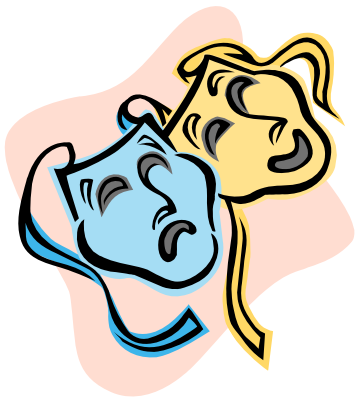


THE STATE OF THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY 2010



*TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC RENEWAL*



September 2010



**THE STATE OF THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY
2010
TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RENEWAL**

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Section 1:	
A Profile of Huron County	Page 4
I. The Huron County Population	Page 5
II. The Huron County Economy	Page 7
III. The Huron County Labour Market	Page 11
Section 2:	
Recent Events in the Huron County Economy	Page 16
In July 2009	Page 16
In August 2009.....	Page 16
In September 2009	Page 18
In October 2009.....	Page 18
In November 2009	Page 19
In December 2009.....	Page 20
In January 2010	Page 20
In February 2010.....	Page 21
In March 2010	Page 21
In April 2010.....	Page 22
In May 2010.....	Page 22
In June 2010	Page 23
Section 3:	
A Who's Who of Economic Renewal in Huron County.....	Page 24
I. Above the Falls Challenge Course Inc.....	Page 24
II. District School Boards – Avon Maitland and Huron Perth Catholic	Page 24
III. elearnnetwork	Page 24
IV. Foundation for Education	Page 25
V. Four County Labour Market Planning Board.....	Page 25
VI. Gateway Rural Health Research Institute	Page 25
VII. Heritage and Culture Partnership.....	Page 26
VIII. Huron Business Development Corporation.....	Page 26
IX. Huron Business Leaders	Page 26
X. Huron County Economic Development Services.....	Page 27
XI. Huron County Federation of Agriculture.....	Page 27
XII. Huron County Local Immigration Partnership Council.....	Page 27
XIII. Huron County Youth Council	Page 28
XIV. Huron Manufacturing Association.....	Page 28
XV. Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Network.....	Page 28
XVI. Huron Tourism Association	Page 29
XVII. Lake Huron Learning Collaborative.....	Page 29
XVII. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.....	Page 29

XIX. Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities	Page 30
XX. Municipal Economic Development Committees	Page 30
XXI. Network Huron.....	Page 30
XXII. Regional Equine and Agricultural Centre of Huron	Page 30
XXIII. Warden’s Task Force on Economic Development.....	Page 31

Section 4:

Towards Economic Renewal in 2010	Page 32
I. Taking Stock in Huron County’s Assets	Page 32
I. Human and Social Capital	Page 32
II. Natural Capital	Page 33
III. Built Capital	Page 34
II. Key Themes of Huron County’s Economic Renewal.....	Page 34
I. Population Renewal	Page 34
II. Agricultural Renewal	Page 35
III. Enterprise Renewal	Page 35
IV. Workforce Renewal	Page 35
V. Infrastructure Renewal	Page 36
VI. Community Renewal.....	Page 36
III. A Huron County Response To Economic Renewal	Page 36
Theme # 1: Population Renewal	Page 37
Theme # 2: Agricultural Renewal.....	Page 37
Theme # 3: Enterprise Renewal	Page 38
Theme # 4: Workforce Renewal.....	Page 38
Theme # 5: Infrastructure Renewal.....	Page 39
Theme # 6: Community Renewal	Page 40

CHART LISTING

Population Change by Municipality	Page 5
Huron County Businesses by Sector	Page 7
Change in Business Numbers	Page 8
Grow/Decline in Enterprises by Sector.....	Page 8
Change in Farm Size.....	Page 9
Businesses by Number of Employees	Page 10
Rates of Self Employment.....	Page 10
Employment by Sector	Page 11
Education Levels.....	Page 12
Change in Labour Force	Page 13
Change in Employment by Occupation.....	Page 13
Change in Family Employment Income	Page 14
Employment Services Activity.....	Page 15
State of the Huron County Economy 2010 – Economic Renewal Themes	Page 42

THE STATE OF THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY 2010

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RENEWAL

Introduction

Community Vision: In 2030...

“The Huron County economy will continue to provide economic security and opportunity for its residents through diversification, business retention, local provision, and education and training opportunities.”

This vision statement for the Huron County economy is quoted from *Take Action for Sustainable Huron – 2009*. It was developed by the County of Huron with the participation of hundreds of Huron County residents, organizations and community leaders. And like any good vision statement, it is a reflection of what the people of Huron County aspire to; what we value most and what we hope to pass on to our children in the form of business and employment opportunities.

Beneath these words lie several unspoken, but inherent goals, including the desire to maintain a certain level of material comfort; the ability to keep the best of what we currently have while developing our most promising economic potential; and unwillingness to meet the needs of the present by compromising the future. But above all, this vision statement reflects a spirit of self-reliance and an assertion that the economy is not something that happens *to us*, but something that *we make happen*.

The State of the Huron County Economy Report for 2010 is the latest in a series of annual explorations into issues affecting the local economy and labour market. The overall purpose is to provide policy makers, planners and community leaders with solid information on what makes the local economy tick – where our strengths lie, what issues require program intervention, and perhaps most important, what is being done about it.

Without question, the Huron County economy is impacted by broader global and social trends, including familiar drivers as global warming; the information age; peak oil and the rise of China as a major economic player on the world stage. While these trends do inevitably impact our local policy and program decisions, they remain out of local control. Hence, this report contains no data on things like Gross National Product, Canada’s Trade Surplus; the Consumer Price Index, or trends in the Toronto Stock Exchange. Instead, we focus on those things that we can influence as individuals, organizations and communities – things like

small business start-ups; labour force training; career opportunities for youth and the transition of the unemployed workers into sustainable new jobs.

It's no secret that the people and communities of Huron County have an admirable track record of successful *community* economic development arising from a "do-it-yourself" attitude. But recent developments have brought significant new challenges to the Huron County economy. Like much of Ontario, Huron County communities and the workers that live in them have been rebounding from the effects of the global economic downturn. Perhaps now then is as good a time as any to pause, reflect, and take stock of our assets as we move forward towards *sustainable economic renewal*.

SECTION 1: A PROFILE OF HURON COUNTY presents and organizes statistical information along a number of inter-related themes. These themes include:

- The Huron County Population** – who we are; where we live; what sets us apart;
- The Huron County Economy** – what sectors drive our economy; what new opportunities are emerging; what sectors are in peril;
- The Huron County Labour Market** – how we make a living, what we are good at, and how changing employment conditions are creating winners and losers.

SECTION 2: RECENT EVENTS IN THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY uses local media articles to reflect upon activity in the Huron County economy over the course of the past year. Information gleaned from local newspapers is organized chronologically by month to paint a picture of local economic and labour market trends and adjustments.

SECTION 3: A WHO'S WHO OF ECONOMIC RENEWAL IN HURON COUNTY profiles the many community organizations sharing a mandate for economic development, business development and labour market adjustment in Huron County. Emphasis is placed on the roles played by each organization in working towards the long-term goal of economic sustainability.

SECTION 4: TOWARDS ECONOMIC RENEWAL presents a strategic overview of current initiatives and projects within the context of Sustainable Economic Renewal. Information is provided on Huron's strengths and weakness; existing projects, their objectives, partnerships involved and the resources

currently devoted to various economic renewal and labour market adjustment measures throughout Huron County.

The State of the Huron County Economy Report is produced by the Huron Business Development Corporation in collaboration with other key stakeholders, including the Avon Maitland District School Board, the Four County Labour Market Planning Board and the County of Huron. It relies on data and information from a variety of sources, including Statistics Canada, the Grey Bruce Huron Perth Community Profile, published by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Trends, Opportunities, Priorities Report published annually by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, and most recently, the Take Action for Sustainable Huron Report and Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint, both undertaken by the County of Huron.

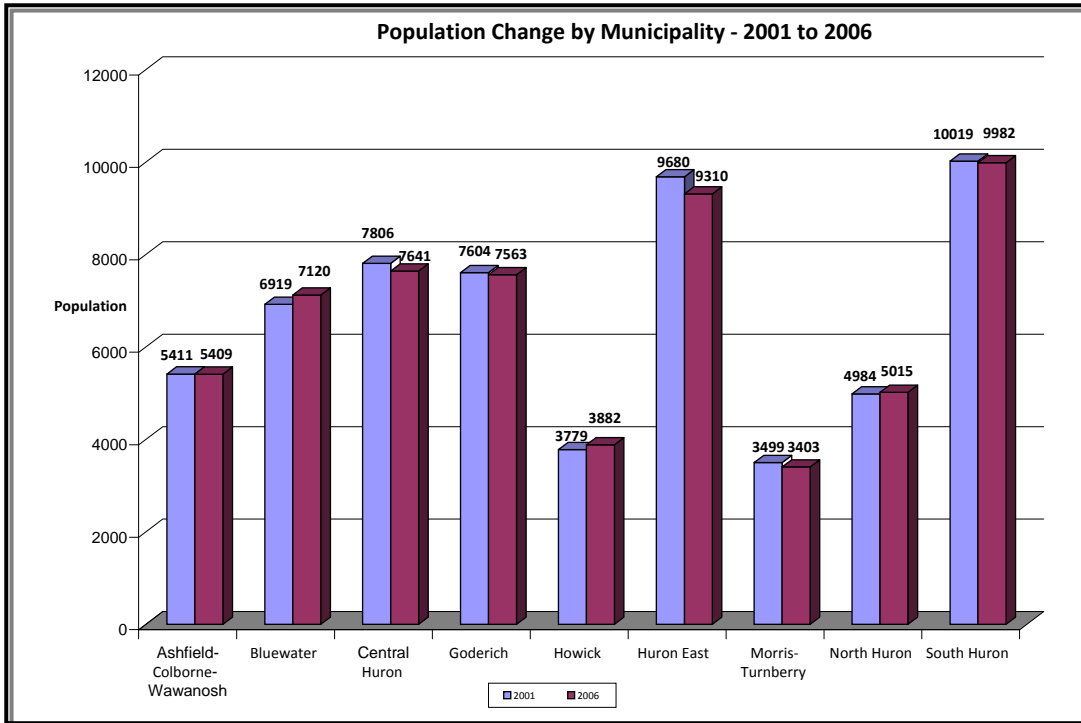
SECTION 1: A PROFILE OF HURON COUNTY

The County of Huron is located in southwestern Ontario north of the City of London and west of the Golden Horseshoe area (see map below). The County is approximately 100 kilometres long from north to south, 50 kilometres wide from east to west. With no urban centres over 8,000 in population, a population density of just 17.7 persons per square kilometer and approximately 60% of the population living on rural farm and non-farm properties, Huron is one of the most “rural” regions of the province. Due in part to its location along the Lake Huron shoreline, residents and visitors to Huron County know this region as “Ontario’s West Coast”.



I. The Huron County Population

Huron County displays a remarkable stability in population numbers. Over the past 30 years, Huron’s population of just fewer than 60,000 people has changed very little; from 2001 to 2006, the population declined slightly by 376 people, or less than 1%. During the same period, Ontario’s population grew by 6.6%.



But population growth and decline is not evenly spread throughout Huron County’s communities as displayed in the chart above. While many communities experienced a modest decline between 2006 and 2001, the municipalities of Bluewater, North Huron and Howick actually experienced modest population growth. Central Huron and Huron East were the communities most affected by population loss between 2001 and 2006, declining in population by 2.1 % and 3.8% respectively.

Despite the relative stability in overall numbers, the composition of Huron’s population continues to undergo significant changes – most notably in the age structure of the population. Huron’s population is proportionately older with a median age of 42.3 years, compared to a provincial median of 39 years. Only 63.5% of Huron County’s population is of working age (15-64 yrs), compared with a 68.3% for Ontario as a whole. Likewise, Huron County has a significantly higher proportion of seniors (17.9%) compared to the province (13.6%).

Much of the divergence in age patterns can be attributed to migration patterns to and from Huron County. In fact, net out-migration of youth (< 24 yrs) is a major factor in determining the age profile of the County. Between 2001 and 2006, 2,711 Huron County youth moved out of the area, while only 1,786 new youth moved in. This resulted in a net loss of 925 young people through out-migration.

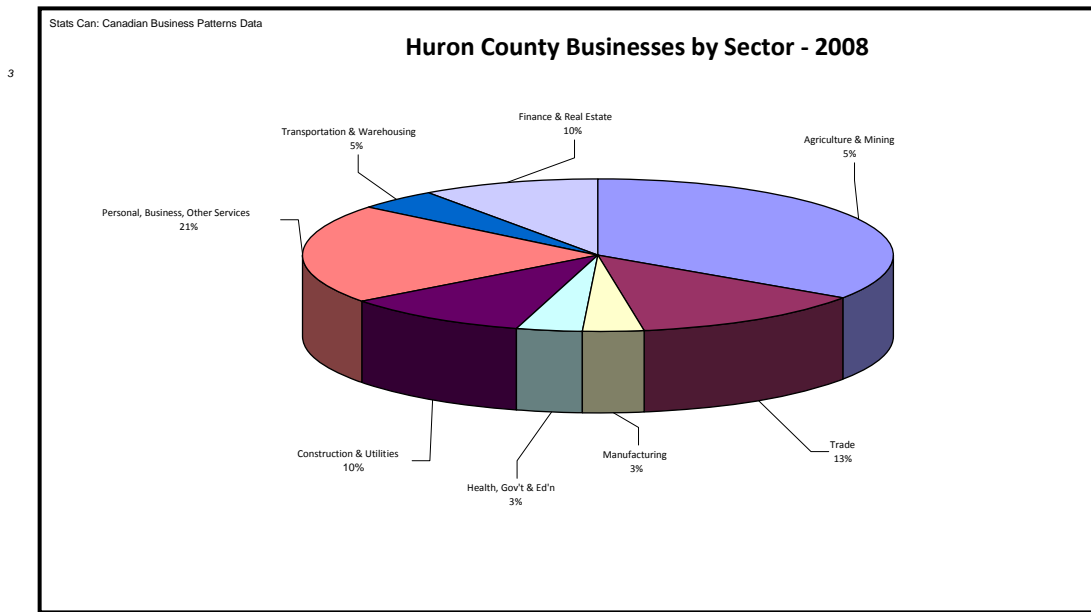
Immigration to Huron County by foreign-born residents is not a major driving force in the area's population profile. Only a small portion of recent immigrants to Canada choose Huron County as a place to settle. In fact, from 2001 to 2006, only 270 foreign-born immigrants moved to Huron County, representing less than ½% of the area's population. The vast majority of these newcomers (205) came from Europe. Consequently, when we look at the ethnic composition of Huron County's population, most of our population is of English/Scotch/Irish descent. The only other significant ethnic groups in terms of population size are the Dutch and German.

What do these population trends mean for sustainable economic renewal in Huron County?

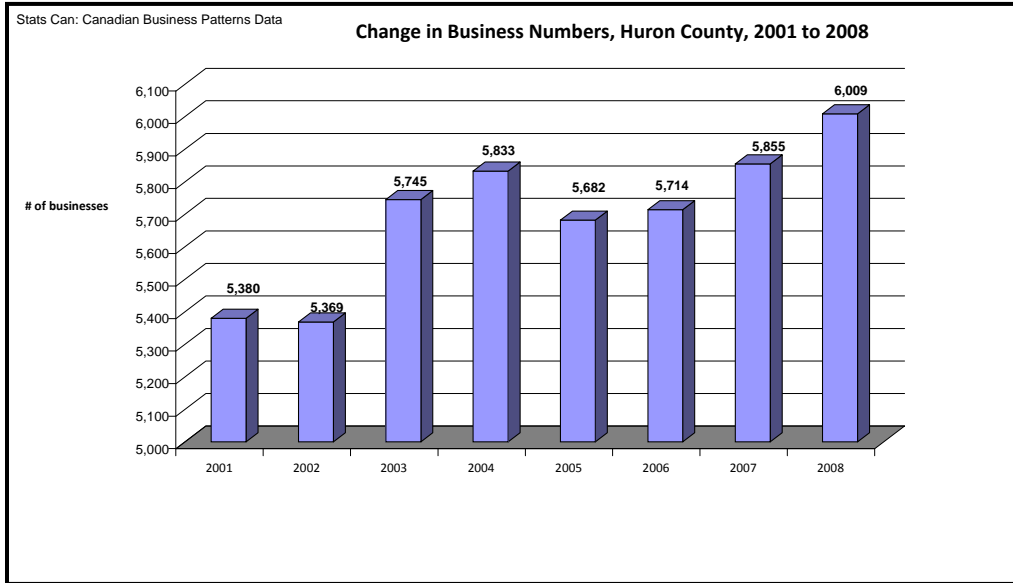
- While some communities in Huron will continue to grow, many will face the threat of consolidation and closure of those publicly-funded services that are supported on a per capita basis, such as schools and employment centres;
- Lack of population growth presents challenges for businesses that are trying to serve a local market - most businesses will need to expand their geographic market well beyond Huron County to be successful;
- An aging population will open up new market opportunities for businesses that serve an older clientele, typically healthcare, personal and financial services;
- On the other hand, the aging of existing farm and business operators, along with aging of the workforce suggests the need for succession planning in all facets of the economy and labour market, including continued support to new farmers and entrepreneurs;
- The chronic loss of young people presents a demographic problem that affects both the number of new business start-ups (fewer entrepreneurs) in the future as well as the supply of labour (fewer workers);
- These concerns are exacerbated by the noticeable lack of population renewal from international immigration;

II. The Huron County Economy

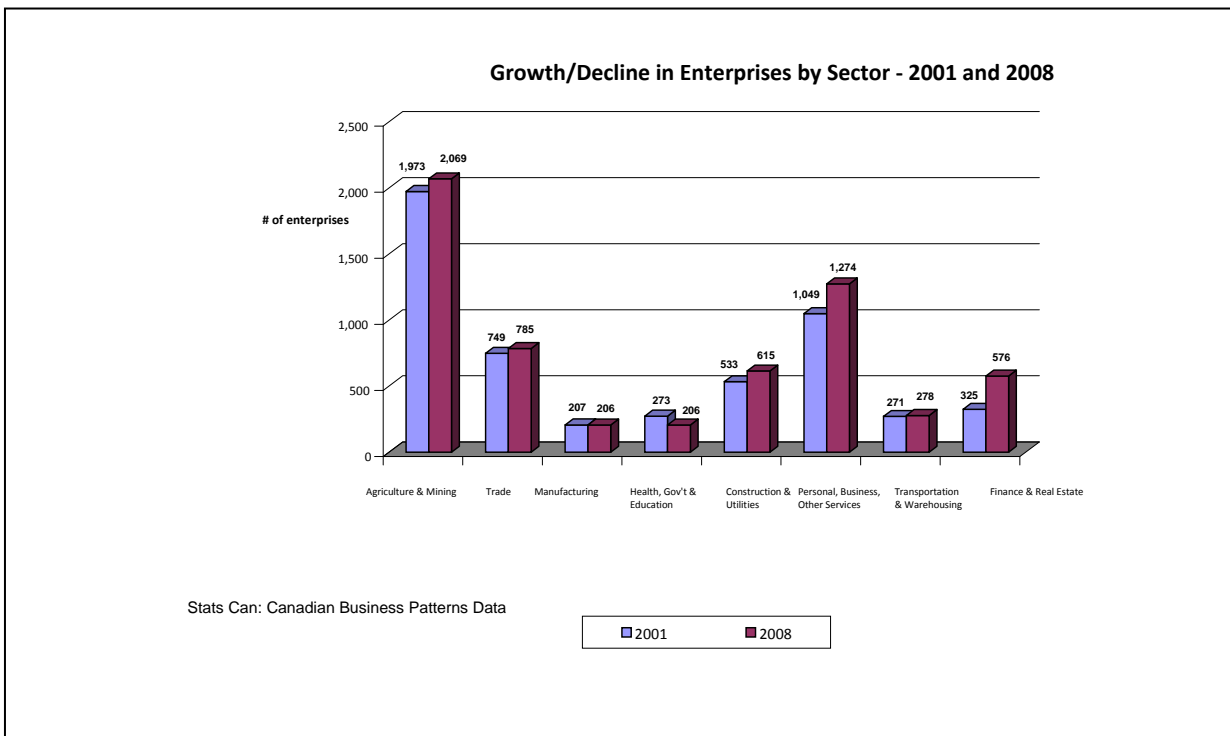
Huron County is home to approximately 6,000 farms and businesses. A review of the enterprise base shows that primary industry (i.e. farms) comprises 35% of all businesses, followed by personal, business and other services at 21% and retail and wholesale trade at 13%. Compared to other regions of Ontario, Huron’s economic profile stands out for its high proportion of farming enterprises, and relative lack of retail and service sector businesses.



Despite some year-to-year fluctuations, the number of business enterprises in Huron County has grown steadily during the past decade. From 2001 to 2008, the enterprise base grew by a net amount of 629 businesses (start-ups over closures), representing an annual growth rate of 1.7%. (See following chart)

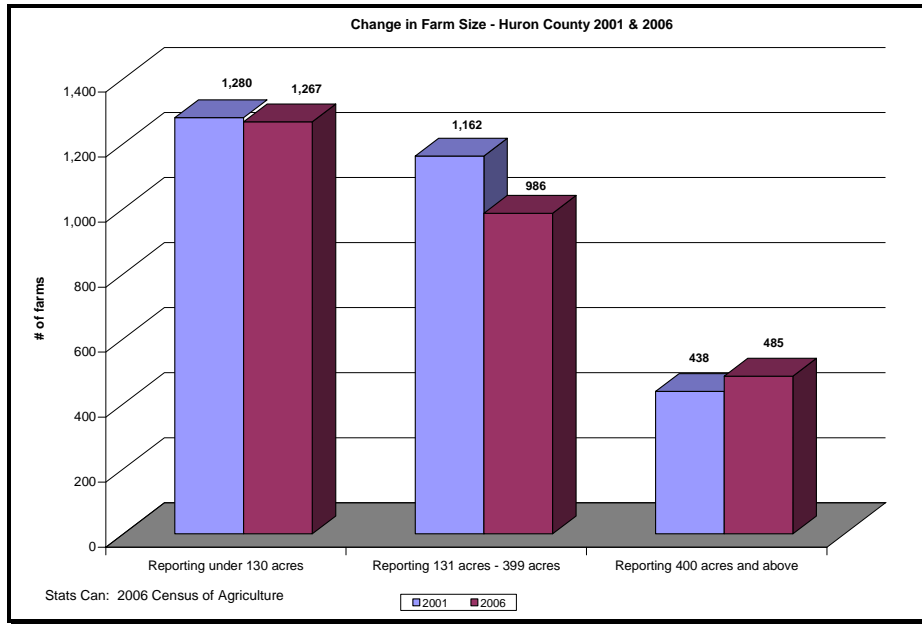


From 2001 to 2008, growth in the number of businesses was distributed across most sectors, with the exception of health, government and education services. Greatest absolute growth in business numbers occurred for finance, insurance & real estate (251); personal, business & other services (225) while greatest losses were seen in the health, government & education sectors (67).

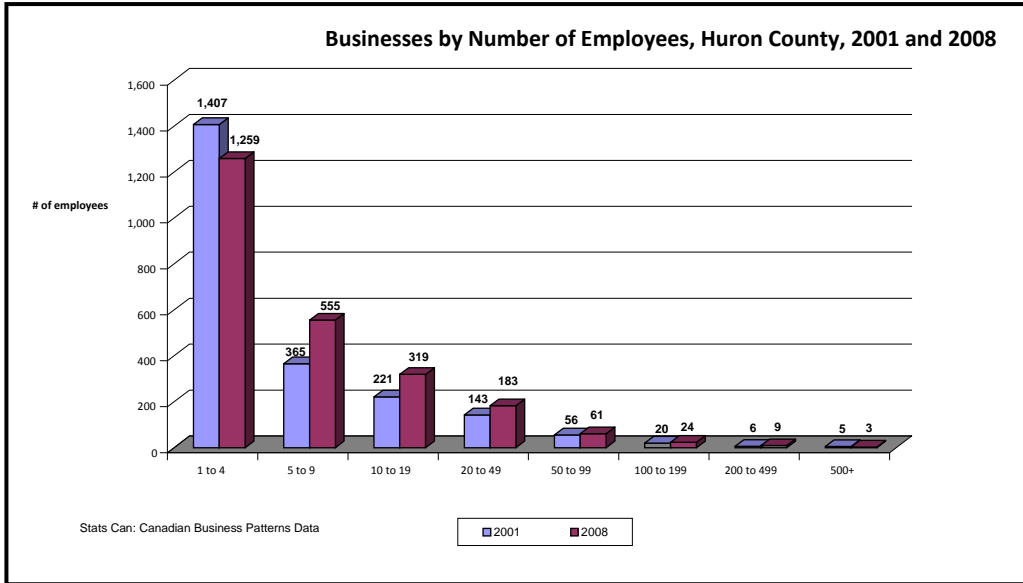


A more detailed account of changes in business numbers in the farming sector is provided by the Census of Agriculture. In Huron County, a revealing trend is apparent when looking at the change in farm numbers. Overall, the number of farms in Huron County declined by 5% between census periods - from 2,880 in 2001 to 2,738 in 2006. Like other regions across the country, this trend is the result of farm consolidation.

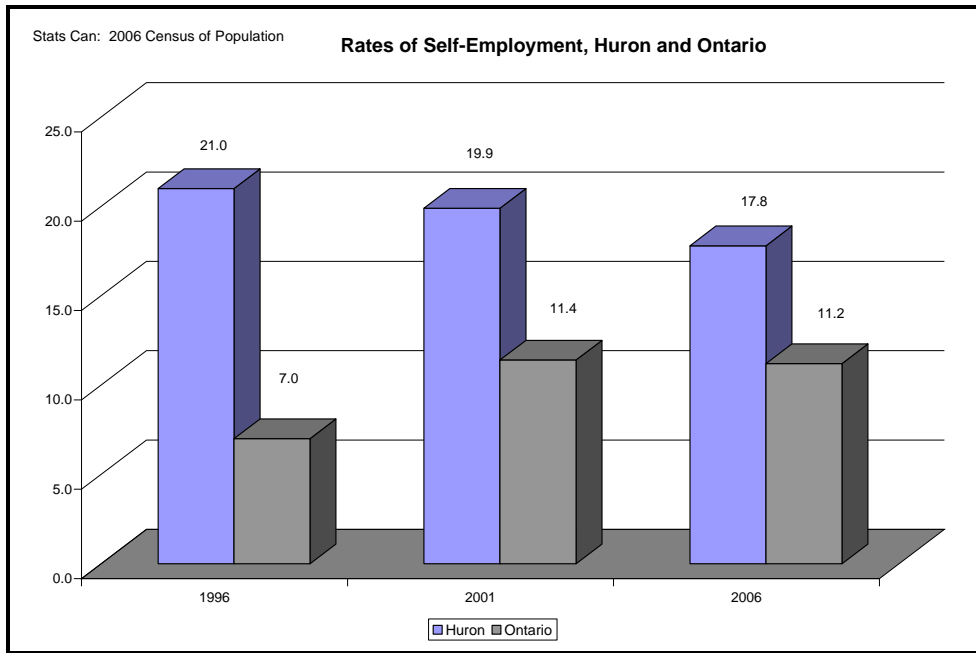
However, changes in farm size suggest that farm consolidation is affecting some farms more than others. While a substantial proportion of the agriculture sector in Huron is still dominated by smaller farms under 130 acres (47%), larger farms over 400 acres are becoming more prevalent. But, as outlined in the following chart, the greatest loss of farm numbers (176) has been in the mid-sized farms between 130 and 400 acres. This “disappearing middle” presumably represents those operations lacking economies of scale and/or sources of off-farm income to remain viable.



Finally, growth in the number of businesses by number of employees reveals some interesting trends as well. From 2001 to 2008, the most substantial growth was in the category of businesses with 5 to 50 employees. Those operations with fewer than 5 employees actually declined in number, while the number of larger companies with over 50 employees remained stable. In general, this trend is positive, reflecting a “maturing” or “graduation” of businesses as they increase their customer base, their revenues and their labour force.



This same trend is evident when examining changes to the rates of self-employment in Huron County. While Huron's population continues to be "entrepreneurial" to the extent that high proportions of the local labour force work for themselves (17.8%), the past decade has seen marked declines in the rate of self-employment (3.2% drop between 1996 and 2006). Once again, this trend is a reflection of proportionately fewer people going into business for themselves, combined with a greater number of workers employed in mid-sized businesses with more than 5 employees.

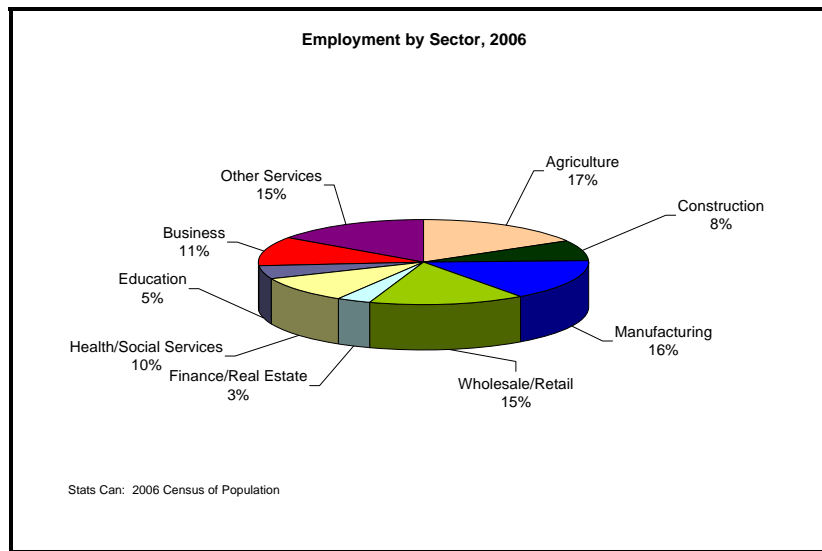


What do these economic trends mean for sustainable economic renewal in Huron County?

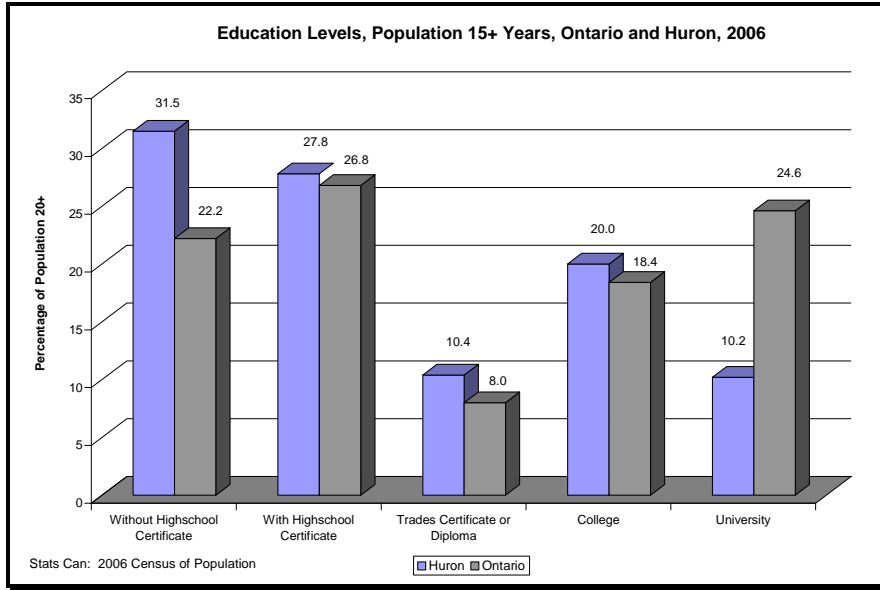
- ☑ Business opportunities continue to exist in Huron County, particularly those businesses that are serving agriculture, seniors (personal services, finance) and markets beyond Huron County (construction, manufacturing);
- ☑ If the sustainability of mid-sized farming operations is a goal of community economic development, then efforts to improve farm viability through on-farm diversification and/or off-farm income opportunities must be enhanced;
- ☑ Judging by the growth in the number of businesses with between 5-50 employees, more Huron County people are working for larger employers – this suggests that agencies serving the business community will need to focus greater attention on the challenges of expansion, including human resource strategies and workforce training.

III. The Huron County Labour Market

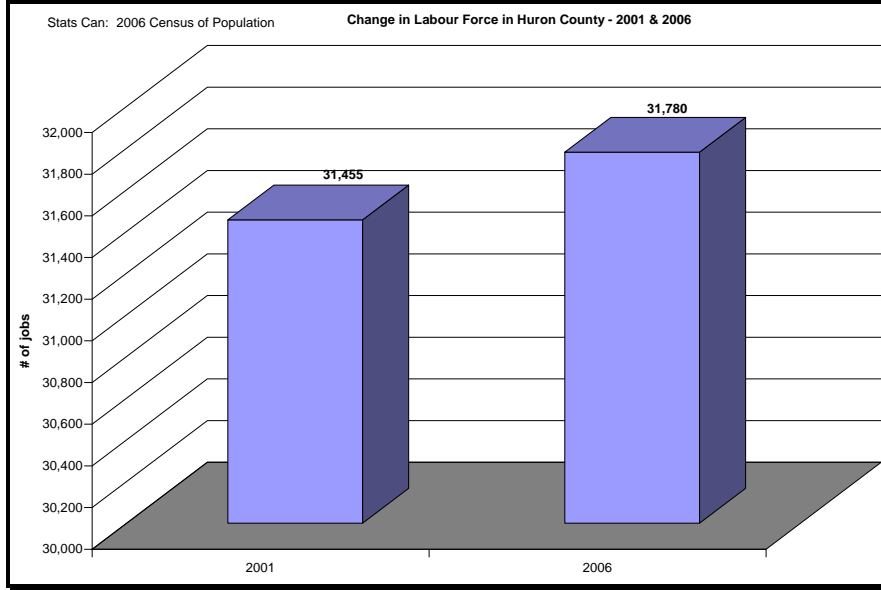
The employment profile for the Huron County labour force (i.e. what sectors people work in) shows some significant differences from the enterprise base (i.e. what sectors people operate businesses in). Currently, agriculture, manufacturing, and trade support roughly equal proportions of the workforce, but the major employer is the service sector (comprised of personal, business, health, education, and government). As with the business profile, Huron’s employment stands out for its high proportion of jobs in agriculture, and relative lack of retail trade and service sector jobs.



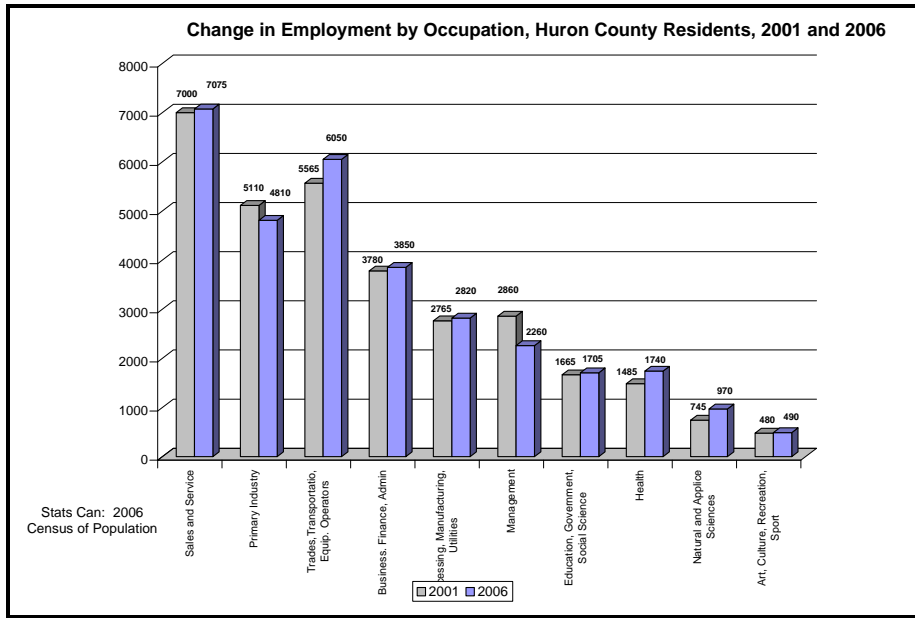
Huron County continues to exhibit a “blue-collar” workforce as shown in the following chart. Despite the fact that many of our residents upgraded their education between 2001 and 2006, Huron County still has high proportions of the population without a high school degree (31.5%). Likewise, Huron County has higher proportions of workers with trades certificates and college degrees when compared to the province, but a significant gap exists in the proportion of the workforce with a university degree (10.2% in Huron vs. 24.6% in Ontario).



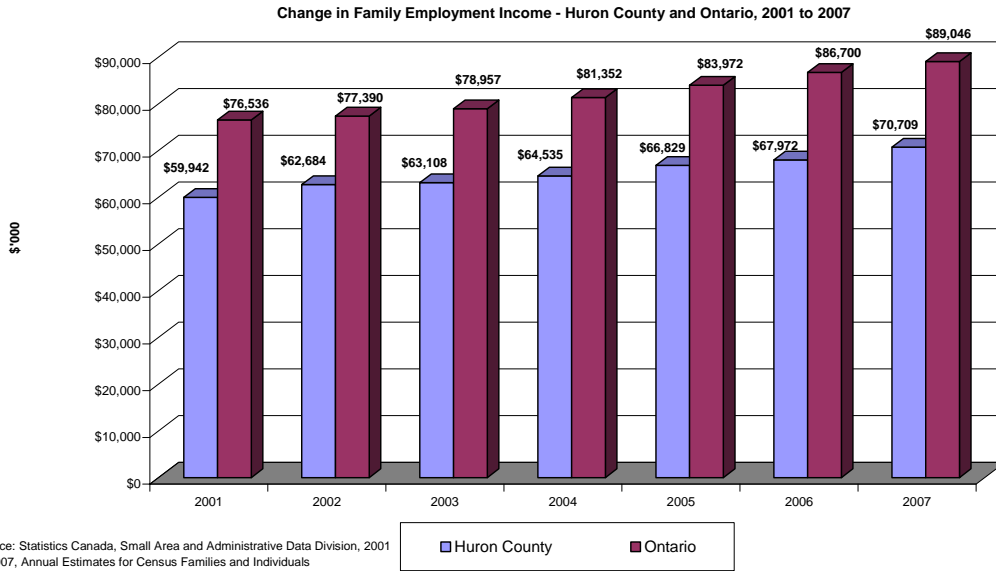
Similar to Huron’s overall population, recent growth in the labour force is noticeably stagnant. Between 2001 and 2006, Huron County’s labour force grew by a modest 1% and now stands at 31,780. During that same period, Ontario’s labour force grew by 6.2%.



While modest, growth in jobs has been very evenly distributed across occupations, with the exception of jobs in primary industry and management that decreased from 2001 to 2006. Again, this suggests a trend towards fewer farm operators and business owners, with more opportunities for employment in mid-size businesses.

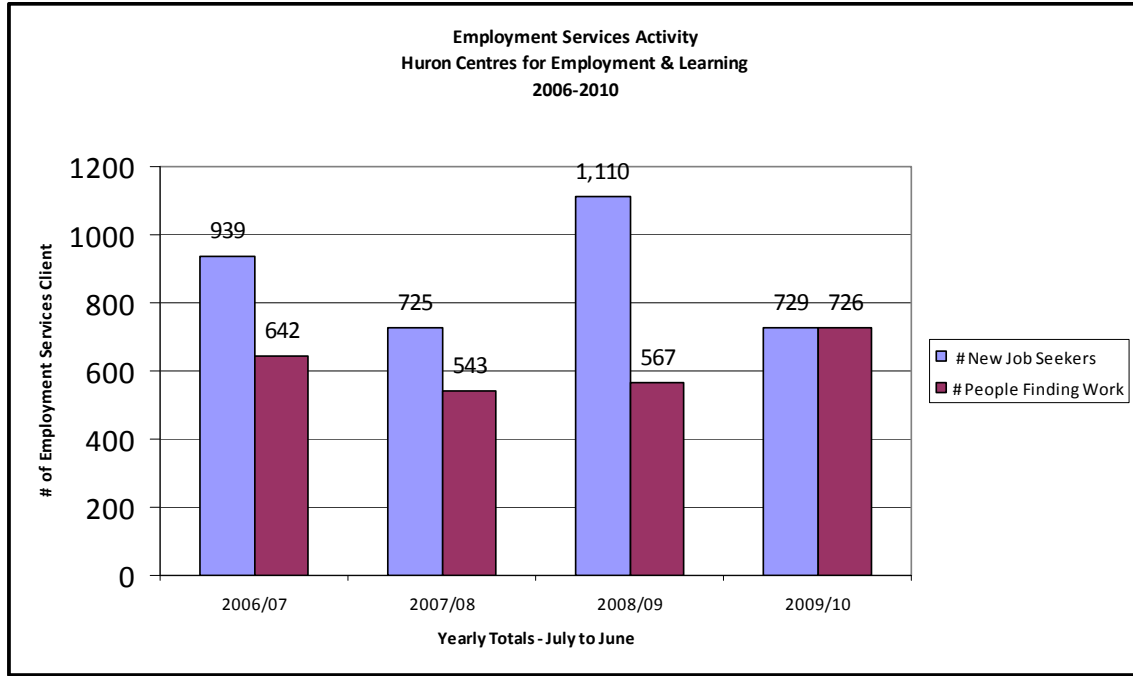


In terms of employment income for families, Huron's wage levels have always lagged behind the provincial average. While family incomes in Huron County grew by 18% from 2001 to 2007, a significant gap (\$18,337 per year) still exists between the Ontario and Huron County averages.



More recent employment data gives indications of the local effects of the downturn in the global economy. When compared year-over-year from July to June, data from the Centres for Employment & Learning confirms a weakening in the local job market during the 2008/2009 period. In 2006/07, a total of 642 people found work through services provided at the Centres. This represented approximately 68% of the new registrants looking for work during that time period. By 2008/09, the picture had become less promising for job seekers. New registrations at the Centres rose to 1,110 as a result of widespread lay-offs in the economy. While 567 people did find work during that period, that represented only 51% of the people looking for work at that time.

The latest figures from the Centres for Employment & Learning are more promising, suggesting a noticeable turn-around and recovery in the Huron County job market. Between July 2009 and June 2010, the number of new job seekers registering at the Centres declined by 381 or 34%. Likewise, the number of successful case closures due to clients finding work jumped from 567 in July 2009 to 726 in June 2010, representing a 28% increase in jobs.



What do these changes in labour force and employment mean for the Huron County economy?

- ☑ Clearly, Huron County's job market has rebounded from the recession of 2008/09 with substantial growth in job opportunities and people finding employment; however, several longer term workforce issues remain;
- ☑ With most new jobs requiring at least a post-secondary education, the high degree (59%) of Huron's workforce without a certificate or degree remains a critical issues affecting how our residents will make a living in the future;
- ☑ Likewise, many of the jobs lost during the recent recession affected an older workforce (55-65 years) – interventions are required to ensure continued employment for these individuals;
- ☑ While sales and service jobs continue to offer significant job opportunities in Huron, the greatest growth in job opportunities is occurring for specialty trades, transportation equipment operators and professional, scientific and technical service positions;
- ☑ On the other hand, job opportunities appear to be shrinking for agriculture, particularly for crop & animal production as a result of long-term market stress in those commodities;
- ☑ In the long-run, demographic trends in Huron County continue to point to a deepening labour shortage based on an aging workforce and a lack of new labour market entrants;
- ☑ Further efforts to enhance the supply of labour in Huron County will need to emphasize increased engagement of youth, educational and vocational upgrading of recently unemployed workers and the existing workforce, and enhanced recruitment efforts by employers, including tapping into the region's immigration potential.

SECTION 2: RECENT EVENTS IN THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY

In July 2009

- Opening celebrations were held at the new location of Joe Kerr Ltd. of Wingham as they moved into their new 11,500 square foot facility in Morris-Turnberry. 50 workers are employed at the site.
- A new contract for Wecast Industries with major European and Japanese turbocharger manufacturers had very little impact on the Wingham plant as the manufacturing is taking place at the Stratford location.
- Hay Communications Cooperative, along with Tuckersmith Communications Cooperative and Quadro Communications Cooperative announced the purchase of Mitchell-Seaforth Cable TV. No immediate changes to facilities and employment were anticipated.
- The Regional Equine & Agriculture Centre for Huron (REACH) partnered with Georgian College and HealthKick to host a Food Service Worker (FSW) program targeted to workers in the food & beverage industry.
- The region's unemployment rate jumped from 8.8% in April to 9% in May, which was nearly double the 5% rate from the previous May. There were 14,000 people in the Grey Bruce Huron Perth region without a job.

In August 2009

- Sparling's Propane of Blyth expanded by purchasing the operations of Caledon Propane in Bracebridge. Sparling's is now the second-largest propane company in Ontario.
- Bi-Ax unveiled a new product line called Evlon, a corn-based compostable, bio-degradable bio-plastic film that will be marketed to companies as packaging material. Currently, Evlon is being manufactured at the Tiverton plant, but as sales increase, there could be jobs added to the line in Wingham.

- Employees of Volvo Motor Graders saluted as the final machine came off the assembly line in Goderich, ending a tradition of 120 years of manufacturing through Dominion Road Machinery, Champion and finally Volvo.
- MTS Environmental Products announced that it is manufacturing its Bio-Desolve product line at their new plant in Exeter. The company currently has contracts with McDonald's Restaurants for its waste water treatment.
- With producers losing \$30 per hog and starting bankruptcy proceedings, a rally for pork farmers was held to highlight industry concerns, including country-of-origin labeling the U.S. as well as a reduction in Canadian pork exports due to the recession.
- The Goderich Flea & Farmers' Market had its best year ever as people are looking for local bargains and home-grown produce. Vendors experienced a 20% increase in sales activity over last year's numbers.
- The E.D. Smith Plant in Seaforth now employs more than 200 workers. After the company became a member of Bay Valley Foods, it gained the resources to make production improvements while improving worker safety.
- Andersen Corporation, owner of the Centralia-area window and door manufacturer Dashwood Industries announced the elimination of 20 jobs, reducing the plant's workforce from 118 to 98. The downsizing was in response to a downturn in the North American housing market.
- Construction ramped up for the Maple Tree Housing Corporation as they developed an affordable housing complex at 45 Nelson St. in Goderich.
- Bruce Power announced that it had withdrawn its applications to the Ontario Power Authority to build two new nuclear generating stations. This announcement came on the heels of a request to Bruce Power by the Independent Electricity Market Operator to shut down a reactor due to low energy demands in the Province.
- Visitor numbers at the Seaforth Tourist Kiosk saw a 30% year-over-year increase from 2008.

In September 2009

- The Seaforth Terminal of Broadgrain Commodities underwent a \$1 million expansion that will see a significant increase in storage capacity and the ability to work with local farmers during the harvest season.
- The Walton TransCan Weekend saw over 25,000 people pass through the gates, making it the single largest event held in Huron County in 2009.
- Goderich saw its best tourism season since 2006 with a 22% increase in visits to the Tourist Information Centre. Approximately 13,000 people took part in the annual Celtic Roots Festival, while the 18th annual Goderich Triathlon pulled in more than 100 people and an expanded West Coast Blues Festival attracted 800.
- The Federal Government announced a three-pronged plan to restore profitability to the failing pork industry. The plan includes long term loans to viable operations; a pork marketing fund targeted to international markets; and transition plans for producers exiting the sector.
- The Honourable John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities paid compliments to the staff of the Volvo Action Centre in Goderich. Since the plant closure in June 2009, over 42 percent of Volvo's former employees had transitioned into new careers, schooling or retraining.
- A \$1.3 million federal funding announcement was made for a new centre for Advanced Aircraft Manufacturing and Maintenance Training at Huron Park. The new training centre is expected to help 235 jobs over the next few years.
- A Grand Opening was held for the Regional Equine & Agriculture Centre of Huron (REACH) in Clinton. The mandate of the REACH is to educate and serve as a site for all equine-related occupations and events including horsemanship; barrel racing, western games, dressage demonstrations, etc.

In October 2009

- Plans were scaled back for the new Canadian Tire Store coming to Wingham. The Wingham store will now be known as a "small market" branch store that will carry key cornerstone items such as

automotive, hardware, home and sports equipment. Plans also include a Mark's Work Warehouse Store, Canadian Tire's clothing division.

- Meanwhile, the Wingham Area Business Retention & Expansion Initiative was moving ahead, with a team of trained volunteers undertaking surveys with local business owners on local economic conditions and opportunities.
- Bluewater Council was assured that plans for the anticipated Greenfield Ethanol Plant at Hensall will still go ahead, despite a potential change to switch grass as the fuel type used.
- As a sign of recovery in the automotive sector, Goderich Hyundai reported an increase in sales of 35% over the last year in new car sales alone.
- As a result of the Province's Green Energy Act, the Huron Manufacturing Association established a Renewable Energy Group to look at ways of creating positive economic spin-off potential for solar, wind, bio-energy, thermal, bio-waste and bio-fuel technologies.
- An investment in new energy efficient grain dryers as well as storage capacity means that Ondrejicka Elevators near Exeter can now process 75,000 bushels of grain per day while producing a better product for the market.

In November 2009

- Wescast Industries reported a 3rd quarter net loss of \$6.1 million, with sales of \$52.2 million compared to \$69.9 million during the same period last year.
- The Goderich Honda dealership was bought by Barry Dohms who also owns Goderich Hyundai. He and his business partner, Scott Fletcher expressed confidence that the auto market will continue to thrive in the Goderich area.
- Gateway Rural Health Research Institute received a \$35,000 donation from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to assist with a communications plan that will inform the public about recent developments in healthcare research.

- According to the Huron Manufacturing Association, approximately 2,000 jobs were lost in the region's manufacturing sector during the past year. These losses occurred as employers trimmed their workforce in order to survive the economic storm.
- The Huron Business Development Corporation, in conjunction with OMAFRA and the Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Committee announced the launch of the Huron-Perth Food Enterprise Opportunities Program that will see the building of more producer capacity for direct marketing of farm products; an increase in farmers' markets throughout the region and the development of a small scale incubator kitchen to help launch more food-related enterprises across the two counties.

In December 2009

- After 15 weeks in a strike situation, the province's 600 drive test employees agreed to resume work in January. The strike had a far-reaching impact on the trucking industry, as drivers have been unable to acquire accreditation.
- With a three-year grant approved by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Four County Labour Market Planning Board was able to construct a mobile trailer containing information on careers available in the Grey-Bruce-Huron-Perth region. The Skills Opportunities Showcase will be taken to community fairs, parades, schools, plant closures and other events to get the word out to the public about emerging jobs in the region's labour market.

In January 2010

- According to the Huron Tourism Association, approximately 500,000 visitors came to various Huron County destinations and events in 2009, representing a slight decrease from 2008, mostly attributable to fewer American visitors.
- The Bluewater Rest Home in Zurich received a \$1 million investment from the federal and provincial governments to move forward with plans to renovate vacated space into a new West Huron Community Centre that will offer a range of programs and services for the general public.
- Plans were announced to convert the Saltford Valley Hall into Samuel's Hotel, a contemporary boutique-style hotel that will be ready for business by the summer of 2010.

- Goderich-area restaurateur, Herb Marshall, unveiled plans to renovate the former CPR Station at the Goderich waterfront into a 200-seat restaurant.

In February 2010

- Public consultations were about to take place for Capital Power's Kingsbridge II project, that will could see another 150 wind turbines erected in Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh.
- A \$150,000 grant from the Rural Economic Development Program gave Exeter's downtown core a boost. Approved under the Province's Downtown Revitalization Program, funds will be used for the next 3 years for downtown revitalization activities including marketing, branding and the identification of new business opportunities.
- After months of speculation, it was announced that the former Darling's Grocery Store in Exeter will be the site for a new discount retailer Dollarama Store opening in the spring.
- A revised edition of Hensall's Community Improvement Plan was presented to Bluewater Council. The revised plan includes a vast array of projects that could be spearheaded on both private and public lands provided the municipality could provide grants or loans to jump start projects.
- Hensall-based Iceculture Inc. was awarded the Canadian Innovation Award at the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters "Roadmap to Recovery Summit" in Ottawa;
- For the second year in a row, Sparling's Propane of Blyth was named one of the Top 50 Best Small and Medium Employers in Canada.

In March 2010

- The Lake Huron Learning Collaborative received a four-year, \$500,000 commitment from Ontario Power Generation to provide post-secondary opportunities at a new learning centre in Kincardine. It was reported that since 2004, over 160 earned credits have been awarded to students through the LHLC.
- Andersen Corporation announced an agreement with Bruce Agra to purchase the Dashwood Industries building located in South Huron. The 330,000 square foot complex will accommodate

Bruce Agra's subsidiary Canadian Bio-Cube Ltd. The south portion of the complex will continue to serve the needs of Andersen Corporation's Dashwood Industries Ltd. while the north portion will become a central packaging and marketing centre for locally grown value added agricultural products such as dehydrated alfalfa pellets.

In April 2010

- Parrish & Heimbecker announced plans to build a new state-of-the-art dry edible bean processing plant in Hensall. The multi-million dollar facility will exceed typical food quality standards, offering traceability from "farm-to-plate".
- A community forum in Wingham highlighted the many challenges faced by small local abattoirs, some of whom are considering closing their businesses rather than attempting to keep up with Provincially-mandated regulations.
- Sifto Salt Mine in Goderich recalled laid-off employees in order to ramp-up for the new shipping season. In addition, Sifto announced it will be completing its \$70 million investment at the Goderich location, which now employs about 400 workers.

In May 2010

- With help from a \$46,650 federal loan, Exi-Plast Custom Molding of Huron Park purchased a 2nd robotic trim cell which will enable the company to pass cost savings on to customers. Owner Frank Zawalsky stated that Exi-Plast continues to anticipate a major expansion from its present 14,000 square feet to 30,000 by 2013.
- The Emergency Services Training Centre in Blyth was the recipient of a \$750,000 federal grant to construct a new technology centre, with up-to-date classroom facilities and equipment.
- Local pharmacies throughout Huron County launched a fight against the Province's proposed bill to eliminate professional allowances given to pharmacists for dispensing generic drugs. They maintain the proposed legislation will drive up costs for products and services and result in shorter business hours, staff cuts, and in some cases, pharmacy closures.

- A proposed 37.5 mega-watt wind project is being discussed in the Zurich area. The Zurich Wind Power Project is slated to take place on land situated mostly between Dashwood Road and Centennial Road. Next steps include an environmental assessment and archaeological study. The project is being put together by Acconica, a Spanish company with projects in more than 30 countries.
- The region's maple syrup industry went from a banner year in 2009 to a poor year in 2010 with ½ to 2/3 of last year's production. Poor yields were due largely to warm weather that swept through the province in March, adversely affecting the production of sap.
- Wescast Industries of Wingham reported its 2nd consecutive profitable quarter, due to a substantial sales increase from much better than anticipated conditions in the automotive sector.

In June 2010

- Exeter-based Syfilco Ltd. saw an increase in sales of their industrial knitting products as a result of demand arising from a massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Syfilco's products are used to construct oil booms that absorb oil from the water.
- With decreased revenues from investment, the Goderich Port Management Corporation has kept the proposed harbour expansion project in a "bit of a holding pattern". To date, a business plan and environmental assessment have been undertaken for the project.
- McDonald Lumber is constructing a 110 kilowatt solar panel on its new storage facility. The Brussels project joins other solar energy projects in Exeter and Wroxeter that have received the go-ahead from the Province's Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) program;

SECTION 3: A WHO'S WHO OF ECONOMIC RENEWAL IN HURON COUNTY

Huron County is fortunate to possess a variety of local groups, organizations and agencies that share in the goal of sustainable economic renewal. Historically, these stakeholders have exhibited exceptional ability to collaborate and innovate by marshalling an area of resources. In some cases, they provide direct funding support to an initiative. And in many cases, partners provide important in-kind support through specific expertise and knowledge. A listing of these partners is provided along with some examples of the nature of each partnership.

I. Above-the-Falls Challenge Course Inc.

Located on land leased from the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority at the Falls Reserve near Benmiller, the Above the Falls Challenge Course is an outdoor adventure and education facility complete with a full series of aerial challenge elements. By combining a unique business venture – an outdoor challenge course, with a social enterprise model, the AFCC will stimulate the local economy, create new jobs, give area students an experiential education adventure and will address the social needs of the community by building social capital. With staff training held Spring 2010 and major construction planned for the Summer, the AFCC will be fully operational by the start of the 2010 school year.

II. District School Boards – Avon Maitland and Huron Perth Catholic

Local school boards share many of the same goals of sustainable economic renewal, particularly in the areas of youth, adult education and employment skills. As a result, they are active partners on several joint projects, including the Technology Skills Summer Camps, Girls Unlimited Non-traditional Careers Camp and the Employer School Development Fund. In addition, the Avon Maitland District School Board operates five Centres for Employment & Learning in Seaforth, Clinton, Goderich, Exeter and Wingham. These Centres are key access points for employment programs such as *Second Career* and *Targeted Initiative for Older Workers*.

III. elearnnetwork

elearnnetwork provides small, rural communities like Huron County with increased access to post-secondary training. Fully funded by the Government of Ontario, the elearnnetwork operates from a series of locations throughout Ontario, including a site in Exeter partnered with the Centre for

Employment & Learning. Over 7,500 courses are available on-line from 19 colleges and 15 universities with staff and equipment provided on-site to assist the learner. This allows students to overcome the distance barrier by having courses available closer to home. The Exeter site opened in 2008 and is one of the networks fastest growing sites in terms of new enrolments.

IV. Foundation for Education

The Foundation for Education has a proud, fifteen-year history of supporting enrichment and enhancement activities for students in Huron and Perth schools. Its mission is to develop, support, and encourage the integration of the rich and unique cultural, corporate, industrial, and agricultural resources of Huron and Perth counties into the school system and initiate new educational enrichment programs to benefit students and citizens. Through a variety of fund raising efforts, it is able to offer programs to schools and support for individual school initiatives. Over the years, the Foundation has spearheaded or funded numerous youth initiatives, including the Girls Unlimited Skilled Trades Workshops, the Technology Skills Summer Camps and the Service Excellence Certificate Program.

V. Four County Labour Market Planning Board

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board (formerly Bruce Grey Huron Perth Training Board) is a community-based non-profit corporation with a mandate to ensure improvements in the local labour market by acting as a link between employers, the community and the government. In that capacity, the Board has been an active player in local renewal initiatives, including co-sponsoring the Huron Perth Community Skills Map, the Lake Huron Learning Collaborative, the development of Newcomer Attraction & Retention programs and most recently, the Skills Opportunities Showcase.

VI. Gateway Rural Health Research Institute

Launched by community partners in 2008, the Gateway Rural Health Research Institute, located in Seaforth, is the first community-based health research facility of its kind in Canada. Modelled after a similar institute in rural Kentucky, Gateway's mandate is to organize and co-ordinate research and outreach activities that supports investigation into all aspects healthcare for a rural population. Thus far, Gateway has attracted core funding from the McCall MacBain Foundation and the County of Huron and is now set to develop healthcare research as an economic driver for regional economy.

VII. Heritage & Culture Partnership

In 2000, through the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the 1st Heritage & Cultural Partnership in Huron County was launched. Since then, the organization has evolved from a committee of the Huron Tourism Association to become its own legal entity with a mandate to promote the arts, heritage and cultural assets of Huron County. Currently, the HCP is taking the lead on implementing a Huron County Cultural Plan that ensures the existence of resources and support for this emerging “creative” sector of the economy.

VIII. Huron Business Development Corporation

The Huron Business Development Corporation is a federally supported not-for-profit Community Futures Development Corporation, governed by volunteers in partnership with the Federal Development Agency for Southern Ontario. Launched in 1993, the HBDC is one of over 250 CFDC’s located throughout rural Canada. Like all CFDC’s, HBDC’s mandate is to help strengthen & diversify the local economy through community strategic planning & economic development; provision of business counseling services; and investment in small business. In the past 17 years, the Huron Business Development Corporation has worked with a total of 205 individual partner organizations on 210 distinct community development projects. As a result of these efforts, the HBDC and its partners have been the recipients of 25 national, provincial and regional awards in the field of economic development.

IX. Huron Business Leaders Network

(Bayfield, Blyth, Brussels, Exeter, Seaforth, Goderich)

Local business organizations are instrumental in developing project ideas and contributing resources to economic renewal. In general, these organizations are small, volunteer driven, with limited financial resources. As a result, business organizations have often contributed valuable volunteer and staff time to co-ordinate initiatives. Currently, Chambers of Commerce and B.I.A.’s throughout Huron are actively engaged in local Business Retention & Expansion and Downtown Revitalization exercises underway in their respective communities. In addition, they have also formed their own Huron Business Leaders Network to share information and coordinate efforts.

X. Huron County Economic Development Services

The County's Department of Planning and Development has been a strong proponent of community economic development for over 20 years. Strategic planning, information and research, and the contribution of staff and financial resources have all been beneficial in the past. Examples include staff assistance in operating the Huron Tourism Association; Huron Manufacturing Association, operation of the provincially-funded Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre and related collaborative efforts such as the Summer Company Program. The County of Huron has just completed a 3-year economic renewal initiative called "Huron Economic Development Matters". As part of this initiative, a new Economic Development Services division was created in 2007 with a full-time Economic Development Officer. As a consequence, aggressive "Invest-in-Huron" promotions have been implemented.

XI. Huron County Federation of Agriculture

The Huron County Federation of Agriculture (HCFA) works in an advocacy role on behalf of its 2,000 farm family members in the County. Along with their Commodity Board partners in Huron, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the HCFA strives for a profitable and sustainable future for farm families. The Federation is an active player representing farm interests among many economic development stakeholder groups, including the Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Committee and the Warden's Economic Development Task Force.

XII. Huron County Local Immigration Partnership Council

Launched in June 2010, the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership Council is a collaborative of local agencies led by the County of Huron and funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada. The Council has a mandate to ensure that local services exist to serve the needs of newcomers transitioning to a new life in Huron County. As with all Local Immigration Partnership Councils throughout Ontario, the objectives are to improve access to, and coordination of, effective services that facilitate newcomer settlement and integration; improve access to labour market opportunities for newcomers; strengthen local and regional awareness and capacity to integrate newcomers; and establish or enhance partnerships and participation of multiple stakeholders in planning and coordinating the delivery of integration services.

XIII. Huron County Youth Council

Following a series of youth retreats in 2008/2009 during which students representing all five high schools in Huron County were given instruction in self-discovery and community leadership, an invitation was extended for the participants to join a formal Youth Council. With a full membership of two dozen, and including youth who have finished school, the Huron County Youth Council (HCYC) now meets regularly with its stated mission being “to bring the issues of youth living in the County of Huron to County Council, to allow our thoughts and opinions to be heard, and to develop and maintain positive liaisons with individuals and organizations dealing with youth related issues”.

XIV. Huron Manufacturing Association

In 1999, the community and industry leaders initiated the development of a manufacturing sector strategy for manufacturers and partnering communities in Huron County. This project led to the development of a 15-point action plan for expanding growth in the County’s industrial base and the incorporation of the Huron Manufacturing Association as a not-for-profit organization. In the first 5-year plan of implementation, the HMA launched an award-winning “Growing the Manufacturing Labour Pool” initiative. In 2006, the original strategic plan was updated with the support of the Community Investment Support Program. Currently, the HMA is involved in numerous economic renewal initiatives such as a Renewable Energy Working Group and a Workforce Development & Training Strategy.

XV. Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Network

The F-T-T Network is an adhoc group of organizations committed to promoting the region’s value-added agriculture sector and is made up of representatives from the Huron Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, the Huron County Health Unit, Huron Tourism Association and sector organizations such as the Ontario Pork Producers Association and Ontario Farmers Markets Association. The Farm-to-Table Network has been able to obtain funding and manage funding contracts for initiatives undertaken in the name of sustainable economic renewal. These include several projects to date, including Bridges to Agriculture, the Huron Harvest Trail, the Huron Good Food Box Program, the Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Map, and a series of Growing Your Opportunities workshops for food producers across the region. Currently, the Farm-to-Table Network is leading a Growing Food Enterprise Opportunities Project with financial support from OMAFRA’s Ontario Market Investment Fund.

XVI. Huron Tourism Association

The Huron Tourism Association arose out of industry-driven discussions in the early 1990's, culminating with the incorporation of the Association in 1993. The Association has an active membership of over 180 tourism operators with a mandate to develop and target cost effective and results oriented tourism strategies within Huron County. Over the years, the HTA has spear-headed many tourism development initiatives, including Shakespeare-to-the-Shoreline, an award-winning regional marketing initiative, and most recently, the award-winning Tastes of Huron Festival.

XVII. Lake Huron Learning Collaborative

In 2005, a citizens' group from Goderich came together to promote more opportunities for post-secondary learning for Huron County residents. That year, a consultant was contracted to work with the group and develop a corporate structure, policies and procedures, and a series of new learning partnerships. As a result, the Lake Huron Learning Collaborative was formally incorporated in early 2006 with two first-year undergraduate courses offered to Huron County residents through the University of Western Ontario. Since inception, over 160 earned credits have been awarded to students through the LHLC. In 2010, the Lake Huron Learning Collaborative received a major boost with a four-year, \$500,000 commitment from Ontario Power Generation to provide post-secondary opportunities at a new learning centre in Kincardine.

XVIII. Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

As the Province's flagship Ministry for rural economic development, OMAFRA has played a strong role in stimulating economic development activity throughout Huron County since assuming the Rural Affairs portfolio in 1991. Through the years, access to rural development funding such as Grow Ontario, the Rural Jobs Strategy and the Rural Economic Development Program have benefited many Huron County initiatives. Staff from OMAFRA continue to provide economic development stakeholders with a wide range of technical expertise in areas such as community economic analysis, trade area assessment and leadership development. Currently, OMAFRA staff are active in supporting local downtown revitalization and B, R & E initiatives throughout Huron County.

XIX. Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities

MTCU has been a major financial contributor of dollars for labour market adjustment activities in this region over the years. This includes sponsorship agreements to operate 5 Centres for Employment & Learning located throughout Huron County. Currently, MTCU is funding *Second Career*, a *Targeted Initiative for Older Workers*, and a *Regional Green Jobs Strategy* Labour Market Partnership that involves a collaborative partnership of 5 Community Futures organizations across Midwestern Ontario.

XX. Municipal Economic Development Committees

(Bluewater, Huron East, Goderich, North Huron, South Huron)

Several communities throughout Huron County have established municipal committees mandated by their respective councils to undertake community economic development. These committees have worked actively with local volunteers to establish local plans for economic development as part of the Municipal Economic Development Readiness Initiative. Municipal economic development committees are similar to local business organizations in that they provide a focal point for community-driven activities supported by modest staff and financial resources. These groups offer a setting for germinating new project ideas and providing management and co-ordination services on behalf of their communities.

XXI. Network Huron

Network Huron is an information-sharing partnership of employment, self employment and training organizations from across Huron County that focuses on supporting and encouraging employability in the region. Objectives are to involve a wide variety of organizations, agencies and services interested in employment, self employment and training; to promote collaboration and coordinated efforts; to organize information sharing, issue discussion, and training opportunities for members; and to discuss areas of need identified by members. The Network currently has 32 members.

XXII. Regional Equine & Agricultural Centre for Huron (REACH)

REACH Huron, located in Clinton, is a state of the art training and event centre for the equine and agricultural industries. Launched in 2009, REACH is the culmination of several years of effort undertaken by the Municipality of Central Huron and other key stakeholders in the equine industry including the Ontario Harness Racing Association and the Ridgetown Campus of the University of Guelph. Now governed by its own board of directors, REACH is developing new training programs, partnerships and

events that provide both a service to the agricultural industry while generating new revenues and jobs in the local community. It is an excellent example of how communities can build upon local assets (e.g. agriculture) to further develop the local economy.

XXIII. Warden's Task Force on Economic Development

In January 2006, Huron County Warden Rob Morley established the first Warden's Task Force on Economic Development comprised of the Mayors and chief staff from each of Huron's municipalities. In subsequent years, representatives from agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and cultural sectors have been added to the membership. The mandate of the Task Force is to examine the state of local economic development efforts, determine what programs and services are working well, and identify gaps in programs and services to be addressed. The Task Force was instrumental in helping oversee the provincially-funded, award-winning Huron Economic Development Matters Initiative and is currently the lead partner involved in the County of Huron's Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint.

SECTION 4: TOWARDS ECONOMIC RENEWAL IN 2010

I. TAKING STOCK OF HURON COUNTY'S ASSETS

The following section frames and synthesizes residents' perceptions of economic strengths gathered through a variety of community input including the Four County Labour Market Planning Board *TOP Consultations*; the *Take Action for Sustainable Huron* Consultations; and the Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint *Growth for Our Future* Report. This analysis takes an explicitly *asset-based* approach to community economic development. By first identifying our strengths and abilities, we can then consider these attributes as "building blocks" for economic renewal. Huron County's assets are identified under 3 major themes:

- ☑ **Human and Social Capital** – the characteristics of our residents; entrepreneurs; workforce and community groups that enable the local economy to adapt to change and perform to its full potential;
- ☑ **Natural Capital** – those gifts of the earth, including climate, land and water, forests and streams that lend both aesthetic value and productive capability to local economic pursuits;
- ☑ **Built Capital** – the physical, man-made infrastructure such as transportation networks, communications systems and building stock that are necessities for doing business in the modern world.

I. HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

- Huron County farmers and other entrepreneurs are among the brightest, best and most creative when it comes to the knowledge and skill required to be successful;
- Huron County's rural and agricultural background has helped to create a workforce noted for its strong work ethic and flexibility;
- Society's increased interest in learning about where their food comes from can translate into more opportunity for suppliers of fresh, local produce and food products;
- Likewise, the rise in "culinary tourism" positions Huron County well for the development of new events and attractions reflecting this agricultural heritage;

- A tradition of co-operative development in the farm sector (e.g. Hensall Co-op) and the telecommunications sector (Hay, Tuckersmith, Hurontel) bodes well for creation of other economic opportunities such as renewable energy and food processing;
- Huron County's cultural and creative community has blossomed in recent years, with many successful ventures now competing on a world-stage;
- A long-standing "legacy of attachment" among Huron residents and former residents alike can be built upon – history...family...heritage are becoming economic commodities in and of themselves – also important as a key to potential "repatriation" of local youth;
- Quality of life factors (recreation; culture, affordability, schools, healthcare) have never been of greater importance when individuals are seeking new communities to invest in – Huron County has distinct competitive advantages given many lifestyle attributes it possesses;
- Business sectors throughout the Huron economy have a remarkable willingness to collaborate and co-operate – sector organizations like the Manufacturing Association; Tourism Association; Heritage & Culture Partnership and Huron Business Leaders Network display an uncanny ability for local businesses to network successfully;
- A number of recent developments in Huron County, including the REACH in Clinton and Gateway Rural Health Research Institute in Seaforth have demonstrated a profound capacity for Huron County communities to embrace change and make their own economic development opportunities happen;

II. NATURAL CAPITAL

- Huron County possesses some of the most productive farmland in Canada. In fact 90% of soils in Huron County are classified as Class 1,2 & 3;
- The potential for production of feed stocks (e.g. manure, switch grass, etc.), combined with a geographic location along Lake Huron, places Huron County in the midst of opportunities for renewal energy (wind, solar, bio-mass) as an economic driver;
- An apparent trend towards warmer winters is creating new opportunities in agriculture, including the production of commercial wine grapes;
- Miles of Lake Huron shoreline (among other things) has resulted in a vibrant tourism industry in Huron County;
- Other natural assets exist, such as rivers (Maitland, Bayfield) swamps (Saratoga; Hay) county forests and trails that hold potential for eco-tourism;
- The very "ruralness" of the Huron County environment with wide open spaces and natural features offers an attribute than many potential residents are looking for;

III. BUILT CAPITAL

- Huron County has an extensive range of transportation assets including roads, railways, airports and harbours that can get our product out to broader global markets;
- Many of these same features are used to attract business (e.g. airport and aircraft refinishers) as well as tourists to the area;
- High speed internet coverage is now universal across Huron County for all intents and purposes – removal of distance as a barrier allows for growth in home-based and other businesses to flourish in the information economy;
- A wide range of housing types can be found in each of Huron County’s communities; much of it significantly more affordable than counterparts in other areas of the province;
- Likewise, a wide range of visitor accommodations (hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts) support a vital tourism industry;
- Many Huron County communities have been able to retain their heritage buildings – both commercial streetscapes and residential areas – these assets have become economic drivers as entrepreneurs rely more and more heavily on these factors when seeking a community to locate in ;

II. KEY THEMES OF HURON COUNTY’S ECONOMIC RENEWAL

The following section highlights current strategies and initiatives that relate to the overall goal of Sustainable Economic Renewal in Huron County. Information is arranged by theme under six key issues of concern for the long-term sustainability of the Huron County economy, its entrepreneurs, workers and communities. These themes address challenges and opportunities that are presented to the local economy, and provide a basis for examining what is being done within Huron County to exploit these strengths, and mitigate these threats.

I. Population Renewal

Renewal should not be equated solely with “growth”. However, Huron County’s stable (some would say stagnant) population growth is cause for concern. Funding for many of our core public services such as schools is now being done on a per capita basis. For this reason, a lack of population growth will inevitably result in a loss of publicly-funded services if current trends continue. And the success of our economy will always rely on people – entrepreneurs, students, workers and community leaders. If we are concerned

about sustainable population growth as part of a sustainable economy, then we must address population renewal through youth retention and the attraction of newcomers to Huron County.

II. Agricultural Renewal

Agriculture has long been the mainstay of the Huron County economy, but no one disputes that much of the industry is in dire straits. A range of factors is threatening the viability of local farms, including a high Canadian dollar; a concentration of processors; and an escalation of both input prices and food safety requirements. Despite operating in the agricultural heartland of Canada, Huron County's economic development agencies have very limited influence over what is now a very global industry. That being said, if agriculture is to continue its role as the leading driver of the local sustainable economy, then we must address agricultural renewal initiatives through the identification of new markets for farm products; the diversification of farm products, and the creation of new business models to ensure more of the food dollar is captured by farmers along the supply chain.

III. Enterprise Renewal

By any measureable standard, the Huron County population continues to be entrepreneurial. But as older business owners retire there are fewer individuals in the prime age group of 25-44 to take over the reins. If we are to maintain interest in launching and operating businesses in Huron County, then we must continue to address enterprise renewal through succession planning; start-up support; business management training, enhanced opportunities for entrepreneurial networking and mentoring and continued access to venture capital for small businesses.

IV. Workforce Renewal

According to the Four County Labour Market Planning Board, we can be sure of at least two things: While new jobs are being created, others are being lost, and there is often a skills gap for workers transitioning from one source of employment to another; secondly, people with post-secondary education are finding jobs; while those without are not. Close to 60% of Huron County's labour force is without a diploma or degree. In fact, approximately 4,700 Huron County residents do not possess a high school diploma. The future appears challenging at best for these workers. If we are concerned about sustainable employment as part of a sustainable economy, then we must address workforce renewal through enhanced adult education and job training that will maintain both the employability and competitiveness of the Huron County labour force.

V. Infrastructure Renewal

Literally speaking, the Huron County economy is built upon a foundation of hard infrastructure – roads, harbours, trails, telecommunications networks, municipal services and public buildings. These are the types of assets that are needed to support local businesses and farms as they bring in their inputs, attract their visitors, or transport their goods & services to market. Huron County residents and businesses consistently cite the quality of local infrastructure as an advantage to doing business. But there is always room for improvement and always an opportunity to do more with what we have. If we are concerned then about ensuring appropriate infrastructure is in place to support the economy, then we must continue to address infrastructure renewal through maintenance of existing assets, adaptation of current facilities to new economic uses, and in some cases, investment in new public services and facilities.

VI. Community Renewal

The economy does not operate in a vacuum. It is part of a broader community that includes not only economic connections, but environmental, social, cultural and recreational linkages as well. For this reason, local communities have a very important role to play in sustaining the economy. *Again, the economy is not something that happens to us, it is something that we make happen.* Provided the local community has the organizational, infrastructure, human and civic capacities in place, there are many effective ways that communities can be engaged in the local economic development. If sustainable economies require sustainable communities, then we must address community renewal through buy-local programs, downtown revitalization, and the provision of a high quality of life for business owners and their employees.

III. A HURON COUNTY RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC RENEWAL

The renewal themes identified above provide a useful lens for cataloguing and describing the various sustainable economic initiatives currently underway. The following table provides an overview of the partnerships, strategies and initiatives that are currently underway and offers a synopsis of how that “Made-in-Huron” approach to sustainable economic renewal is making its presence known in the communities and business sectors of Huron County.

THEME # 1: POPULATION RENEWAL	PARTNERS	DESCRIPTION
1. First Step to Leadership for Rural Youth	Rural Ontario Institute; Huron County Youth Council; Huron Business Development Corporation; County of Huron	Offers enhanced development of leadership skills that will engage the area's youth and give them a voice in community efforts
2. Youth Skills Training Camps	Foundation for Education; Avon Maitland District School Board; Huron Perth Catholic District School Board; Four County Labour Market Planning Board	Series of skills camps to promote career opportunities for youth in healthcare, skilled trades, and hospitality sectors – Med Quest; S.T.E.P., Girls Unlimited, etc.
3. Huron Immigration Partnership	Citizenship & Immigration Canada; Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Culture; County of Huron	Strategies for targeted recruitment programs that will attract new entrepreneurs, investors and skilled workers to the area.
THEME # 2 AGRICULTURAL RENEWAL	PARTNERS	DESCRIPTION
4. Huron Shores Commercial Wine Industry Feasibility	County of Huron; Huron Business Development Corporation; Chateau-des-Charmes Winery;	Technical climate and soil feasibility studies to determine the viability of establishing a commercial wine industry in Huron County
5. Huron County Beef Industry Development Initiative	Huron Business Development Corporation; County of Huron	Strategies to ensure the long-term competitiveness of small abattoirs by expanding markets for local beef products
6. Huron Specialty Cheeses Initiative	County of Huron; Huron Business Development Corporation	Promotion of investment opportunities for up to 10 new artisanal cheese enterprises in Huron County
7. Huron Good Food Box	Huron Business Development Corporation; Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Committee; Ontario Market Investment Fund; Victorian Order of Nurses	Building local markets for farm produce through delivery of monthly GFB to Huron County consumers & School Nutrition Programs to Huron/Perth students
8. Food Enterprise Opportunities Project	Huron Business Development Corporation; Huron Perth Farm-to-Table Committee; Ontario Market Investment Fund; County of Huron; Canadian Organic Growers	Stimulates new opportunities in food production and marketing by building farmer capacity; launching new farmers markets and offering entrepreneurial training for new food enterprises

9. Tastes of Huron Festival	County of Huron; Huron Tourism Association; Huron County Federation of Agriculture	Promotion of culinary tourism in Huron County through series of week-long summer events
THEME# 3: ENTERPRISE RENEWAL	PARTNERS	DESCRIPTION
10. Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre	Huron County Planning & Development; Ministry of Economic Development; Huron Business Development Corporation	Provides entrepreneurs with free access to a library of business development resources along with the mentoring services of a Business Consultant
11. Summer Company Program	Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre; Ministry of Economic Development	Provides youth aged 15-29 with financial bursaries and mentoring support while operating summer businesses
12. Self Employment Benefit Program	HRSDC; MTCU; Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre; Huron Business Development Corporation	Offers E.I. eligible participants financing and mentoring support while they are launching new business ventures
13. Better Business Workshop Series	Huron County Small Business Enterprise Centre; Ministry of Economic Development; Huron Business Development Corporation	Enhances business management skills through a series of workshops on various topics including business planning, financing, marketing and customer service
14. Small Business Networks	Heritage & Culture Partnership; Huron Farm to Table Network; Huron Manufacturing Association; Huron Tourism Association; Huron Women in Networking; Huron Business Leaders Network	Regular business forums and marketplaces where local entrepreneurs can network; promote their products & services and celebrate their successes
15. Huron Business Development Corporation Investment Fund	Local Banks & Credit Unions; Business Development Bank of Canada; Farm Credit Canada; FedDev Ontario	Business mentoring and commercial loans up to \$150,000 for Huron County enterprises
THEME # 4: WORKFORCE RENEWAL	PARTNERS	DESCRIPTION
16. Centres for Employment & Learning	Avon Maitland District School Board; Conestoga College; Partners in Employment; MTCU	5 sites provide access to a full suite of employment services that assist job seekers in finding sustainable employment

17. Second Career	Avon Maitland District School Board; MTCU	Provides financial support and training for laid-off workers transitioning into new occupations that are in demand
18. Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW)	Avon Maitland District School Board; MTCU; Human Resources & Skills Development Canada	Provides employment assistance services and employability improvement activities to unemployed older workers aged 55 to 64
19. HealthKick Human Resources Initiative	Huron Business Development Corporation; OMAFRA; Georgian College; Huron East Community Development Trust; County of Huron	Pilots new methods for recruiting, retaining and training healthcare professionals in rural Ontario
20. Midwestern Ontario Regional Green Jobs Strategy	Huron Business Development Corporation; MTCU; Maitland Valley Conservation Authority; Bruce CFDC; Saugeen CFDC; Waterloo-Wellington CFDC; Perth CFDC; Middlesex CFDC	Helps companies and communities identify skills needed for transition into the emerging green economy including renewable energy; energy conservation and climate change
21. Aircraft Manufacturing & Maintenance Training (Huron Park)	Goderich Aircraft International; Fanshawe College; Huron Business Development Corporation; FedDev Ontario	Renovation of an existing airplane hangar at Huron Park into a training facility for new hires in aircraft manufacturing & maintenance
22. Skills Opportunities Showcase	Four County Labour Market Planning Board; Huron Manufacturing Association; Ontario Trillium Foundation	Mobile unit promoting career opportunities in a variety of sectors throughout the region
THEME# 5: INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL	PARTNERS	DESCRIPTION
23. Levan Airport Opportunities Study	Municipality of North Huron; County of Huron ; Ministry of Economic Development (CIT)	Identifies options for developing lands at the Richard Levan Airport near Wingham
24. Blyth Campground Alternative Use Assessment	Municipality of North Huron; Huron Business Development Corporation;	Identifies potential for new alternative & complimentary events with the potential to create off-season usage at the Blyth Campground

25. Blyth Campground Event Venue	Municipality of North Huron; Government of Canada; Government of Ontario	Infrastructure Stimulus Project to build a 3,200 sq. ft., fully accessible event venue with services for campers
26. Goderich Harbour Expansion Plan	Town of Goderich; Goderich Port Management Corporation ; County of Huron; Ministry of Economic Development (CIT)	Will finalize plans for expansion of commercial land and facilities at Huron County's major lake port.
27. Goderich Performing Arts Centre	Town of Goderich; Huron Business Development Corporation; County of Huron	Will determine the market viability for launch and operation of a municipally-owned, regional performance centre in Goderich
28. Port Blake Master Plan	Municipality of South Huron; County of Huron; Huron Business Development Corporation	Will develop a plan for long-term use and sustainability of the Port Blake Park as a tourism amenity
29. Huron Park Industrial Area Reconstruction	Municipality of South Huron; Huron Park Industrial Tenants' Association; Government of Canada; Government of Ontario	Reconstruction of Canada Avenue in the Huron Park Industrial Area, along with the replacement of water facilities
THEME # 6: COMMUNITY RENEWAL		DESCRIPTION
30. Business Retention & Expansion Initiatives	Local Business Groups OMAFRA; County of Huron ; Huron Business Development Corporation	Volunteer-led business outreach program – initiatives undertaken in Goderich, South Huron, Bayfield and Wingham and Brussels
31. Downtown Revitalization Initiatives	Local Business Groups OMAFRA; County of Huron ; Huron Business Development Corporation	Organizational, marketing, business and street-scaping strategies to enhance the economic climate of downtowns – initiatives currently underway in Bayfield, Brussels, Dungannon and Exeter
32. Huron County Cultural Plan	Heritage & Culture Partnership; Huron Tourism Association; County of Huron; Huron Business Development Corporation; Ontario Trillium Foundation	Series of on-going initiatives for growth in the region's creative and cultural economy

33. Local First Shop-in-Huron Campaign	County of Huron: Local Business Groups; Huron Business Development Corporation	Marketing campaign and incentive program to encourage more Huron County consumers to patronize local businesses for their goods & services
34. Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint	County of Huron; Ministry of Economic Development (CIT); Warden's Economic Development Task Force; HMA; HTA; HCP; Huron Business Development Corporation; 9 local municipalities	Strategic planning exercise to establish aligned municipally-driven and sector-driven actions that will support, enhance and sustain the Huron County economy

STATE OF THE HURON COUNTY ECONOMY 2010

Economic Renewal Themes

