



Markdale Chamber of Commerce
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BR&E INTERIM REPORT

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS:

The Markdale & Flesherton Chambers of Commerce conducted a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Survey for the entire municipality of Grey Highlands. In the fall of 2009, the Chamber successfully applied for a Community Futures Rural Development Fund grant through Saugeen Economic Development Corp. to undergo this project between November 2009 and March 2010. The project entailed training provided by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the recruitment of volunteer visitors to conduct surveys, subsequent training of interviewers, and a volunteer leadership team. The survey data was then entered into an online database provided by Executive Pulse, as arranged through OMAFRA for analysis. The project was completed at the end of March 2010, with the Leadership Team carrying on to develop an interim report for the development of a Task Force to study ways to implement actionable strategies determined by the needs identified in the surveys.

BACKGROUND OF BR&E – LEADERSHIP TEAM

The BR&E process was developed a decade ago by OMAFRA as a tool for small rural communities to identify strengths and weaknesses within their local economic climate. Each community is invited to include its own local questions in the process to assess any specific issues to be dealt with during the project. There are many online and printed resources available as well as OMAFRA staff support. A volunteer Leadership team is developed locally to oversee the process. The Markdale Chamber's Leadership Team for this project consisted of the following dedicated volunteers, who are here recognized and thanked for their contributions:

- Charmaine Peever, Committee Chair - Vice President of Markdale Chamber
- Doug Crawford – President of Markdale Chamber – Markdale Foodland
- David Turner – President of Flesherton & District Chamber – Flesherton Art Gallery

- Wayne Fitzgerald – Past President Markdale Chamber
- Rick Gamblen – Director of Markdale Chamber – Grey Bruce Insurance
- Kathy Gamblen - Director of Markdale Chamber – Grey Bruce Insurance
- Lynn Silvertown - Director of Markdale Chamber – Municipal Councilor
- Stewart Halliday - Director of Flesherton Chamber – Municipal Councilor
- Dave Barrett – Project Manager for Saugeen Economic Development Corp.
- Kate Russell – Project Coordinator – Markdale Chamber Coordinator

SURVEY EXPLANATION – THANKS TO VOLUNTEER VISITORS

Surveys were conducted at random from a business listing of as many businesses in Grey Highlands as were found during a comprehensive search of local listings, phone books, ads and other sources. Each business was assigned within a business sector, and then those sectors were sampled to a size to reflect their size in the community. Some sectors were not included, mining/forestry; public administration; healthcare and agriculture. Agriculture will be the subject of a further sector-specific survey in the near future. Once selected, businesses to be surveyed were distributed to volunteer visitors to set up interview times at the convenience of those to be interviewed. Each volunteer visitor was trained to do the interviews during two training sessions or one-on-one training with the project coordinator. Many thanks go out to the following volunteer visitors who participated in the project:

- Lucy Anders
- Phillip Allanson
- Debra Bujeya
- Alan Coleclough
- Doug Crawford
- Denise Edwards
- Willard Foster
- Kathy Gamblen
- Rick Gamblen
- Diane Jackson
- Art Jefferey
- Janet Lamb
- Charmaine Peever
- Elizabeth Pierre
- David Turner
- Mont Wehrle

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS – STATISTICS

In reviewing the completed BR&E surveys, the Leadership Team chose to focus on three main sections of the study for development of an interim report and the building of the Task Force. These 3 areas are **1) Business Climate 2) Local Climate 3) Future Plans.**

The first area reviewed was the overall **BUSINESS CLIMATE**. The following is a summary of the findings:

58 per cent of respondents feel this is a **GOOD** community to do business in.

98 per cent said the **QUALITY OF LIFE** in Grey Highlands is excellent.

Satisfaction level is **good or high** regarding:

- policing
- fire prevention
- public utilities
- street repairs
- snow and garbage removal

The top 5 issues affecting business expansion were identified as

- lack of proactive business recruitment & suitable land availability
- water/sewage availability and capacity
- approval processes & development charges
- information technology accessibility
- need for more medical facilities.

The following were items identified as needing more information available to the public:

1. Local training board
2. Community College/university – regional facilities
3. Cultural facilities and assets
4. Saugeen Economic Development Corp. - Community Futures Corp.
5. Business Development Bank of Canada
6. Business Enterprise Centre in Owen Sound
7. Granting opportunities through: OMAFRA, Ministry of Culture & Tourism etc.

IDENTIFIED ACTION FOR FOLLOW-UP: To create a resources list, post the information online and be made available at public offices – such as the Chamber, the municipality etc. Contact representatives of these groups to arrange information sessions in the community. Ensure the continuation of promoting and marketing the quality of life in Grey Highlands. Ensure the Task Force has representation to address all items identified.

The second area The Leadership Team reviewed was the **LOCAL CLIMATE**.

Overall business owners felt that they received good support from other local business as well good support from local residents.

The top issues affecting local climate were identified as:

- Availability of labour/cost of labour.
- Transportation costs/availability - Trucking costs.
- Appropriately zoned land
- Municipality
 - Local Permit process –73% low satisfaction. Planning and building is an issue.
 - Availability of utilities
 - Municipal taxes – (Breakdown of Distribution)
 - Support from municipality – 75% low satisfaction
 - Water/sewer capacity
 - Development charges
 - Municipal bylaws – 70% low satisfaction
- Access to markets/clients
- Access to suppliers.
- Telecommunications infrastructure- outdated.
- Size of local market
- Access to Research & Development – (information/resource)
- Access to training facilities- (information/resource)

IDENTIFIED ACTION FOR FOLLOW-UP:

To ensure the task force has community business members and community leaders including members of the Municipality to address each of the above items. Provide additional input to the Task Force from public meetings and information collected from community group meetings.

The third review is a comprehensive look at the **FUTURE PLANS** of businesses in the area, with the following notable information:

- Half businesses surveyed are expanding
- 88% of expansions will include new equipment – good indicator of local growth
- 75% of expansions because of business innovation
- 88% of expansions will include an increase in workforce and increase in services
- 71 % of expansions will include investments in equipment and new technology

The top issues affecting the Future Plans of Local Businesses are:

- About half those expanding need help with financing needs.
- Issues as barriers to expansions include:
 - financing (75%)
 - labour availability (50%)
 - land availability (38%)
 - strategic alliances (38%)
 - local bylaws (38%)

IDENTIFIED ACTION FOR FOLLOW-UP:

To ensure the Task Force has representatives from the banking industry, Business Development Bank, and the Saugeen Economical Development Corp. in addition to those representatives from the municipality and business community to address these issues.