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## BRIEF

“Health research is essential for providing people with quality health care and improving their health. Health research is key to ensuring a healthy and wealthy society. Health research not only extends life, it improves the quality of life. It is imperative to make research central both to our health agenda and to our economic agenda because the links between these two areas are clear.”

- *Dr. Alain Beaudet, President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research*

### Introduction

In the summer of 2007, a group of fifteen community leaders and volunteers from Seaforth, Ontario, undertook a road trip to Hazard Kentucky, to visit a unique Centre of Excellence in Rural Health. In this small (population 5000) coal mining town in the Appalachian Hills, they found a group of dedicated health care providers and teachers operating a very unique and cutting-edge health care centre and teaching hospital.

In a modern facility, a rural arm of the University of Kentucky was delivering and teaching health care and conducting research. The town of Hazard and surrounding area shares many health care issues with rural south west Ontario. With state and federal funding and in partnership with the University of Kentucky, the centre thrives as an example of state-of-the-art health care delivery in a poorer, less developed, rural segment of American society and geography.

On their return to Canada, the group of fifteen, inspired by what they had seen and heard, formed a volunteer Board of Directors, named the entity and started Gateway. Gateway continues to expand its team of academic research partners. It has met with great success to date in research team development and professional, academic and economic associations. There are volumes of health and socioeconomic data showing that Canadians living in rural areas are health disadvantaged.

### What is Gateway?

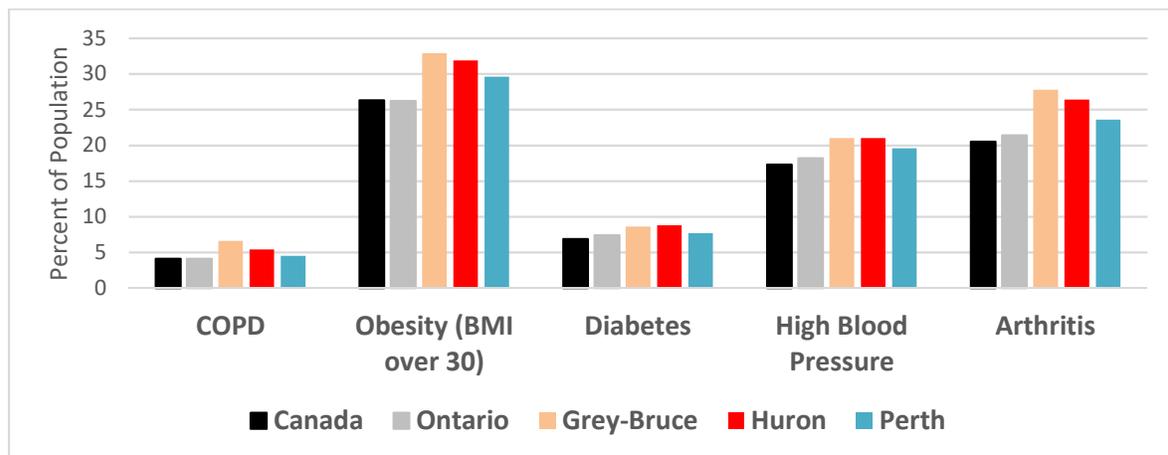
Gateway was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit corporation with charitable status governed by a community-based volunteer Board of Directors committed to its continued success. Gateway is, to our knowledge, Canada’s only community-based rural health research institute.

Gateway’s mission is **“to improve the health and quality of life of rural residents through research, education and communication.”** Through health research we can improve health care and health care delivery. Through innovation in rural health research, education and health business, we can attract health care professionals to our area and be an economic driver for a health and knowledge based economy. We can be a model for similar development in all of rural Canada.

## Why Gateway?

- 1) To ensure healthier rural residents can actively contribute to healthy local economies and require less health care over time.**

Higher rates of chronic conditions have been found in Huron, Perth, Grey and Bruce Counties than in Ontario or Canada. The difference in health levels between rural and urban Canada were the impetus to explore health research in the rural setting. As a research centre, Gateway's goal is to bring research to bear on these health discrepancies and drive research into local rural communities.



- 2) To ensure the region can attract a wide range of health care practitioners and researchers to practice, conduct research and contribute to the knowledge economy.**

Innovation and education in rural health research does more than just attract healthcare professionals. It recruits new practitioners from urban areas, helps to retain and attract residents, creating new knowledge-based and much-needed jobs.

- 3) To ensure creation of a rural model for Canada that successfully links health research, education, evidence-based practice and economic development through innovation.**

To date, Gateway has made several significant links with academic, healthcare and cultural Institutions and has appointed 15 Research Chairs and Associates.

- 4) To ensure healthy sustainable communities.**

We help to attract businesses and strengthen rural health care by bringing world class leaders to the region; putting our region on the map by establishing a centre of excellence in rural health with a focus on teaching and research.



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### **Support from the Community**

Gateway has successfully grown from our initial vision with the support of many individuals, businesses and groups who recognize the unaddressed needs of rural Ontario and have donated to that end.

### **Donations have enabled Gateway to:**

- Establish our administrative structure.
- Employ local students and assist in advancing their healthcare careers.
- Provide facilities and mentorship to allow traditionally urban research and teaching resources to reach out into rural Ontario.
- Support numerous rural research projects and publish the results.
- Continue to raise awareness of rural health issues.
- Disseminate information through meetings, presentations and seminars to healthcare professionals, our government leaders and the general public.

### **Going forward**

- We plan to expand our partnerships with academic centres and other collaborators.
- We plan to conduct much needed research on recognized and under recognized rural health issues.
- We plan to ensure knowledge is successfully transferred back to the communities we serve.