Discovery Workshop Report
South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin
November 2, 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 Allliston, ON. Eighteen community leaders and business people from the County of Wellington and Region of Waterloo 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 Ms. Val Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, Nottawasaga Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), with the support of the Centre for Business and Economic Development in Collingwood and Dufferin County. 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 belong to Dr. Jennifer Ball, University of Guelph; Mr. Harold Flaming, Executive Director, TORC; and Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business for their support of the event. 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 South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Top Issues:
1. **Managing growth & development**. We need to ensure that infrastructure such as water issues, intensification targets and constraints, support growth in a sustainable way.
2. **Keeping farming viable.** We must support our agricultural businesses.
3. **Gap between rural and urban.** We must emphasize rural focused policy development.
4. **Hard infrastructure**. We must address the lack of hard infrastructure such as high speed internet, water & sewage, roads, and transportation.
5. **Aging population**. Our senior population requires facilities, services, and other needs.
6. **Government silos.** We need a shared vision for policy development between the provincial government and the municipalities.
7. **Government funding.** There is a lack of long-term government funding to support legislation which downloads services to municipalities.
8. **Poverty.** We must address poverty and the lack of affordable housing.
9. **Community cohesion.** We must address the lack of communication between government, agencies and residents.
10. **Healthy communities.** We want to encourage healthy communities, where personal vehicles are less depended upon and people can choose healthier means of transportation.
11. **Waste management.** Better methods of waste management at the local level must be identified.

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. **Healthy communities.** What infrastructure is required to create healthy communities and where will funding come from?
2. **Sustainable growth**. What type of rural development should be permitted in order to encourage sustainable growth?
3. **Addressing poverty.** What does poverty look like in a rural area and how can we address it?
4. **Future employment trends**. What are the future employment trends in the agricultural, tourism, and environmental sectors and how will we be able to fill these jobs? Will we be able to fill them with our youth and/or with new people moving here?
5. **Communication & collaboration between government and communities**. How can we foster partnership in policy development between the provincial government and the local municipalities?
6. **Economically viable farming.** How can we address the need to make farming more economically viable?
7. **Green business transformation.** What successful green business transformation strategies (e.g. efficiency, effective, job creation) have been implemented?
8. **Waste management in rural areas**. How can we work towards a zero waste program?
9. **Knowledge-based employment.** What knowledge-based jobs can replace those jobs being sent offshore? What changes must be made in our education system so that our youth are prepared for these future jobs?
10. **Economic impact of food and farming.** What is the economic impact of food and farming in South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin, and how does that translate into dollars for municipalities and the province?
11. **Social Services.** How can we protect the fragile network of social services (given the size of the federal/provincial debt) when health and education are sacred cows?

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. **Healthy communities.** What infrastructure is required to create healthy communities for all ages and where will funding come from?
   - Healthy Communities Initiative - Provincial and Federal governments
   - Healthy Communities Canada
   - Dufferin County trails project - Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association
   - Sustainability Dufferin project (Caroline Mach)
   - Active Transportation studies
   - Bike and Walk Canada
   - WalkON
   - Walkolution
   - Americantrails.org
   - Rails-to-trails conservancy
   - Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
   - Active Transportation committee for Simcoe County
   - Simcoecountytrails.net
   - Safe Routes to School

2. **Sustainable growth**. What type of rural development should be permitted in order to encourage sustainable growth?
   - Natural Step - British Columbia
   - Alliance for Sustainable Colorado
   - Tillie Macdonald in Collingwood
   - Holland Marsh Growers' Association (Jamie Reaume, jreaume@rogers.com, 905-251-6786)
   - Ecological footprint
   - University of Guelph

3. **Addressing poverty.** What does poverty look like in a rural area and how can we address it?
   - Tamarack Institute
   - Caledon Institute
   - Wellsley Institute
   - Leanne @ CONTACT
   - New Path (children's mental health agency- www.newpath.ca)
   - Mercy House (women's support group- www.merchouse.ca)
   - Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
   - Comparator with urban community information centres
   - Statistics Canada

4. **Employment trends**. What are the future employment trends in the agricultural, tourism, and environmental sector and how will we be able to fill these jobs? Will we be able to fill them with our youth and/or with new people moving here?
    - Labour Market information - Human Resources Skills Development Canada
    - Martin's Prosperity Institute - Rotman School of Business
    - Trends Opportunities Priorities Report - Simcoe Muskoka Training Board (Judy Noel)
    - Michigan Institute of Technology
    - Top Internet Companies who follow trends and are futuristic

5. **Communication & collaboration between government and communities**. How can we foster partnership in policy development between the provincial government and the local municipalities?
    - Holland Marsh Growers' Association (Jamie Reaume, jreaume@rogers.com, 905-251-6786)
    - Local MP and MPPs
    - MMAH 'one window' Municipal service office
    - Nottawasaga Futures Agriculture Action Plan

6. **Economically viable farming.** How can we address the need to make farming more economically viable?
    - Holland Marsh Growers' Association (Jamie Reaume, jreaume@rogers.com, 905-251-6786)
    - OMAFRA

7. **Green business transformation.** What successful green business transformation strategies (e.g. efficiency, effective, job creation) have been implemented in other communities and can we look towards implementing them?
    - Nottawasaga Futures Green Transformation Project
    - Husky Injection Moulding
    - Majora Carter Group (http://www.majoracartergroup.com/)

8. **Waste management in rural areas**. How can we work towards a zero waste program?
    - Dufferin County Waste Management Department – Dufferin Eco-Energy Park project
    - Nottawasaga Futures (Mary Munnoch)

10. **Economic impact of food and farming.** What is the economic impact of food and farming in South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin, and how does that translate into dollars for municipalities and the province?
    - Local federations of agriculture
    - Holland Marsh Growers' Association (Jamie Reaume, jreaume@rogers.com, 905-251-6786)
    - Statistics Canada
    - Municipalities - Tax rolls
    - GTA Agricultural Action Committee

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)
- Identify researchers, grad students, etc to work with communities in clearly articulating the needs, business case, specific research questions etc.
- Engage big business and major employers. Must ensure relevance, immediate impact, appropriate & simple language.
- Collaborate with the South Simcoe Economic Alliance.
- Relationship building: combining sectors/groups that might not normally get together for mutual wins.
- Create Creative solutions for processes, approaches, and collaborations to address some of the burning issues.
- Invite experts from various universities, industry, and government to speak on a topic at a Knowledge Synthesis workshop in Collingwood.
- Bring back The Monieson Centre to share the results from across SW Ontario and best practices.
- Publish results in more community/user friendly venues such as Municipal World, trade publications, newspapers.
- Create a database on research relevant to Simcoe County.
- Create an easy to understand mechanism to navigate all current funding opportunities.

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 7) (Allow bypass)
Number of ballot items: 21
Total number of voters (N): 16

Rank	Issue	Comments	Total Votes
1	Managing growth	• Managing growth & development (ensuring infrastructure supports growth in a sustainable way) • Managing water issues ...balancing sustainability w/ development ...intensification targets/constraints	11
2	Profit in farming	• Lack of profit in agriculture - farming is backbone of any community	9
3	Rural / urban gap	• The ever widening gap between rural and urban - most policy focused on urban areas ...lack of understanding of what rural means	8
3	Hard infrastructure	• Hard infrastructure - high speed internet, water & sewage, roads, transportation	8
3	Senior population	• Senior population growing: facilities, services, other needs	8
6	Government silos	• Lack of coordination between mmah, omafra, moe, med with municipalities with respective to policy development through shared vision. ..silo mentality	7
6	Government Funding	• Lack of long-term government funding commitment to support legislation - downloaded to munis (e.g. Accessibility, conservation initiatives, social services)	7
6	Poverty	• Recognizing and addressing poverty -> issues related to affordable housing, public transit	7
9	Communication	• More effective communications between government, organizations, agencies and residents ...no unity in area	6
9	Healthy Communities	• Lack of infrastructure to support healthy communities, where people can be physically active and rely less on the automotive to access shops, school, work, recreation	6
9	Waste Management	• Research better methods for material (waste) mgt at local level, more uses for recyclable material e.g. plastic, bale wrap	6
12	Planning Policies	• Impact of current provincial rural / agricultural planning policies (e.g. consents)	5
13	Emerging employment sectors	• Identify emerging sectors for employment - has been a major loss of job • less dependence on the automotive sector - greater	4

		diversity needed	
13	**Public transit**	• Public transit - car pooling, mobility x region etc.	4
13	**Young families**	• Demographics in SS - young families with young children (compared to rest of SC) - gaps in service ...Daycare	4
16	**Education**	• Lack of priority focus on education (school closures), infrastructure (not just building), maintenance	3
16	**Youth Retention**	• Youth retention	3
18	**Downtown maintenance & revitalization**	• Downtown maintenance & revitalization	2
18	**Political power**	• Lack of political power at provincial level	2
18	**Health Care**	• Lack of health care	2

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 = 6) (Allow bypass)
Number of ballot items: 17
Total number of voters (N): 16

Rank	Issue	Questions	Total Votes
1	Healthy communities	• What infrastructure is required to create Healthy Communities? Where is the funding going to come from? Which communities are considered best in class in the long term, and why? • How can rural communities create & sustain a range of recreational activities, not just sports for specific age group.	14
2	Sustainable growth	• What is sustainable growth? What type of rural development should be permitted? • How can we educate landowners about sustainable land use & stimulate implementation • Is there a community growth model that demonstrates the level of growth that a community could/should grow to before encountering a detrimental increase in negative social impacts? Clearly Toronto has gone beyond that point.	13
3	Poverty	• What does poverty look like in a rural area and what unique supports are needed to address poverty in a rural area... • How would you address the growing issue of poverty in regards to housing, shelters, etc.	10
3	Emerging employment sectors	• What are the employment trends for the future of: agriculture; tourism; environmental jobs that will help build sustainable communities? • Where will the skills for infrastructure development going to come from? youth retention? New people moving in?	10
3	Government silos	• Communications & collaboration x government, communities. How can we arrange for Ministry bureaucrats to sit down with municipal representatives, local business and community representatives to clearly understand how their policies and legislation are	10

		• impacting their ability to grow and prosper... • Who and how do you pull all agencies and groups programs together ...silos	
6	**Profit in farming**	• What would make farming economically viable?	**9**
7	**Green businesses**	• What successful green business transformation strategies (e.g. efficiency, effective, job creation) have been implemented?	**5**
7	**Waste Management**	• Waste management in rural areas. In what real ways could low population, rural areas better manage their waste program to become more productive i.e. working toward zero waste?	**5**
9	**Knowledge-based employment**	• How can we research next generation jobs that will replace those jobs being sent offshore with higher level (knowledge-based?) jobs. • What changes must be made in our education system so that our youth are prepared for these future jobs.	**4**
9	**Economic impact of farming and food**	• What is the economic impact in this area of food and farming - and how does that translate into dollars for municipalities and the province	**4**
9	**Social services**	• How can we protect the fragile network of the social services sector (given the size of the federal/provincial debt) when health and education are sacred cows?	**4**
12	**Funding infrastructure**	• How do we access public funds for infrastructure/program needs	**3**
12	**Physician recruitment/ retention**	• Physician recruitment/retention - what is the process to do this? best practices?	**3**
14	**Promotion of rural living**	• How can we create awareness and attract people to rural living	**2**
15	**Non-profit economics**	• What does the non-profit sector need to do to react to the current economic reality and changed context?	**0**
15	**Rural tax base**	• How do you redefine the tax base for rural and rural communities - given that all taxes come from the same place	**0**

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 *South Simcoe, Collingwood and Dufferin* 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.