



# **Enhancing Rural Research and Policy**

## **Report of the 2019 Rural Symposium**



IMPROVE LIFE.



Submitted by:

Sara Epp, Ashleigh Weeden, Sheri Longboat, and Ryan Gibson



**School of  
Environmental Design  
& Rural Development**

Research conducted within the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development reflects the diversity of our programs and the diversity of our faculty and students. Research spans the Canadian and international context and makes important contributions to society and our respective professions focused on Landscape Architecture, Rural Planning and Development, Capacity Development and Extension and Rural Studies. It is often focused at the community level, rural and urban, and tends to be very practical in its application. Further information about the School can be found at [www.sedrd.uoguelph.ca](http://www.sedrd.uoguelph.ca).



Through the Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance, a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the University of Guelph, Ontario's long term investment in research, laboratory, and veterinary training programs at the UofG has delivered innovation to Ontario's agri-food industry and stimulated prosperity in Ontario's rural communities. World-class laboratory programs enhance food safety, while strategic investment in the next generation of veterinarians, researchers and business and policy leaders promises a bright future for our rural communities and agri-food industry. Further information on OMAFRA can be found at [www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca).

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# Introduction

In partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the University of Guelph's School of Environmental Design and Rural Development (SEDRD) hosted a one-day symposium on rural research. The Rural Symposium is an opportunity for graduate students to share their research with researchers, policy analysts and program staff with OMAFRA, and rural organizations from across Ontario. The 2019 Rural Symposium, the fourth annual, brought together over 80 students, researchers, provincial government, non-profit organizations, and businesses together.

This year's event focused on seven themes: (i) changing rural landscapes, (ii) northern agriculture, (iii) rural policy, (iv) Indigenous research, (v) agriculture, (vi) community health and well-being, and (vii) water resources. This document highlights each of the presentations and posters shared at the 2019 Rural Symposium. A brief outline of each contribution is provided along with a hyperlink to the presentation or poster.

Highlights from the Rural Symposium can also be found on social media, through the #ruralsym19.



# Presentations

The presentations are listed in the order from the program. The presenters of each poster are listed along with the brief abstract on their presentation. Further information on each presentation and poster can be found through the hyperlink provided.

## Changing Rural Landscapes

### Perceptions of Wind Turbines in Rural Communities: A Case Study of Orono, Ontario

*Jenn Adams, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Wind energy in Ontario is gaining momentum as one of the most widely used renewable resources. Granted the opportunities and capacity for wind turbine production in Ontario, there is still resistance to implementation and development. This paper will examine rural community members perceptions based on a case study in Orono, Ontario. It will use the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) theory to examine which other factors such as health concerns, aesthetic value, and economic impacts influence members perceptions of wind energy. A survey was implemented through the Orono, ON Facebook group to gauge displeasure, anxieties or support for the local wind turbines. Findings from this survey will help gauge which factors are most important to community members. This paper will propose new policy adaptations to gain the most support from members living near wind farms in and outside of Orono. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

### Power in Policy: Measuring Farmland Loss in Ontario and Testing the Strength of the Greenbelt Act

*Rachel Singer and Sharon Wan, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Farmland in Ontario continues to be under immense pressure from development associated with population growth and urbanization, such as residential subdivisions, commercial developments and aggregate operations. This OMAFRA funded research investigates the strength of the Greenbelt Act in preserving Southern Ontario's prime agricultural soils by measuring the rate of farmland lost to non-farm land uses from 2000—2017 through official plan amendments. This methodology was applied to 15 counties and regions in southern Ontario and the results provide an assessment on the Greenbelt policy in place. This presentation will report on phase one of this research project (completed) including trends and results from specific jurisdictions and then provide an update on phase two, which extends across the province and is currently underway. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

# Northern Agriculture

## Understanding the Barriers to Livestock Production in the Clay Belt Region of Northern Ontario

*Sara Epp, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

The Clay Belt region in northern Ontario has recently been promoted as an ideal area for new agricultural endeavours, particularly related to livestock production. While opportunities may exist, many barriers, both perceived and real, significantly impact the expansion of this industry. This presentation will provide findings from a joint study conducted by researchers at the University of Guelph and University of Hearst. In particular, it will summarize barriers identified by participant group, including existing farmers, prospective farmers and youth, among others. Possible solutions and future research activities will also be provided. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Infrastructure Alone is Not Enough: Identifying Gaps in the Literature Regarding First Nations Water Governance

*Brooke Ellison-Wareing, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

In 2015, the federal government committed to ending drinking water advisories in First Nations communities across Canada by 2021. Their approach involves an increase in monetary commitments to improving water quality infrastructure in priority First Nations communities. The perception surrounding water-based infrastructure investments in First Nations communities is that infrastructure grants will solve the issues related to boil water advisories and allow for all individuals in communities to access clean water. While the investments are overdue and necessary, infrastructure alone does not address the institutional issues related to governance of water for First Nations reserves. Furthermore, as Indigenous peoples have constitutionally protected Aboriginal and treaty rights, and international rights (e.g. UNDRIP) of which many are tied to safe water, Indigenous peoples are seeking to incorporate Indigenous laws into their local water governance systems. The goal of this research is to examine gaps in the literature related to First Nations water governance and policy and investigate alternative models of community level water governance. Focusing in Ontario, this research will investigate the historical context which influences current water governance and created the framework for water management in First Nations communities. By identifying gaps in the planning and implementation projects, this research aims to add to the toolkit of potential solutions and improve the holistic approach to water management within First Nations communities across Ontario. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

# Rural Policy

## Making a Difference: Provincial Policy Reflections on Knowledge Mobilization

*Ashleigh Weeden, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Governments across Canada struggle to develop and implement robust, flexible, and effective rural policies and programs to meet the ever-changing contexts of rural communities. Critical to understanding how policymakers are addressing this challenge as they design, implement and/or evaluate rural policy and programming is examining if and how they use research evidence – and what kind of evidence – they use to inform this process. This presentation will highlight findings from interviews conducted with policy makers across Canada, which investigated knowledge mobilization processes and relationships between academic research and the public policy process for rural policy decision makers. This research offers insights into improving rural development public policy in Ontario by providing critical information about current challenges to and opportunities for more effective knowledge mobilization in designing, implementing, and evaluating successful rural development policies and programs. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Creating Effective Rural Policies: Rural Lenses and Their Effectiveness

*Louis Helps, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

As part of an international trend in regional policy development towards “mainstreaming” rural issues, multiple national and regional governments have created policy lenses designed to ensure that legislation is formed with the needs of rural areas taken into account. Despite a relative lack of academic research on the effectiveness of rural lenses, the idea has been imported to multiple jurisdictions, including several Canadian provinces. This presentation will offer a comparative overview of rural lenses in jurisdictions in Europe and North America in order to achieve a better understanding of their commonalities and divergences in methods, circumstances, and effectiveness. The presentation will make use of a review of the government and academic literature conducted for an upcoming working paper by Louis Helps and Dr. Ryan Gibson. This research is the foundation of a larger project that will seek to understand the feasibility of implementing rural lenses at the provincial level in Canada. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Rural 2.0: Investigating Place-Based Rural Innovation Systems and their Implications for Public Policy and Community Development Practice

*Ashleigh Weeden, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

We live in an era obsessed with innovation. So much so that in 2016, the Government of Canada began work on a new national 'Innovation Agenda' with the following proposition: "Innovation is a Canadian value. It's in our nature, and now more than ever, it will create jobs, drive growth and improve the lives of all Canadians. It's how we make our living, compete and provide solutions to the world. We have the talent, the drive, the dedication and the opportunity to succeed. So, what's next?" However, as every public consultation on the Innovation Agenda took place in a major city and produced initiatives with names like 'the Smart Cities Challenge,' it seems like 'what's next' is a national innovation conversation so steeped in unquestioned urbanism that it fails to even acknowledge, let alone include, rural Canadians. This presentation will highlight work being undertaken as part of a doctoral research program to investigate the complex relationships involved in rural community innovation and the opportunities this investigation provides for informing and improving public policy. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Indigenous Research

### Reflecting Bicultural Mechanisms in Waterscape Design and Planning

*Emily Bowerman, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

This research investigates the ways practitioners uphold Indigenous and Western values water values in the design and management of waterscapes in New Zealand. Waterscapes are defined as a landscape in which water relationships are central to community social, ecological, recreational, spiritual and cultural interactions. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to understand how practitioners; landscape architects, planners, designers and environmental managers navigate the complexities of bicultural approaches in practice. The research optimizes two robust literature reviews and 13 semi-structured interviews conducted in New Zealand. Findings will be presented with a series of photos and frameworks followed by a speculative discussion on the applicability and future research opportunities in the Canadian context and beyond. The research contributes to policy discourse toward design and management practices and opportunities to employ a bicultural lens to achieve more collaborative outcomes. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.



## Exploring Attitudes Towards Water Collaboration for Source Water Protection Between First Nations and Ontario Municipalities

*Natalya Garrod, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

My research will examine how collaborative source water protection planning involving First Nations, municipalities, and conservation authorities can act as an avenue for enhancing water security on-reserves in southern Ontario. There is plenty of academic literature that examines the extent of water quality issues on First Nations reserves in Canada, and on the factors that contribute to the problem. However, what is lacking are those focused on collaborative efforts between First Nations, municipalities, and conservation authorities. This gap has been acknowledged by other academics in the field. For example, Nelles and Alcantara (2011) claim scholars have ignored the variety of inter-governmental agreements between Indigenous communities and municipal governments in Canada. “We know very little about collaborative agreements, how or why they have emerged or failed to emerge, and whether or not they would be successful” (Nelles and Alcantara, 2011). Some questions have yet to be answered, such as, what collaborative models currently exist that would enable source water protection? What kind of relationships exist between First Nations and their neighbouring municipalities and conservation authorities? How can these relationships work to positively impact source water protection in the region? The goal of this research is to assess the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of First Nations, Municipalities, and Conservation Authorities in a shared watershed to determine how they might be able to work towards collaborative source water protection planning. A case study approach will be used with COTTEN, the City of London, and Upper and Lower Thames Conservation Authorities. This document will act as a guide to collaborative efforts and relationship building can enhance source water protection. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## The Opioid Epidemic and Rural First Nation Communities

*Shannon Labelle, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

The purpose of this research is to explore the connections and impacts the opioid epidemic has had on First Nation communities. Particularly looking at communities that are in rural and remote locations across Ontario. The opioid epidemic has impacted all of Ontario, and it is garnering a lot of public attention. However, rural communities are not as well equipped to deal with such an issue as their urban counterparts. I would like to explore the extent of the opioid impact on said communities, discuss potential solutions, and address gaps in literature regarding this topic and as it relates specifically to First Nations. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

# Agriculture

## The Social Disruptiveness of Digital Agricultural Technologies: Asking Questions in the Context(s) that Matter

*Abdul-Rahim Abdulai, Department of Geography, Environment, and Geomatics, University of Guelph*

Agriculture and food, the sector at the centre of many debates on technology driven human civilization, may be at the onset of another transformation: a transformation showing glimpse of both old and new revolutionary and incremental change in what farming means, where and how it is done and our relationship to the land, especially within rural settings. Today, food and agricultural systems are once again experiencing what can be described as another technological surge, a digital-driven potential transition. Emerging technologies including mobile support systems, precision agricultural tools, drone technologies, RFID and blockchain, sensors, satellite system, just to mention a few, are being employed across the food system, a system intrinsically and extrinsically connected to the what and the how of the countryside. There is no hiding that these recent development holds broader implications for both agriculture and farming, and rurality at large. However, at present, we are oblivious to the particularities of these implications. But we need to start the conversations about the implications for the rural to adequately prepare for what it has in stock for rural development and restructuring. What I seek to do in my research is to begin to ask some social questions on the digital surge in agriculture, with specific emphasis on how it will affect practices and performativities of rurality across rural landscapes. It is my intention to spur initial discussions with this preliminary presentation and engage audiences in exploring specific forms of the rural and farming that should be considered in this emerging field. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Understanding the Impacts of Aggregate Production on Agriculture and Identifying Mitigating Strategies

*Jeff Reichheld and Emily Hehl, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Across Ontario, aggregate extraction provides economic stimulus for many rural locales, but these operations significantly alter the landscapes upon which they occur and are often considered a nuisance to adjacent land owners. Especially in Southern Ontario, these operations frequently occur on agricultural land or within close proximity to productive farmland. Given the potentially disruptive nature of aggregate extraction, it is important to understand their impacts on nearby farms so that measures to mitigate these impacts can be developed and implemented. Thus, research is needed that understands the social, economic, environmental and land use impacts of aggregate operations to help ensure that adjacent agricultural operations prosper. This research therefore seeks to identify the farm operator's perspective on impacts on crop and livestock production, along with

corresponding best practices that can be utilized to mitigate these impacts. Additionally, this project will involve a jurisdictional scan to identify social, economic, environmental and land use impacts, as well as quantitative and qualitative research intended to identify impacts on agriculture (such as dust, noise and water) and promising practices that aggregate operators and municipal planners could use to limit these impacts. The goal is to see these best practices implemented early in the planning process to avoid conflict and negative impacts on agricultural production from future aggregate operations. The project is supported by a three-year research grant from OMAFRA. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Community Health and Well-Being

### Exchanging Locally Informed Recreational Trail Development Practices to Build a Better Trans Canada Trail

*Timothy Hunting, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

The Trans Canada Trail is the world's largest recreational trail network, spanning 24,000 km and connecting 15,000 diverse communities across Canada from coast, to coast, to coast. The research currently being undertaken is to investigate both barriers and solutions for best planning practices pertaining to recreational trail networks and, specifically, for the TCT. Using mixed methods of both semi-structured interviews and recurring surveys, the methodology of this research project pairs together key-informants from communities of both similar and diverse characteristics and provides them with a participatory outlet for knowledge sharing to occur. Applications of this research project has the potential to create synergies between various stakeholders and interest groups, such as active transportation coalitions, economic development practitioners, and conservation authorities. In rural Ontario, where safety and accessibility to the TCT is dramatically far from being consistent, research findings may have particular salience. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

### Investigating the Decision-Making Process of Physicians in Rural Ontario: The Perspectives and Attitudes on Medical Cannabis

*Asiful Islam, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

This thesis will guide health communities to better understand the clinical decision-making process that physicians from rural Ontario undergo when considering whether to prescribe medical cannabis to patients for their medical condition. Very few studies have been conducted which examine the perspectives of physicians on medical cannabis, especially in rural areas, and these studies have found that most physicians are skeptical towards medical cannabis. This skeptical perspective of physicians has complicated the clinical

decision-making process as “recent changes in media reports and changing trends in social media propose a change in the attitudes towards cannabis (Zolotov et al., 2018, p.5).” Physicians practicing in rural Ontario are currently being recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews to explore the issues which they prioritize the most. Once completed, the findings from this study will identify common themes and trends that could help influence change in physician practice and healthcare policy. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Healthy Rural Communities: Strategies and Models of Practice

*Sharon Wan, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

This project has gone through several phases over several years: The initial phase led to the development of the Healthy Rural Communities Toolkit (funded by Public Health Ontario). The second phase (funded by the Guelph/OMAFRA Partnership) involved KTT with workshops delivered across the Province. The third phase (funded by Public Health Ontario and the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development) saw the development of educational materials, most recently culminating in a graduate course oriented to planning and public health students. Overall, this project aims to identify evidence-informed strategies and models of practice for land use planning policies, procedures and designs for the built environment to improve population health outcomes in rural communities. It has been identified that these communities often have limited resources and minimal development. This presentation will introduce a main output of this project— a toolkit which identifies rural land use policies that have successfully increased the capacity of the community to achieve positive health outcomes. This toolkit is produced to advise public health professionals, land use planners, municipal staff and elected officials of effective strategies and models of practice. The presentation will also introduce educational materials developed in support of the graduate course: Healthy Rural and Small-Town Communities. This includes many publicly available videos and other resource materials. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Water Resources

### Controlling Pathogens and Chemical Contaminants in Greenhouse Irrigation Water through Electrochemical Processes

*Serge Lévesque, School of Environmental Science, University of Guelph*

The capture and re-use of greenhouse irrigation/fertigation water is an efficient use of ever more limited water resources. Although, when capturing and re-applying fertigation solutions there is a greater risk for both pathogen proliferation and chemical contaminant accumulation, both of which can lead to reduced productivity and, in more severe cases, crop loss. In order to avoid these obstacles, it is important that grower’s employ some form



of water treatment. Electrochemical disinfection can be used to treat irrigation water by producing and recycling chemical components, in situ, that limit pathogen proliferation while degrading chemical contaminants. Two electrode types (Dimensionally Stable Anodes & Boron-Doped Diamond) using regenerative in situ processes are tested and will be evaluated on their suitability for crop production. Upon analyzing the electrochemical systems' ability for disinfection and organic pollutant degradation, they appear to be compatible with crop production following preliminary trials. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

## Best Practices for Onsite Wastewater System Inspections, Maintenance and Record Keeping in the Lake Simcoe Watershed

*Cameron Curran, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Onsite wastewater systems, commonly known as septic systems, can pose serious threats to the health and functionality of lakes, aquatic systems, and rural communities if effluent is not sufficiently treated. To ensure septic systems are functioning well and having minimal impacts on the natural environment and human health, regular maintenance, reinspections, and record keeping are required under Section 8.9 of the Ontario Building Code. The objective of this project is to improve the capacity of municipalities within the Lake Simcoe Watershed for adopting septic reinspection program best practices. Mandated and discretionary programs will be analyzed for their effectiveness within vulnerable areas. The information gathered from the project research phases will be used to inform the development of a final proposed best practice framework for completing onsite wastewater system reinspection programs in Ontario. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this presentation.

# Posters

## Perceptions of Wind Turbines in Rural Communities A Case Study of Orono, Ontario

*Jenn Adams, Environmental Policy Institute, Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Wind energy in Ontario is gaining momentum as one of the most widely used renewable resources. Granted the opportunities and capacity for wind turbine production in Ontario, there is still resistance to implementation and development. This paper will examine rural community members perceptions based on a case study in Orono, Ontario. It will use the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) theory to examine which other factors such as health concerns, aesthetic value, and economic impacts influence members' perceptions of wind energy. A survey was implemented through the Orono, ON Facebook group to gauge displeasure, anxieties or support for the local wind turbines. Findings from this survey will help gauge which factors are most important to community members. This paper will propose new policy adaptations to gain the most support from members living near wind farms in and outside of Orono. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Sustainable Agriculture: Farmers' Perspectives on Transition to Sustainable Agricultural Practices

*Paige Allen, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

The role of sustainability in Canadian agricultural production systems is a complex and evolving topic. In 2018 Canada announced the launch of a five-year Canadian Agricultural Partnership which is a \$3 billion funding initiative between the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Innovation and sustainability is one of the key elements of the initiative. The purpose of this research is to increase policy discussion in relation to sustainable agriculture through the engagement of farmers in Southern Ontario. This research will help improve the sustainable policies and programs by investigating farmers' views on the inclusion and transition to sustainable farming practices, factors influencing farmers' decisions to make the transition, as well as identifying deficits in current sustainable policy and programming in Ontario. It is essential to develop research which is representative of farmers' viewpoints on as they are the stakeholders directly impacted by the policies and programs which are developed and enacted. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Side Appel Amenability to Ontario

*Nicolas Querques, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph*

My thesis research involves an evaluation of apple production for the rapidly expanding Ontario cider industry. This entails several experiments that provide an analysis of several apple cultivars. These include apples from traditional global cider regions, established Ontario varieties, and novel crab-derived varieties. Firstly, a report on the cider-centric sensory characteristics of these apples will be published. Additionally, the winter hardiness of varieties with historic use in cider making will be established using microscopy methods. This will provide a minimum cultivation temperature for use in planting decisions throughout Ontario's apple growing regions. A major concern of Ontario apple grower's is the cost of harvest labour. For this purpose, I am evaluating the economics of mechanical harvesting in high-density orchards. Lastly, I am exploring the suitability of ice cider production in Ontario to provide methodology recommendations. My project seeks to support the expanding Ontario cider industry through providing localized guidelines. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Rural Development in Campobello Island

*Anthony Offor, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Guelph*

It is a project that looks at how best to improve the economic stability of the community environmental and economic rural development. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Agritourism as a Solution to Rural Revitalization: The Case Study of Brock, Ontario

*Sarah Parish, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

The agricultural and agri-food industry has a prevalent, long-standing history as a successful cornerstone industry in Ontario. This historical prevalence stands true for the central rural township of Brock, Ontario as agriculture and livestock are a driving force in the township's economy. However, throughout the last three decades, agricultural production in Ontario's rural townships have been negatively impacted by vertical integration, globalization, and the intensification of land-based activities (Wicks & Merrett, 2003). Therefore, the aim of this research study is to determine if agritourism is a viable solution to aid in revitalizing the rural township of Brock, Ontario. This research is imperative for farm operators in rural Ontario because small family farms are seeking ways to remain economically competitive against the pressures of urbanization and changing global markets. The objectives of this research study necessitate in-depth information-gathering which will be gained from conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals whom are members of the Beaverton Agricultural Society, the Sunderland Agricultural Society, or the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA). This research will provide information about why farmers decided to diversify their farms through agritourism, how agritourism has helped farming

businesses (if at all), and what strategies farmers used to implement agritourism into their traditional farming practices. The findings of this research study will be utilized by for farm operators that have integrated agritourism practices into their traditional farming practices and for government programs and policies to support farm operators. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Building the Future: Rural Infrastructure and Regional Economic Development

*Ashleigh Weeden, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Communities of all sizes must balance fiscal realities, changing economies, aging infrastructure, changing demographics, and a challenging climate as they work to manage their core infrastructure assets and accommodate and/or address new infrastructure and service demands. Given these challenges, are rural Ontario communities capable of responding to infrastructure pressures and opportunities? How does that capacity – or lack thereof – affect a community's current and future long-term economic development? Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the University of Guelph-OMAFRA Research Partnership, this research initiative will examine the capacity of different communities in rural Ontario to respond to infrastructure pressures and how these response impact their short and long-term economic well-being. Running from 2018-2021, the research team will use surveys, workshops, content analysis, and case studies, to develop recommendations for addressing these issues through both immediate and long-term policy alternatives. This research initiative will directly support rural Ontario's economic vitality by providing three key benefits: enhanced understanding of the diversity and varying levels of rural community capacities, improved and more nuanced public policy, and enhanced rural infrastructure development programming. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Making a Difference: Provincial Policy Reflections on Knowledge Mobilization

*Ashleigh Weeden, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

Governments across Canada struggle to develop and implement robust, flexible, and effective rural policies and programs to meet the ever-changing contexts of rural communities. Critical to understanding how policymakers are addressing this challenge as they design, implement and/or evaluate rural policy and programming is examining if and how they use research evidence – and what kind of evidence – they use to inform this process. Through interviews with policy makers across Canada, this project investigates knowledge mobilization processes and relationships between academic research and the public policy process for rural policy decision makers. This research will directly contribute to improving rural development public policy in Ontario by providing critical information



about current challenges to and opportunities for more effective knowledge mobilization in designing, implementing, and evaluating successful rural development policies and programs. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Rural 2.0: Place-Based Rural Community Innovation Systems

*Ashleigh Weeden, School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph*

We live in an era obsessed with innovation. So much so that in 2016, the Government of Canada began work on a new national 'Innovation Agenda' with the following proposition: "Innovation is a Canadian value. It's in our nature, and now more than ever, it will create jobs, drive growth and improve the lives of all Canadians. It's how we make our living, compete and provide solutions to the world. We have the talent, the drive, the dedication and the opportunity to succeed. So, what's next?" However, as every public consultation on the Innovation Agenda took place in a major city and produced initiatives with names like 'the Smart Cities Challenge,' it seems like 'what's next' is a national innovation conversation so steeped in unquestioned urbanism that it fails to even acknowledge, let alone include, rural Canadians. This doctoral research project will use a comparative case study approach to investigate the complex relationships at play in place-based rural innovation systems and provide grounded, illustrative narratives for informing public policy. [Click here](#) to view a copy of this poster.

## Acknowledgements

The Rural Symposium would not have been possible without the dedication of the organizing committee. The committee designed the event, solicited for submissions, hosted capacity building sessions to prepare for the event, and coordinated all communications. Members of the 2019 Rural Symposium organizing committee were Sara Epp, Ryan Gibson, Teighan Hunt, Sheri Longboat, Jonylle Smith, Mallory Smith, and Ashleigh Weeden.



The 2019 Rural Symposium received financial support through the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development and in-kind contributions from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.