

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 28, 2026

Perth County and Stratford Set the Stage for Rural Prosperity at Provincial Agriculture Forum

Two-day event brings municipal leaders, economic development professionals and planners together to celebrate agricultural innovation, regional partnerships and the opportunities shaping rural Ontario.

STRATFORD, ON – Perth County, investStratford, and the Ministry of Rural Affairs are rolling out the welcome mat this week as they host the 18th annual Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum, September 28 and 29, 2026.

This year's forum, themed Setting the Stage for Rural Prosperity, brings together approximately 130 municipal leaders, economic development professionals, planners and industry partners from across Ontario.

More than a conference, the forum is an opportunity to showcase the strength of the region's agricultural economy, celebrate the businesses and entrepreneurs driving innovation, and demonstrate what can be accomplished when municipalities, industry and government work together.

"Perth County has an incredible story to tell, and we're excited to share it with colleagues from across the province," said Meredith Forget, Director of Economic Development and Tourism for Perth County. "Our greatest strength is our ability to build relationships and turn those relationships into opportunities. Whether we're supporting local businesses, attracting investment or working with our municipal and provincial partners, collaboration is at the heart of everything we do. This forum gives us the opportunity to showcase not only our agricultural and business communities, but also the partnerships and programs that help them succeed."

Showcasing the Region, One Stop at a Time

The forum kicks off Monday, September 28, with an agricultural and business discovery tour, offering delegates a firsthand look at the businesses, entrepreneurs and innovations contributing to the region's economic success.

Throughout the day, participants will visit local agricultural operations and businesses, connect directly with industry leaders and explore the relationship between agriculture, manufacturing, innovation, tourism and rural economic development.

The day will conclude with an evening networking reception at Lynn River Farm, bringing together delegates, business owners, speakers and community partners to celebrate the people and partnerships behind the region's success.

"Stratford and Perth County have so much to be proud of, and this event is a wonderful example of what happens when we work together," said Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford. "Our economies, businesses and communities are deeply connected. By bringing people together, sharing our experiences and showcasing the innovation happening across our region, we're creating opportunities for new partnerships and demonstrating the value of a collaborative approach to economic development."

Setting the Stage for Rural Prosperity

On Tuesday, September 29, delegates will gather at Stratford's Tom Patterson Theatre for a full day of discussions exploring the opportunities and challenges facing rural Ontario.

The conference will feature municipal and provincial leaders, Indigenous perspectives, industry experts and practitioners who will share experiences and practical approaches to strengthening rural communities.

Sessions will explore the relationship between economic development and land-use planning, municipal collaboration, agricultural innovation and the policies and partnerships that support sustainable rural growth.

The forum will also highlight the important role that local economic development and tourism programs play in supporting business retention and expansion, investment attraction, agricultural diversification and regional prosperity.

A Celebration of Partnerships

Hosting the provincial forum provides Perth County and investStratford with an opportunity to demonstrate the value of regional collaboration while highlighting the businesses, communities and programs that make the region an important contributor to Ontario's agricultural economy.

Together, they are setting the stage for conversations, connections and new ideas that will help shape the future of rural Ontario.

About the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum

Now in its 18th year, the Municipal Agriculture Economic Development and Planning Forum brings together economic development professionals, municipal planners, elected officials, agricultural organizations and industry partners from across Ontario to exchange ideas, share best practices and explore opportunities to strengthen rural communities and agricultural economies.

-30-

Media Contact

Clara Boersen
Tourism Officer, County of Perth
519-301-5611
cboersen@perthcounty.ca