



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Celebrating 40 years of AALP Leadership Excellence at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show**

GUELPH, ON, August 30, 2024 – The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is excited to announce the 40th Anniversary Celebration and Alumni Reunion of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) on September 11, 2024, from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm in the Special Events tent at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show.

AALP was established in 1984, through the work of four partners – the University of Guelph, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Foundation for Rural Living. The program was created for those who want to broaden their horizons, expand their networks and help shape the future of the agriculture and food sectors in Ontario. Today, the program has over 520 graduates who have risen to roles of influence in private industry, producer associations, government, public service and community organizations.

*"Forty years ago, champions of agricultural leadership worked to introduce an innovative educational training program for up-and-coming agricultural leaders,"* says Gabrielle Ferguson, Leadership Programs Director at ROI. *"Today, AALP is stronger than ever employing the latest in leadership curriculum and its alumni resources to remain future focused, impacting all parts of the agriculture and food value chain."*

The afternoon will include an engaging panel moderated by Minister of Rural Affairs Lisa Thompson (AALP Class 6 alumna) (featuring past and present program directors Pat Mighton, Ann Gordon, the Honourable Rob Black, Senator (ON) and Gabrielle Ferguson who will share highlights from 40 years of AALP. Alumni from each of the past classes will be in attendance to reconnect with fellow alumni, former staff, sponsors, and stakeholders.

*"As a founding member of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is incredibly proud to celebrate 40 years of leadership development in our sector. This milestone is a testament to the program's enduring impact, and we see the results reflected throughout the agriculture and food sector,"* remarks Drew Spoelstra, President Ontario Federation of Agriculture and AALP Class 13 alumni. *"AALP alumni are not only represented on our Board and staff but are also making significant contributions across our membership, and throughout the entire value chain. Forty years is an incredible achievement, and we look forward to seeing the continued positive influence of this program for years to come."*

*"We are so excited to be a sponsor of the 40th Anniversary of AALP,"* says Carol Carson, sponsorship and partnership lead for Canada's Outdoor Farm Show. *"This event represents a celebration of people dedicated to innovation, discovery and growth in agriculture over the past 40 years. We are thrilled to be part of this incredible achievement, as it is certainly something to celebrate!"*

*"We are grateful to our generous donors and sponsors whose unwavering support over the years has propelled AALP to great heights. Special thanks to our anniversary premier sponsors,*



*the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Canada's Outdoor Farm Show," says Ellen Sinclair, ROI Executive Director. "We anticipate an extraordinary afternoon and encourage you to join us in the special events tent as we celebrate this pivotal milestone."*

Those interested in attending the anniversary celebration are encouraged to register at [www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/events](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/events). This event is free to attend with entry to Canada's Outdoor Farm Show (COFS). To purchase your COFS ticket, please visit <https://www.outdoorfarmshow.com/>.

## **ABOUT**

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) is a non-profit organization committed to developing leaders, informing decision makers and connecting communities. ROI delivers the renowned Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP) entering its 40th year of operation. AALP is an 18-month experiential executive leadership program for those who want to shape the future of the agriculture and food industry and make a positive difference in rural communities across Ontario. AALP has over 520 graduates who have risen to leadership positions in private industry, producer associations, public service and community organizations. AALP is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Agribusiness and the Ontario Ministry of Rural Affairs.

## **CONTACTS**

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