



## Head of Council and Councillors & CAO

The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI) has good news to share with you. One of the participants who has stepped forward for the Rural Change Makers program of ROI is from your municipality and we thought you should know about their intent and motivation to make their community a better place. Having engaged citizens, particularly young adults, is a huge benefit for any rural community.

We are pleased to announce that Morgan Dykstra has been selected for this community development leadership building journey. Attached is a short bio. You may already know this community member but we thought that becoming aware of their participation in the program would assist them since there may be times in the upcoming months that they reach out to you, or the municipal staff, to explore your knowledge, expertise or connections surrounding a particular community challenge they may be gearing up to mobilize action around.

Rural Change Makers is a pilot program that will prepare young adults to help mobilize action for their community. Eighteen, motivated young adults from across rural Ontario have been selected to join the experience. These leaders will participate in a series of developmental training webinars on community development, connect with each other on-line and hopefully come together for a face-to-face customized, experiential event later in the year. This will support them to take action on a challenge/opportunity that they have helped their community to select. Additional personalized coaching will take place, as-needed, either in-person, phone or via email.

The Rural Change Makers are being prepared to organize at least two events:

1. A “discovery session” with local stakeholders and community members focusing on an asset-based approach and linking them with allies in their mobilization efforts;
2. A “community action lab” or event oriented at producing an action plan towards a short-term concrete project that will be the focus of their initial steps in effecting the change they want to see in their community.

The aim of the new program is to:

1. Build rural youth leadership capacity
2. Catalyze impactful rural development outcomes for communities and regions
3. Broaden public engagement in rural development initiatives



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Should you be interested in learning more we will be inviting you and the rest of the community to an informational webinar so that you can hear about what's next for the Change Makers and so you can start considered whether there is a role for your municipality in supporting their initiative.

In the meantime feel free to visit our website to learn more about Rural Change Makers [www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/changemakers](http://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/changemakers) or reach out to me directly.

Thank you.

Vicki Dickson

Project Manager

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Morgan Dykstra

*"Born and raised in Exeter Ontario, I pursued a Bachelor of Arts Degree at McGill University, majoring in Political Science and a minor in History. During the summers I worked at the Municipality of Bluewater, and the County of Perth where I learned I had a true interest in local government. Working in local government allows you to see tangible results and foster direct community building – which is very enriching. After living in Montreal, I returned to my hometown – nothing beats a small community where you say “hi” when passing by someone on the sidewalk.*

*I now work for the Town of St. Marys, where I can continue to develop skills and learn. I also volunteer for the United Way Perth-Huron, I sit on the Board of Directors, Community Impact Allocations Committee and Urgent Needs Fund Review Team. Volunteering with the United Way has been an enlightening experience, I never truly understood the need in our community until I began to review funding applications and read the impact statements from those who receive services from supported partners.*

*In my spare time I’m an avid trail walker, and book reader.*

*I look forward to learning from the Rural Ontario Institute and applying new skills.*