

Discovery Workshop Report

Niagara, Two Rivers, and Grand Erie Region

November 16, 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 Dunnville, ON. Twenty-six community leaders and business people from Niagara, Two Rivers, and Grand Erie 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, J. Wayne Knox, Business Consultant, Grand Erie Business Centre, with the support of Two Rivers Community Development Centre, Venture Niagara Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) and South Niagara CFDC. Dr. Wayne Caldwell, Professor, University of Guelph; Mr. Harold Flaming, Executive Director, 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; Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business; and Ms. Suzanne Ainley, Project Coordinator, TORC, 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 Niagara, Two Rivers, and Grand Erie region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Top Issues:

1. **Youth Retention.** We need role models for public and high school students, and a post secondary institution could provide this. Also, there are inadequate reintegration programs for rural youth.
2. **Transportation:** We need better inter- and intra-community public transportation.
3. **Native Land Claims.** Native land claims are an ongoing issue with uncertain economic impact.
4. **Economic Growth Plan.** We need an economic growth plan leading to sustainable long term employment.
5. **Business Attraction.** How to attract new business and industry to Dunnville and the broader region to expand business.
6. **Local Government.** Lack of future vision, cohesion and collaboration.
7. **Education and Training.** There is a serious deficit in secondary schools and city facilities, specifically in the case of courses, equipment etc. Lack of retraining facilities in Haldimand for those who have lost their jobs.
8. **Health care.** Hospital closings resulting in people being transported out of the region.
9. **Diversification.** We need help in developing beyond current industrial base.
10. **Agricultural Production Capacity.** Full realization of our agricultural production capacity and assistance for small farm operators.

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. **Agricultural Viability and Sustainability.** Why is agriculture being acquired by large corporations? What would a fair farm tax system look like in Ontario? What can we learn from other jurisdictions? How can we use knowledge from other communities to improve our Agricultural and Green space?
2. **Economic Revitalization.** What can be done to revitalize the declining economy of our community? How do we attract sustainable long term employment? How do we diversify beyond our current industry base?
3. **Rural Policy.** What are the impacts of urban-based government policies implemented in rural areas?
4. **Best Practices.** What are the best practices from other rural communities? What ideas have other rural communities used to attract businesses to their communities?
5. **Local Government.** How do we make local government work? How can we improve our current municipal government system to increase effectiveness? How can we improve single tier systems who serve large geographic areas?
6. **Native Issues.** How can the native issues be more effectively addressed? How can a community adapt to adverse issues? How has the native land claim had an impact on local Haldimand communities and to what extent monetarily?
7. **Youth Retention.** Why are rural youth disappearing from our communities and what is needed to keep them?
8. **Environment.** What alternatives are available to land filling and energy production that will be effective in protecting the environment and downstream communities?
9. **Diversification.** What would diversification bring to Haldimand/Niagara?
10. **Technology Access.** What alternatives are available that will provide access to knowledge for rural areas at a cost equal to urban centres?
11. **Transportation.** What is the most cost effective way of providing transportation services within and between the communities of Haldimand and Niagara?

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. **Agricultural Viability and Sustainability.** Why is agriculture being acquired by large corporations? What would a fair farm tax system look like in Ontario? What can we learn from other jurisdictions? How can we use knowledge from other communities to improve our Agricultural and Green space? Agricultural Action Plan: Region of Niagara
 - Agricultural Impact Study: Niagara - Patrick Robson
 - Agricultural Value Added Activities Study, Nov 2009
 - Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) young farmer task force

2. **Economic Revitalization.** What can be done to revitalize the declining economy of our community? How do we attract sustainable long term employment? How do we diversify beyond our current industry base?
 - Niagara Agricultural Economic Impact Study. Planscape.
 - Grand Erie Business Centre
 - Local Chambers of Commerce
 - Dunnville Cause Report
 - Wingfield waterfront redevelopment
 - Dunnville lift lock
 - Dunnville lift lock Environmental Assessment
 - Lumber Island & Dunnville marsh prospectus
 - Dunnville Tourism study
 - Recreation Master Plan HN
 - Dunnville Strategic Economic Planning: Voices of Consent (Brock University)
 - Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) Studies
 - Grand River Conservation Foundation (GRCF) Studies
 - Lower Grand River Studies
 - Dunnville Bioregion A Study

3. **Rural Policy.** What are the impacts of urban-based government policies implemented in rural areas?
 - Agricultural Economic Impact Study. Planscape.
 - Local Federations of Agriculture and commodity groups: www.ofa.on.ca

4. **Best Practices.** What are the best practices from other rural communities? What ideas have other rural communities used to attract businesses to their communities?
 - Dunnville's original regional council!
 - CAUSE report - study for the Town of Dunnville (late 1980"s)
 - Business Retention & Expansion 2008 / Caledonia
 - Arts Dunnville Study for Art Centre 1993
 - Active Living: Caledonia Arena Project

5. **Local Government.** How do we make local government work? How can we improve our current municipal government system to increase effectiveness? How can we improve single tier systems who serve large geographic areas?
 - Brock University - Dunnville Business Retention and Extension (BRE) study and downtown
 - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

6. **Native Issues.** How can the native issues be more effectively addressed? How can a community adapt to adverse issues? How has the native land claim had an impact on local Haldimand communities and to what extent monetarily?
 - How do we encourage investment and development with the unresolved land claims?
 - Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
 - Six Nations
 - Human Development Index (HDI)

7. **Youth Retention.** Why are rural youth disappearing from our communities and what is needed to keep them?
 - Would be the results of a study of incubator malls and youth retention?
 - Dunnville Youth impact centre
 - Grand Erie business centre
 - High schools in area
 - Grand Erie Board of Education -> retention
 - University alumni associations - survey of graduates?
 - College alumni associations
 - St.Leonard's Employment Centers in Secondary Schools and in Dunnville
 - Develop student tracking system at local high schools.
 - Survey high school reunions

8. **Environment.** What alternatives are available to land filling and energy production that will be effective in protecting the environment and downstream communities?
 - www.haltthedump.ca
 - Bruce Power
 - Ministry of the Environment
 - Ministry of Energy
 - www.site41.ca
 - www.ebr.gov.on.ca
 - Alkmaar Holland waste for energy incinerator
 - AIM Power corporation
 - Positive Power Corporation

9. **Diversification.** What would diversification bring to Haldimand/Niagara?

10. **Technology Access.** What alternatives are available that will provide access to knowledge for rural areas at a cost equal to urban centres?
 - Haldimand County

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)

- Share these results with major organizations in region
 - Economic development committees across region. Can we find champions to advance these issues?
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Other service clubs (rotary, Kiwanis etc.)
- Haldimand County Economic Development - James Gooderham. Efforts need to be led at municipal level
- Use OMAFRA BRE model for engagement
- Need a citizen engagement strategy with a champion and team of volunteers
- Provided me with focus on community priorities
- Youth retention
 - Rotary to conduct a focus group on: what reasons do you need to stay?
 - Role models, mentors

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Niagara, Two Rivers, and Grand Erie region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 7)

Number of ballot items: 22

Total number of voters (N): 23

Rank	Issue	Comments	Total Votes
1	Youth Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need role models for public & high school students - a post secondary institution could provide this Lack of proper reintegration programs for rural youth 	15
2	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Transportation (inter- and intra-community) Transportation, Mid Niagara Corridor 	14
3	Native land claims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native land claims 	13
4	Economic Growth Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viable economic growth plan Sustainable long term employment Incubator malls - small business 	12
5	Business Attraction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to attract new business and industry to the Dunnville & region Enticing industry beyond 25 km of a 4 lane hwy Lack of Industry producing quality employment 	11
5	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government- Lack of future vision 	11
7	Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing High Schools & City facilities re: courses, equipment, etc. Retraining facilities- Haldimand -> no facilities in rural for those who have lost jobs Risk of loss of quality educational facility 	10
8	Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital closings Transport of people out of the region 	9
8	Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aid in how to develop beyond industrial base (diversification e.g. tourism etc) 	9
8	Agricultural Production Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full realization of our agricultural production capacity (lots of land sitting idle) Assistance for small farm operators - e.g., access to funding programs Indoor Farmer's Market 	9
11	Knowledge Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining access to knowledge economy-virtual access needs large enhancement (e.g. high speed in rural areas) 	6
12	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government policy impact on agriculture industry (e.g. 	5

		Greenbelt)	
12	Community Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community capacity (participation, involvement and taking ownership in future of our community) 	5
14	Environmental Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental issues-waste stream management 	4
14	Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to create closer ties between town centers and their rural communities- Closer ties between Haldimand (Dunnville) and Niagara 	4
14	Energy Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for developing energy systems (employment, self sustainability, green, etc.) 	4
17	Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness 	3
17	Nature Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature Centre in Dunnville, like the one in Balls Falls 	3
17	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local urban policies unrealistic for social & economic advancement (e.g. planning act regulations) 	3
20	Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated (i.e. seem to lack our own identity - who are we connected with?) 	2
21	Border Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border restrictions -- Homeland security -> used as trade restriction 	1

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 = 5)

Number of ballot items: 15

Total number of voters (N): 21

Rank	Issue	Questions	Total Votes
1	Agricultural Viability and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is agriculture being acquired by large corporations? What would a fair farm tax system look like in Ontario? (assessment policies) Value added practices and effect on viability What can we learn from other jurisdictions? How can we use knowledge from other communities to improve our Agricultural and Green Space? 	16
2	Economic Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can be done to revitalize the declining economy of our community? How to attract sustainable long term employment? How do we diversify beyond our current industry- to what and how? 	14
3	Rural is not Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts of urban mindset government policies implemented in rural areas? 	12
3	Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the best practices from all rural communities? What ideas have other rural communities used to attract businesses to their communities? 	12
3	Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government- Lack of future vision, cohesion, collaboration & engagement. How to improve our current municipal government system so that they are more effective? How to improve single tier systems who serve large geographic areas? 	12
6	Native Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can the native issues be more effectively addressed? How can a community adapt to adverse issues? How has the native land claim impacted on local Haldimand communities, and to what extent monetarily? (360 analysis) 	11
7	Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are rural youth disappearing from our 	10

		communities and what is needed to keep them?	
8	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What "nonpolluting" alternatives are there to land filling and energy production that will allow local and imported waste to be dealt with so that the environment and downstream communities are protected? 	5
9	Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would diversification bring to Haldimand/Niagara? (e.g. tourism, farm related industry,) 	3
9	Technology Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What alternatives are available to provide access to rural areas to gain access to knowledge at a cost equal to urban centers? (knowledge economy -> high speed access, etc) 	3
9	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most cost effective way of providing transportation services within and between the communities of Haldimand and Niagara? 	3
12	Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is poverty and homelessness ignored by government agencies and others when it is a growing problem, even though is not as visible as urban areas? 	2
13	Rural Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the rural boundaries for the major town centres in Haldimand County, such as Dunnville, Caledonia, and Hagersville? Market size. 	1
14	Competitive Agriculture Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can Ontario agriculture compete globally? 	0

Appendix C – Post Workshop User Comments

Local leaders provided comments after the meeting as follows:

Comment 1:

1. I am a big fan of the Region of Niagara's Grow South policy linking urban with rural and spreading the wealth and power of Niagara southward linking the two lakes: Ontario and Erie, roads communities the 406 highways will give a 20 min drive from St. Catherine's (i.e. QEW to Welland to Port Colbourne).
2. Large urban centers joined with rural centers give the rural a stronger say at the government table. As a provincial minister said to me, "its easy to say no to 10 to 18 thousand people as compared to 100 thousand people".
3. In rural southern Ontario the partnerships, counties, and political ridings should be North and South, not east and west. The Erie Lincoln riding was a great and successful riding that was changed to east and west.
4. Education loss of youth. We are surrounded by colleges and Universities: Brock McMaster, Mohawk, Niagara college, BUT NO NORTH/SOUTH LINKAGE. You need the strength of the north to develop the south. The Green Belt policy has pushed this faster along (i.e. southward educational centers). You need these centre to lift the bar higher, promote research and invest.
5. Why does the United States have 3 cities on Lake Erie and we have none?
6. Transportation (train and highway) has been wiped out. The quickest way to fix it; north and south access to the QEW 15 to 20 minute drive, if roads straighten northward.
7. Six nations issues will only be resolved when bigger centers are affected (i.e. Hamilton or Brantford get affected by Caledonia issues). If Caledonia were part of Hamilton (i.e. north and south) would they have a bigger stick to get action? My answer is yes, and that can be used in a lot of economic issues.
8. The Grand River Conservation Authority is north and south and has done great work, however the area north and south is too big and has affected investment by them there the south end of the river.

Comment 2:

1. As land claims are not unique to the rural area of Haldimand, how can education/information surrounding land claims be distributed to the general population of the neighboring communities? Information could include whether there are claims existing, how the actual land claim process works and policies with regards to claims?

Many people were not aware of the existing claims and even fewer know anything about the process or policies. If this information was better communicated or available the resulting animosity might be avoided or at the least diminished.

2. Yesterday brought the topic of economic impact as a result of land claims. This is a legitimate question in our community with the protests already having taken place. My question is, what would the economic impact have been if the claims had been handled with cooperation between the communities of Haldimand and Six Nations rather than pitting one community against the other?

Appendix D – 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 Niagara, Two Rivers, and Grand Erie 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 E – 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 known 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 5 and the overall results were then displayed to the group and further discussed.