

## Tourism leaders held first Rural Tourism Symposium in Orangeville

Tourism and business leaders from across Ontario gathered at the Orangeville Town Hall Opera House for the first provincial Rural Tourism Symposium Jan. 16.

Spearheaded by Headwaters Tourism, in partnership with Peterborough and the Kawarthas, this collaborative undertaking was supported by Grey County Tourism, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the Town of Orangeville, QuinteVation, Tourism Simcoe County, the City of Orillia and Société Économique de L'Ontario.

Close to 150 delegates from across Ontario came together to raise the profile of rural tourism as an integral part of the provincial and national visitor experience. Delegates discovered best practices in rural tourism, were inspired by rural tourism leaders and helped give a voice to the importance of rural destinations in showcasing the best of Ontario and Canada to national and international visitors.

Along with keynote speaker Lisa LaVecchia, president and CEO of Destination Ontario, delegates had the opportunity to hear from David Robinson, vice-president of Destination Canada, and Beth Potter, president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, and discuss how rural tourism in Ontario can align and support provincial and national tourism strategies.

As a result of this first Rural Tourism Symposium, industry leaders have agreed to build on the momentum and create initiatives that support collaborative rural tourism development. Peterborough and the Kawarthas will host the second annual symposium April 11, 2019 and in the meantime, an alliance of key players from Ontario municipalities and destination marketing organizations was formed to collaborate on a framework for ongoing development through quarterly engagement sessions.

Headwaters Tourism continues to recognize the power of partnership and collaboration and was honoured to spearhead the first Rural Tourism Symposium. With the support of the Headwaters Board of Directors, Headwaters Tourism will continue to be a leader in rural tourism development and find innovative ways to grow tourism in support of robust rural economies.

For further information about rural tourism in Ontario, visit [ruraltourism.biz](http://ruraltourism.biz)