shared for the purposes of helping to inform future policy and program actions.



MCP Forum (Minnett) Speaker
Laurence Mawhinney, Mayor, Lunenburg, N.S.,
speaking to a participant



MCP Forum (Brockville) Speaker
Peter Kenyon, Bank of I.D.E.A.S.,
Perth, Australia



Linguistic and Rural Access
to Justice Roundtable

TORC ROUNDTABLE ON LINGUISTIC AND RURAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE September 2008 (Guelph)

The issues and challenges encountered by rural communities are often unique when compared to their urban counterparts. Most notably, we see this disparity in the areas of health, education, economic development, financial resources and community capacity. This being the case, it has long been held that rural solutions must be innovative and stakeholder-based if there is to be success in overcoming obstacles.

It was within this framework that The Law Foundation of Ontario (LFO) identified linguistic and rural access to justice in this province as a critical issue requiring action. To address the shortcomings, the LFO launched an outreach of community consultations throughout rural and northern Ontario. The goal was to better understand the issues and challenges of affected stakeholders and gain insights into how to improve the system for those in rural and remote areas.

What happened? Given TORC's mandate as a collective rural voice for Ontario, the LFO approached TORC to help coordinate a special Roundtable discussion to address these concerns. The Rural Justice Roundtable was facilitated by TORC Executive Director Harold Fleming and LFO's Karen Cohl and George Thomson. Twenty key stakeholders from across rural and northern Ontario provided an accurate picture of what was currently working and not working, as well as the all-important next steps of how best to overcome current challenges and barriers with rural access to justice in Ontario.

What did we hear? A host of challenges emerged, centred on issues like distance, shortage of lawyers, lack of frontline training and internet access, literacy barriers and clients feeling intimidated by the process due to their lack of knowledge/access/common language. More promising were the possible solutions suggested: information hotlines, increased training, the establishment of outreach locations, and improved internet access which could lead to videoconferencing and enhanced websites. Of particular note was the suggested need to foster stronger partnerships at both the ground level, amongst well-established organizations, and at the higher levels of decision-making.



Continued on next page...

What was the outcome? The resulting TORC Roundtable Report on Linguistic and Rural Access to Justice (www.torc.on.ca) captures the full range of issues and recommendations as outlined by our participatory stakeholder group. The TORC Report served to inform a broader-based document called The Connecting Report published by the LFO last fall as a follow-up to the Foundation's overall project directives.

RURAL YOUTH COUNCIL TOOLKIT

During 2007/2008, TORC Member Nichole Fraser MacDonald (Chair, TORC Rural Youth Working Group) provided exceptional leadership in the vision and development of a Rural Youth Council Toolkit designed to inspire, engage and empower youth in today's rural and remote regions. We were pleased to complete the process this year with the publication of *Create a Youth Council in Your Community...in 10 Easy Steps!*

This handy resource tool, developed in partnership with Endeavour Volunteer Consulting Network, is geared to young people who wish to contribute to the municipal decision-making process as a means of feeling invested in their communities and more inclined to work towards affecting positive and lasting change.



Create a Youth Council in Your Community...in 10 Easy Steps! is a free download (www.torc.on.ca) that shows youth just how straightforward it can be to introduce a Youth Council in their community; how to champion the idea, motivate others to get involved, organize and promote, and most importantly, how to gain the respect and trust of senior community decision-makers.

Our thanks to Nichole, the TORC Rural Youth Working Group and all of the dedicated volunteers who worked to make this Toolkit a helpful resource for those looking to harness and sustain the wealth of enthusiasm, expertise and commitment of our young people!



EMERGING RURAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

TORC WORKING GROUPS

(RURAL HEALTH, COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, RURAL YOUTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

We at TORC have always believed the strength of our organization rests in its committed membership and stakeholder base which contributes a considerable amount of time and energy to the work of TORC. Our TORC Working Group members are an important part of this process. They offer up valued insights and practical, firsthand experience on a wide range of rural concerns which, in turn, allows TORC to be viewed as a respected "voice" on rural issues. Working Group members also play a critical role in the planning and delivery of our Issue Forum Events and TORC Roundtable initiatives.

And so it was, over the course of 2008/2009, that our Working Groups invested a significant amount of time to researching and identifying **critical emerging rural issues** for the purposes of greater exploration and targeted attention. The document summarizing these emerging issues can be found on the TORC website (www.torc.on.ca) and will be used to help inform the future focus of TORC Members, researchers and provincial policy- and decision-makers.

TORC MOVING FORWARD

TORC Members, funding organizations and rural stakeholders appreciate the significant contribution our organization makes as a facilitator and catalyst for dialogue on rural issues. Through member dialogue sessions and The **TORC Report(s)** on specific issues, our organization empowers rural interests with the valued opportunity of having a say in their own future...as well as the future of their community. We remain the only organization focused on representing the 'collective' rural voice, cutting across all sectors to ensure the rural viewpoint is clearly heard by today's policy- and decision-makers.

With this in mind, the TORC Board of Directors has been committed to moving the organization forward as a more effective and efficient provincial rural organization, even in the midst of challenging times. Through the support of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, discussions have been held with The Centre for Rural Leadership (TCRL) to explore potential partnership model(s) to better serve the mandates of TCRL, TORC and rural Ontario. This initiative has resulted in TCRL and TORC working towards the creation of a new provincial organization to serve the broader interests of rural Ontario. Announcements related to this new organization will be forthcoming during the coming year. We invite you to stay tuned...!

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
Economic Developers Council of Ontario
Greater Peterborough Area EDC
Harry Cummings and Associates Inc.
LaCloche Manitoulin Business Assistance Corporation
Maddock Group Inc.
Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations
Ontario Co-operative Association

SECTOR: RESOURCE & ENVIRONMENTAL

Centre for Applied Renewable Energy
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
Conservation Ontario
Credit Valley Conservation
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

FedNor
Ministry of Transportation
Municipality of Trent Hills
Municipality of West Elgin
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Rural Ontario Municipal Association
Rural Secretariat (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)
Town of Caledon
Township of Mapleton
Township of Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS*

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

* includes students and youth



2008 | 2009 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 Fleming
TORC Executive Director

DIRECTORS

Valerie Ryan
Economic and Infrastructure Sector

Joan van der Meer
Resource and Environmental Sector

Chris White
Government Sector

Brenda Wilson
Individual Members Sector

Julie Cayley
Environmental Working Group

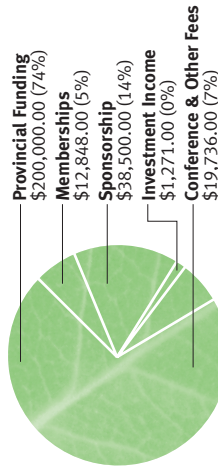
Christine Dukelow
Rural Health Working Group

Jim Nubel
Board Nominee

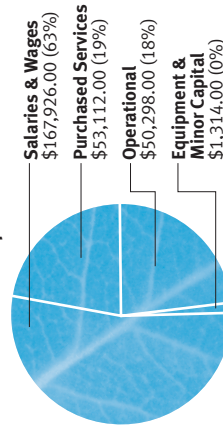
Jim Whaley
Board Nominee


FINANCIALS 2008 | 2009

2008-2009 TORC Revenue




2008-2009 TORC Expenditures





THE ONTARIO RURAL COUNCIL



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