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A message from rural canada to our urban friends

Rural Canadians produce the bounty but do not reap the wealth of their contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). That's the message Dr. Ryan Gibson, Libro Professor of Regional Economic Development at the University of Guelph remarked on May 7 with those attending the Dufferin County Economic Development Seminar in Orangeville, taking a closer look at the county's economic future.

During the seminar, Gibson, highlighted the factors influencing development and the role rural communities have in a larger economy. Rural Canada, approximately 6 million people, make up 17 per cent of the population but generate 30 per cent of Canada's GDP.

But why? How is it that rural Canada punches so high above its weight class in terms of GDP contribution? Part of the explanation begins with the rich natural resource sectors and agri-food industries continuing with a commodity market that has been establishing itself for decades.

Rural communities also have higher rates of volunteerism, charity and sense of belonging compared to our urban counterparts. Dr. Gibson says that Rural Canada acts as an ?ATM? to urban communities supporting infrastructure, health care, education and more. Rural communities are consistently told by senior levels of governments, ?do more with less? and to deal with the problems themselves with the wealth and knowledge produced being taken to cities.

Still, rural communities ultimately lack access to a diverse labor force, financial and social capital, paired with challenges surrounding data collection and information sharing, more can be said about how important rural Canada is to urban Canadians.

Rural Canada experiences events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and President Trump's tariffs all differently but we must come together during times of trouble and support local industries and economies.

At the conclusion of the seminar, Dr. Gibson stated that staying optimistic is crucial and finding new ways to support one another through partnerships and collaboration is a pathway to resilience. For more information on the Economic Development Seminars happening in Dufferin County visit www.dufferincounty.ca.

This article was written by Lucas Berek, an emerging expert in the field of economic development, public policy, and ethics.