Discovery Workshop Report

Bruce and Saugeen Region

October 26, 2009

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of The Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP) Project, a one-year endeavor to identify and prioritize development needs in Rural Ontario. The report is a summary of information collected at a 3-hour workshop in Hanover, ON. Twenty-five community leaders and business people from the Bruce and Saugeen region gave feedback on their community's development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in seven other communities in Southwestern Ontario, will guide the research pursued over the course of the RRP project.

The workshop was hosted by Mr. Dave Barrett, Project Manager, Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) in cooperation with the Bruce Community Futures Development Corporation (BCFDC). Dr. Wayne Caldwell, Professor, University of Guelph; Ms. Suzanne Ainley, Project Coordinator, The Ontario Rural Council (TORC); and Mr. Jeff Dixon, Project Coordinator, The Monieson Centre introduced the RRP project and Mr. Erik Lockhart, Associate Facilitator, Queen's Executive Decision Centre, facilitated the workshop. Special thanks also belong to Dr. Jennifer Ball, University of Guelph; Mr. Harold Flaming, Executive Director, TORC; and Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, for their support of the workshop. The RRP project is funded by the Province of Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

QUESTION 1

What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Bruce and Saugeen region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Top Issues:

1. **Youth retention.** There is a lack of opportunities for youth (e.g., programs, employment opportunities, sustainability of our schools, access to higher education)
2. **Economic decline & stable employment.** We are hit by agricultural sector decline compounded by changes in resource-based industries resulting in a ripple effect due to the loss of manufacturing jobs.
3. **Transportation.** Our large geography creates increased transport costs, training distances, and seasonal driving variances.
4. **Government coordination**. There is a lack of leadership & collaboration at municipal, provincial and federal policy levels.
5. **Health care professional attraction**. We must recruit more doctors, sustain our hospitals, and ensure access to primary medical services.
6. **Aging workforce**. An overall older demographic resulting in a reduced tax base, and lack of education, health care, training opportunities, and facilities.
7. **Support for our farming community**. We need to ensure agricultural businesses have the assistance required to be sustainable.
8. **Balanced growth**. We must ensure compatibility of environment with economic development.
9. **Small business support**. We must address barriers to small business start-ups not having access to information, training, expertise and international markets

QUESTION 2

If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study in relation to question 1? What are the critical research questions requiring answers and insights?

1. **Economic development best practices**. What are some successful economic development models that have worked in rural communities like ours? We should measure the impact of investment and how it has improved (or not) the viability of rural Ontario communities.
2. **Youth retention**. What strategies exist for retaining youth and developing new opportunities to bring them back?
3. **Farm revitalization.** What can we do to revitalize our farming/agricultural sector? How do we grow, market and sustain food production within Canada to feed ourselves and decrease our reliance on imports?
4. **Government alignment & support.** How can municipal, provincial and federal policies be aligned to support rural residents to build sustainable livelihoods? What specific areas can/should the 3 levels of government better collaborate on and how can that networking be facilitated?
5. **Green economy.** Given global trends, what are the opportunities, occupations and skills in support of a green economy?
6. **Geography, demographics & affluence**. What makes one region more affluent (GDP) than another when they are similar with respect to geography and demographics (e.g., business sector profiles, econ dev policies)?
7. **Workforce inventory**. How do we inventory our workforce skills and use this information to attract and expand employment?
8. **Higher education**. With low educational attainment levels how can we mobilize the region to higher education?
9. **First Nations engagement**. How do we welcome and encourage collaboration and interaction with our First Nations communities in regards to economic development, education and employment?
10. **Immigrant attraction**. What are the local conditions that will attract immigrants to our area?

QUESTION 3

What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What local businesses have had success overcoming related challenges and can be consulted or studied?

1. **Economic development best practices**. What are some successful economic development models that have worked in rural communities like ours? We should measure the impact of investment and how it has improved (or not) the viability of rural communities
    - OMAFRA success stories
    - Business Retention & Expansion study
    - Business Matrix Online report
    - Trade area report
    - Local Economies in Transition program
    - Main Street Ontario downtown revitalization program
    - Local Planning Board; Municipal Cultural Planning, Prince Edward County; Grey Bruce Cultural Network
    - Chapman's Ice Cream may provide a successful model

2. **Younth retention**. What strategies exist for retaining youth and developing new opportunities to bring them back?
    - Summer company - Provincial Business Enterprise Centres (Dave Barrett)
    - Food Sector Study - Saugeen Economic Development Corp./Four County Labour Market Planning Board
    - Business Enterprise Centre - Summer Company Program
    - Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program - Barbara Wright in Grey/Bruce
    - SEDC web-site section "Jobs available" for former residents/students
    - Recreation & Leisure Study - Prof Don Reid
    - Job Connect data collection
    - Explore with Owen Sound and Area Family Y their experiences with youth that are seeking and finding employment (Job Connect Data)
    - Saugeen Youth 4 Water Group - UN Canada/MOE
    - Create a round table group from agriculture sector group by commodity to seek input on the challenges and ways to level the rules of playing field with the world import-export markets
    - www.sbdc.ca/studies
    - Database Evaluation Executive Report: An Analysis of Best Practices funded by Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Paul Cavan, provincial coordinator Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. 416-326-5840
    - Waterloo Wellington CFDC info
    - The Grey Bruce Children's Alliance Measuring and Planning Project - Profile of how well children youth and families are doing

3. **Farm revitalization.** What can we do to revitalize our farming/agricultural sector? How do we grow, market and sustain food production within Canada to feed ourselves and decrease our reliance on imports?

- Farm organizations - i.e. Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and National Farmers Union - all lobby groups of government but have specific ideas on what can be done
- Good Food Box project - Grey Bruce Culinary and Agricultural Association
- Grey Bruce Cultural and Agricultural Association
- Food Sector Study - Saugeen Economic Development Corp., Four County Labour Market Planning Board
- Queens Bush Ministry
- Grey Bruce Culinary Association - Buy Local Buy Fresh - Rural Food Maps
- Community Supported Agriculture
- Farmers Markets
- Good Food Box should be supporting local farmers
- Field to Fork - 100 mile market initiatives. Promote!
- Bring the Economic Development resources from wellington, grey, etc together
- Main Street Ontario (OMAFRA) Program
- Buy local, Buy Fresh Huron/Perth Initiative
- Recognize innovative agri-initiatives (Premiere Awards)

4. **Government alignment & support.** How can municipal, provincial and federal policies be aligned to support rural residents to build sustainable livelihoods? What specific areas can/should the 3 levels of government better collaborate on and how can that networking be facilitated?
    - West Local Planning Boards have started the process of interministerial meetings. Contact Gemma Mendez-Smith
    - Grey Bruce Sustainability Network - Not for profit perspective (Barry)

5. **Green economy.** Given global trends, what are the opportunities, occupations and skills in support of a green economy?
    - Green job strategy
    - Wind turbine strategies and guidelines (Jim Taylor U. of Guelph)
    - Green Jobs Strategy - Saugeen, Huron, Perth, Middlesex CFDC's are currently working on
    - Grey Bruce Culinary and Agricultural Association
    - CFARE - Centre for Applied Renewable Energy. Paul Nichol 519.527.0305
    - Georgian Triangle Environment Association (Chris Munn Grey Bruce Health Unit)

6. **Best community practices**. What makes one region more affluent (GDP) than another when they are similar with respect to geography and demographics (e.g., business sector profiles, econ dev policies)?
    - First Impression tourism program
    - business and economic and retention studies (BR&E)
    - customer point of origin study OMAFRA

7. **Workforce inventory**. How do we inventory our workforce skills and use this information to attract and expand employment?
    - Business Enterprise Centres
    - Wellington Waterloo Dufferin workforce planning board repots (WWTAB)

- Needs Assessment, Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities, Labour Market Adjustment programs, for companies with layoffs of more than 50 people.
- compile data from Business Retention & Expansion surveys as well as First Impressions Reports sponsored by OMAFRA
- Training Board and SEDC Stats

8. **Higher education**. With low educational attainment levels how can we mobilize the region to higher education?
    - Pilot is being conducted in Grey County utilizing Dr Ruby Payne's model Bridges out of Poverty with clients on social assistance.
    - QUILL Learning Network - Debera Flynn (519) 881-4655
    - elearnnetwork.ca
    - Bruce Power

9. **First Nations engagement**. How do we welcome and encourage collaboration and interaction with our First Nations communities in regards to economic development, education and employment?
    - Huronia Area Aboriginal Management Board
    - M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre
    - Cape Croker First Nation Band Council and Economic Development Organization
    - Saugeen First Nation Band Council and Economic Development Organization

10. **Immigrant attraction.** What are the local conditions that will attract immigrants to our area??
    - Newcomer program MEDT
    - OMAFRA immigrant attraction tools

QUESTION 4

To ensure that today's workshop results in lasting community benefits, what actions can your community take to address these priorities and what assistance do you need?

Suggested Next Steps (in no particular order)

- Continue to focus efforts on communication and partnering. Share our knowledge of local problems and opportunities with the communities.
    - SEDC - continued communication and partnerships – lots of this work is going on – bring the players together
    - Assist to leverage the resources needed to get the job done – SEDC
    - Formalize and enhance the platform for communication and networking
- Continue to work closely with Community Partner committee, Labour Market Planning Board and project specific committees
- Submit a funding application/request to Dave before the end of Friday.
- To share research opportunities and processes (ethics review, etc.), build new partnerships that will bring diverse partners together to support a research opportunity.
- Each individual town do BR& E and First Impressions studies and share with each.
    - Help our local politicians realize that First Impressions ARE important.
- Take initiatives such as regional approach to economic deveopment in conjunction with federal & provincial priorities.
- Promote local products, goods & services; Good food box to source with locally grown food only
- Building stronger relationships with University researchers with similar research interests; Making connections between "have not" rural areas (with respect to universities) and universities and their resources.
- Take advantage of the research and projects going on around us like this one. Follow the recommendations in the various reports which we have completed. Post any research projects that are locally developed (perhaps on the SBDC site).
- Keep manufacturing on the table as a local economic activity – it creates wealth.
- Continue to work with local health units, universities & colleges as resources for both knowledge and low cost research assistance.
- Encourage local organizations to engage in social media to communicate and share information.
- How do we address getting people more engaged in the welfare of their community? We need to figure out a way to engage people, and need to balance against volunteer burnout.
- Create an action plan and seek support to fund and implement.

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Bruce and Saugeen region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 6) (Allow bypass)
Number of ballot items: 27
Total number of voters (N): 25

Rank	Issue	Comments	Total Votes
1	**Youth Opportunities**	• Youth Opportunities: programs, employment opportunities, sustainability of our schools, access to higher education ..Diversity of opportunities in order to retain the expertise that we have here ...knowledge based innovation	**20**
2	**Stable employment with economic decline**	• Economic decline & Stable employment - i.e. agricultural sector decline compounded by changes in resource based industries ..Ripple effect due to the loss of manufacturing jobs ...diversity of opportunities in order to retain the expertise that we have here ...workforce adaptability -> new skills for new jobs ..Knowledge based innovation	**17**
3	**Transportation**	• Transportation -> geography (transportation costs, adds to training costs, seasonal driving)	**12**
4	**Government coordination**	• Lack of leadership & collaboration -> municipal, provincial and federal policy lack of co-ordination	**11**
5	**Health Care**	• Health Care: Physician recruitment, sustainability of our hospitals, Lack of Primary Medical Services etc.	**8**
6	**Aging work force**	• Aging workforce (reduced tax base, lack of education, health care, training opportunities, and facilities)	**7**
6	**Supporting local farmers**	• Support for our farming community... Working with our Mennonite community	**7**
8	**Balanced growth**	• Compatibility of environment with economic development	**6**
8	**Small business support**	• Small business start up not having access to information and training ...business development niche to access international markets across different sectors...create local wealth	**6**
10	**Community planning – health and poverty**	• Community planning with respect to health issues including Rural Poverty ... (rural solutions) i.e. impact of financial hardship on health; focus on social determinants	**5**
10	**Equitable access**	• Equitable access: Access to resources and expertise, equitable and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable within the community	**5**
10	**Volunteerism**	• Volunteerism and the capacity to sustain and develop	**5**

		...heavy reliance on volunteers, burnout	
10	**Education**	• Education, lack of technical equipment, both in the high school and college levels	**5**
10	**Immigration**	• Receptivity to cultural and social diversity ...attraction of immigrants to rural areas	**5**
15	**Housing**	• Affordable housing	**4**
15	**Networking**	• Communication and networking - coordination across all sectors	**4**
17	**Poverty and violence**	• Poverty and violence - particularly concerning the impact on women and financial sustainability	**3**
17	**Amalgamation**	• Amalgamation, loss of identity in small communities, too large of area to cover ..Rural & urban divide since amalgamation	**3**
17	**Internet**	• Access to broadband, technology	**3**
20	**Commercial Base**	• Declining commercial base in downtowns - regional competition	**2**
20	**Commerce**	• Chamber of Commerce - Growth & Leadership	**2**
20	**Economies of Scale**	• Attention to lack of economies of scale in our region.. Losing out to urban centres econ of scale	**2**
23	**Substance abuse**	• Substance abuse problems	**1**
23	**Global trends**	• Knowledge and understanding of global trends and local impact: wellness, health, immigration...we need political readiness	**1**
26	**Elderly and youth**	• Caring for elderly & youth at the same time ..Service demand, impact on families	**0**
26	**Infrastructure**	• Local infrastructure to support a livable community to attract commuters	**0**

Appendix B – Rough Ideas for Question 2

If you had access to researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study in relation to question 1? What are the critical research questions requiring answers and insights?

Note: prior to voting, the group brainstormed questions. Below is the result of selecting top questions

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 7) (Allow bypass)
Number of ballot items: 20
Total number of voters (N): 24

Rank	Issue	Questions	Total Votes
1	**Economic development models**	• What are some successful economic development models that have worked in rural communities like ours? • Measure the impact of investment and how it has improved the viability of Rural Ontario communities (i.e. quantify the impact of a downtown revitalization project, or the impact of a farm support project, and impact of rural planning in support of healthy communities)	**17**
2	**Youth Retention**	• Rural economic studies to find opportunities for retaining youth and developing new opportunities • How can youth be supported in the rural areas to establish sustainable businesses including agricultural businesses?	**16**
3	**Farm revitalization**	• What can we do to revitalize our farming/agricultural sector? • How do we grow, market and sustain food production within Canada to feed ourselves decreasing our reliance on imports ...How can we build on our agricultural base (knowledge, land, resources, expertise) to create new opportunities - energy, fibre?	**15**
4	**Government alignment and support**	• How can municipal, provincial and federal policies be aligned to support rural residents to build sustainable livelihoods? • What specific areas can/should the 3 levels of government better collaborate on and how can that networking be facilitated?	**15**
5	**Green economy**	• Given global trends in peak oil climate change and the economy what are the opportunities, occupations and skills in support of a green economy?	**15**
6	**Geography, demographics and affluence**	• What makes one region more affluent (gdp) than another when they are similar wrt geography and demographics. (business sector profiles, ed policies, conditions)	**14**
7	**Workforce inventory**	• How do we inventory our workforce skills and use this information to attract and expand employment? e.g.	**10**

		layoffs	
8	**Higher education**	• With low educational attainment levels how can we mobilize the region to higher education?	**8**
9	**First Nations engagement**	• How do we welcome and encourage collaboration and interaction with our First Nations communities in regards to economic development, education and employment	**8**
10	**Immigrant attraction**	• What are the local conditions that will attract immigrants to our area?	**7**
11	**Rural definition**	• Redefine or in some cases define the definition of rural? e.g. different scope for different sectors, programs	**6**
12	**Creative sector**	• What motivates & attracts creative sector workers to rural communities?	**5**
13	**Doctors**	• Health professional recruitment: Help us focus on recruiting the Doctor's whole family not just the doctor.	**5**
14	**Diversity**	• Can the diverse needs be aligned across sectors to address cross community needs and opportunities in a rural context?	**5**
15	**Funding for industry**	• Evaluate opportunities to research funding models for rural industrial development projects	**5**
16	**Transportation models**	• What models of transportation provision exist for rural Ontario?	**4**
17	**Internet**	• What is the economic impact of rural Ontario NOT HAVING consistent access to broadband	**4**
18	**Amalgamation**	• What impact has amalgamation had on rural communities, what communities have succeeded with it?	**3**
19	**New business**	• How to build an incubator? Help us build a business "incubator" where several businesses can start-up.	**3**

Appendix C – Session Overview

The **purpose** of the workshop was to engage community leaders and academics to collaborate in order to:

- Identify Southwestern Ontario knowledge needs and resources
- Prioritize research needs and opportunities
- Share experience and knowledge
- Build lasting relationships and communication channels
- Serve Southwestern Ontario

Discovery workshop groups **explore four topics**:

1. Burning issues. What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Bruce Saugeen region a vital community (economic, social, health)?
2. Research wish list. If you had access to researches for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research "wish list" and the scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?
3. Local capacity. What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What local businesses have had success overcoming related challenges and can be consulted or studied?
4. Ensuring success. To ensure that today's workshop results in lasting community benefits, what actions can your community take to address these priorities and what assistance do you need?

Appendix D – Methodology

Information Gathering and Community Consultation process

The community consultation process included an information gathering component composed of a series of interactive workshops using facilitators from the Queen's Executive Decision Centre. The purpose of this component was to get input from a broad cross section of community stakeholders.

The consultation was conducted using a group decision support system also know as an electronic meeting system (EMS), an innovative facilitation process developed from research at the Queen's School of Business. The Queen's EMS, called "the Decision Centre", combines expert facilitation with a state of the art group decision support system to enable groups to rapidly accelerate idea generation and consensus building. This facility consists of a network of laptops accessing software designed to support idea generation, idea consolidation, idea evaluation and planning. The tool supports, but does not replace, verbal interaction; typically 25% of interaction takes place on the computers. Feedback from groups who have used the Executive Decision Centre process includes: meeting times can be cut in half; participation goes way up; better idea generation and alternative evaluation; a more structured process; and automatic documentation of deliberations.

Over 500 organizations around North America use the Centre for meetings such as: strategic planning, visioning, annual planning, focus groups, team building, budgeting, program review, project planning, risk assessment, job profiling, 360 degree feedback, alternative evaluation, new product development and a variety of other meeting types.

In the consultations, participants were asked, for example, "*What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making your region a vital community (economic, social, health)?"* Participants typed in ideas on the laptops all of which appeared on a public screen at the front of the room. These ideas were then discussed and categorized into common themes. The group was then asked "if we could only address five of these in the next year, which ones are most critical?" Individuals selected his/her top 6-7 and the overall results were then displayed to the group and further discussed.