

## Discovery Workshop Report Perth, Huron and Middlesex *September 21, 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 Mitchell, ON. 18 community leaders and business people from the Perth, Huron and Middlesex area gave feedback on their community's development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in seven other communities in Western Ontario, will be used by OMAFRA to guide rural research funding allocations.

The workshop was hosted by Mr. Jaret Henhoeffler, General Manager, Perth Community Futures Development Corporation. Dr. Wayne Caldwell, Professor, University of Guelph; Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, Queen's School of Business; Mr. Harold Flaming, Executive Director, The Ontario Rural Council; and Mr. Jeff Dixon, Project Coordinator, The Monieson Centre, introduced the RRP project. Mr. George Jackson, Facilitator, Queen's Executive Decision Centre, facilitated the workshop. Special thanks belong to Ms. Suzanne Ainley and Dr. Jennifer Ball for their coordination 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 Huron, Perth and Middlesex region a vital community (economic, social, health)?*

Top Issues:

1. **Education and Literacy.** Rural areas have low levels of basic and technological literacy; rural school closings have a negative economic, social and health effect on communities.
2. **Employment.** There is a shift away from the traditional rural economic base and few alternative employment opportunities.
3. **Climate Change.** Planning for the ecological and economic effects of climate change on rural communities .
4. **Healthcare.** Growing healthcare demands with an aged population. Difficulty attracting new doctors.
5. **Demographic Change.** Aging baby-boomers are retiring and rural communities are unable to attract new immigrant and youth populations.
6. **Transportation.** We need a sustainable rural transportation network.
7. **Government Cooperation.** Failure of different rural organizations and government agencies cooperating on important issues.
8. **Watersheds.** Ensuring a resilient watershed in the face of multiple policy issues.
9. **Youth.** Youth engagement.
10. **Broadband.** Access to high speed internet across the region.
11. **Tax Base.** Maintaining a tax base that will sustain the community.
12. **Poverty.** High unemployment has brought about increasing poverty issues.
13. **Renewable Energy.** There are many barriers to the adoption of green energy technologies.
14. **Planning.** Lack of resources in local rural governments to develop forward thinking, innovative policies and initiatives.

Other Issues:

- Green Industries
- Libraries
- Sustainability
- Immigration
- Value-added Products
- Community Engagement
- Gender Issues
- Red Tape

## 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. **Sustainability.** How do we change our mindsets to think bigger and plan for the long term? How can we sustain our existing tax base? How do create sustainability in the amidst changing oil costs, climate change, and food issues?
2. **Education.** How can we encourage higher education in rural communities? How do changes in literacy rate impact health care, concern for the environment, employment and economic success? What are best practices in rural schools, particularly with school closures and “super schools”?
3. **Renewable Energy.** How do we overcome the barriers to the adoption of green energy technology? What opportunities and strategies exist for bio-technology and how do we evaluate the costs?
4. **Youth Retention.** What are the best practices to retain youth in rural communities?
5. **Transportation.** What are the existing best practices and case studies for rural transportation networks?
6. **Healthcare.** What incentives/enticements or resources are effective in attracting healthcare professionals to rural communities? How can we encourage healthy living locally?
7. **Value-Added Resources.** How can rural communities maximize positive economic spin-offs from development of its natural resources?
8. **Skilled Jobs.** How do rural municipalities attract businesses that will provide skilled, technology-based and digital jobs?
9. **Agriculture.** How can we put more grocery dollars in the hands of the local producers?
10. **Downtown Revitalization.** What are the best practices in revitalization of rural downtown and mainstreet areas? What economic value do healthy downtowns add to a small town economy?
11. **Agri-Business.** What is the future of agri-businesses including family farms in rural Ontario?
12. **Childcare.** What is the impact on the economy and the quality of family by having access to quality childcare?
13. **Watersheds.** How can we develop a strategy for building a resilient watershed in a way that tackles multiple policy issues?
14. **Planning.** How can information sharing be better delivered between/among communities at government level to maximize scarce resources?
15. **Demographic Change.** Do we deal with the lack of leaders due to the demographics issues?
16. **Gender Issues.** How do we create planning policies that will support women-owned/operated non-agricultural business on farms?
17. **Immigration.** What are the most likely new immigrant groups in Canada who will consider locating in rural communities?

Other Questions:

- Cultural Planning – How do we capitalize on cultural economic development?
- Entrepreneurship – How can we attract or stimulate the start up of new businesses?
- IT/Broadband – What are the abilities of people in rural areas to adjust to Information Technologies (IT)?
- Housing – How do we develop affordable housing for rural seniors?

### 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. **Sustainability Planning.** How do we change mindsets to think bigger and for the long term i.e. make sustainable decisions both at the level of the decision/policy makers and for the everyday person ?

- Centre for Applied Renewable Energy (CFAR)
- Community Futures Development Corporations
- Environmental Groups (e.g. CARE Stratford)

What are the best practices in rural sustainable planning?

- Ontario Provincial Planning Institute (OPPI)
- University of Waterloo and University of Guelph
- Oxford County Award Program

How does a community maintain a tax base to support sufficient services?

- University of Guelph's work with the Municipality of Perth South

2. **Education.** How can planning for school closures, and proposals for "super schools" look at issues of transportation, efficiency, environment, community resiliency, to choose the best location for schools.

- Local School Council (ones that were reviewed for closure)
- Ministry of Education
- Retired education directors
- Research regarding the superiority of small schools
- Bill Gates Foundation
- Community Schools Alliance: Mayor Doug Reycraft, Southwest Middlesex

How can post-secondary opportunities be made available to rural residents to foster entrepreneurship and job creation?

- Community Futures Development Corporation
- Universities/Colleges
- Public Libraries
- On-line courses from educational institutions
- Local on-line educators – Avon Maitland Distance Education Courses

How do we encourage higher educational institutions to promote and set up satellite and resources in small, rural communities?

- Mayor Dan Mathison, Stratford Ontario
- Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership, Ontario Ministry of Culture
- Fanshawe and Conestoga campuses in our area
- Technical Training Group (TTG)
- James Timlin, CAO, Ingersoll Ontario
- Technical Delivery Agent (TDA) Model – Exemplified by the Stratford Welding Apprenticeship Program: Mark Rothe

How do changes in literacy rate impact health care, concern for the environment, employment and economic success? What is the local literacy rate, by local municipality (not currently available)?

- United Way of Perth – Social Research and Planning Committee
- Statistics Canada
- Local Libraries
- Rural Connections Broadband Task Force
- Wikipedia

3. **Renewable Energy.** When oil permanently rises to >\$100 per barrel, what impacts will that have? Will rural communities become more or less viable? What do we do to prepare? How do we keep our commuters? What issues will we be faced with?

- Province of Ontario – Green Energy Act
- Transition Town grassroots movement from oil dependency to resilient communities
- Centre for applied renewable energy

As an investor/farmer, how do I do a cost/benefit analysis of alternative energy options?

- RET screen tool for analyzing renewable energy projects
- Trade associations for each of the alternative energy sectors

What are the best practices for alternative land use and ecological services performed by rural landowners and farmers?

- Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot project in Norfolk County: Bryan Gilvesy, Chair
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) best practices booklet
- Huron County Planning and Development Department
- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
- Lower Thames Conservation Authority
- Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario

4. **Youth Retention.** What are the best practices for retaining youth? Attracting immigrants? Attracting entrepreneurs? Attracting cultural creative? Helping communities embrace change in order to attract newcomers?

- Quebec and other Provinces have developed programs that urge youth leaving for post secondary education to return through incentives to start a business etc.
- Multicultural Centres
- Migrant worker communities (Federal Agencies)
- Businesses and Chambers of Commerce

How do you retain youth and give them the skills that are needed in the community so that they can find jobs in their home community?

- Ingersoll fusion centre best practices
- The Ontario Rural Council (TORC) working group
- Lake Huron Learning Collaborative

5. **Rural Transportation.** What are the existing best practices and case studies for rural transportation networks?

- Charles Fitzsimmons

- Four Counties Transportation Service – A service that picks up seniors and transports seniors to senior programming in Newbury Ontario
- Is there an efficient, cost-effective form of public transportation that can be provided in rural municipalities?
- County Social Services Department
  - Social Planning Council’s Quality of Life Report
6. **Healthcare.** What incentives/enticements or resources are effective in attracting health care practitioners to rural communities?
- Beattie Heaven Retirement Home in Wardsville Ontario – A unique retirement home for the very aged and fragile
- What are other communities doing to gain exercise for the citizens so that heart/diabetes levels are not so high e.g. bike trails?
- Perth District Health Unit.
  - Fitness Centres (YMCA)
  - Alternative Health Care Providers
  - Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)
  - Heart & Stroke Foundation
  - Gateway Rural Research Centre
  - Cancer Society
  - Health Units
  - Family Health Teams
  - Innovative rural activities to encourage healthy living
7. **Value-Added Resources.** How can rural economies progress from primary to processing and knowledge industries?
- Huron Manufacturing Association
  - Huron Business Development Corporation
  - Lake Huron Learning Collaborative
  - Strathroy Better Business Bureau
  - The County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategic Plan
8. **Skilled Jobs.** How do rural municipalities attract businesses that will provide the skilled, based-based, and digital jobs?
- The Lucan Biddulph business retention and expansion study : Perry Caskanette
  - Municipal Cultural Planning Partnerhsip
9. **Agriculture.** How can we put more grocery dollars in the hands of the local producers? How do we encourage eating healthy local foods?
- The Arts and Cookery Bank: a cultural centre focusing on cuisine and local. West Lorne based. Serving four municipalities and two counties (Middlesex County and Elgin County). Contact: Grace McGartland.
  - Huron Federation of Agriculture
  - Middlesex Federation of Agriculture: Tracy Falco
  - Egg Farmers of Ontario
  - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMFRA): Ron
  - The REACH centre in Clinton: Richard Harding, CAO, Municipality of Central Huron

- Local Food Plus (Toronto): Lori Stahlbrand. Certifies producers with large institutions who want to buy local food
- 100 Mile diet
- European examples (France)

10. **Downtown Revitalization.** What types of business successfully exist in Downtown cores. Lists of successful businesses in vibrant downtown communities. What are missing in downtowns to make them more vibrant?

- Community Futures Development Corporation
- Chambers of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas and Downtown Merchant Associations
- Perth County Business Retention and Expansion Survey results
- Wardsville Ontario revitalization project: Mary Simpson, President
- Middlesex Community Future Developments Corporation, Main Street Program based in Washington, D.C. Proven model

What economic value can be attributed to a healthy small town business district/downtown in terms of employment, quality of life, and business attraction?

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Studies (OMAFRA) – Local downtown revitalization professions including County of Perth, Community Futures, North Perth Chamber of Commerce and social research planning
- Council's quality of life and other reports
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Studies (OMAFRA) – Main Street Program
- Rue Principle in the Province of Quebec
- Main Street Alberta
- American Downtown Associations
- United Kingdom Town Centre Management Associations

11. **Agri-Business.** What is the future of agriculture and agri-businesses in rural Ontario? Is there a future for the small, family farm? Do you have to be a large, corporate-style entity to survive?

- Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) studies from numerous municipalities
- Canadian Farm Business Management Council – Value Plus – Your path to farm success
- Rural Community Future Development Corporations (CFDCs)

12. **Childcare.** What is the impact on the economy and the quality of family by having access to quality childcare?

- Fraser Institute report
- Canadian Child Care Network
- Perth Care for Kids

13. **Watersheds.** How can we develop a strategy for building a resilient watershed in a way that tackles multiple policy issues?

- The Coon Creek project in Wisconsin
- New York Drinking Water Program – Watershed Agricultural Council
- Grand River Conservation Authority
- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Briefing notes on agriculture and Climate change

- Provincial expert panel report on climate change adaption: Dr. David Pearson, Chair
  - Local source water protection plans
  - Professor Will Steffen – Lecture on the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Stockholm Resiliency Centre website – multidisciplinary teams help communities develop strategies
14. **Planning.** How can information sharing be better delivered between/among communities at government level to maximize scarce resources (both people and money)?
- Public Libraries
  - Community Futures Development Corporation
  - Municipal Shared Services Committee
  - Past Councilors/Wardens who went through municipal amalgamation studies/debates
15. **Demographic Change.** How do we deal with the lack of leaders due to the demographics issues?
- Centre for Rural Leadership
  - 10 steps to rural leadership, OMAFRA
  - Dianna Denton, University of Waterloo
  - Anne Marie Madziak, Southern Ontario Library Service
16. **Gender Issues.** How can we create planning policies that will support women owned/operated non agricultural business on farms?
- Check for current research and case studies done in other provinces
  - Huron County Planning & Development Department
  - Pam Hannington of Goderich, Formerly of Women Today
  - Middlesex County Planning Department
  - Small Business Enterprise Centre of Huron: Alison Lobb
  - Community Future Development Corporations: Bruce, Huron and Cara Finn, Middlesex
17. **Immigration Issues.** What are the most likely new immigrant groups in Canada who will consider locating in rural communities? What settlement services are required in rural communities that don't currently exist? How racist are our rural communities?
- Previous research done in Huron by Sue Horvath, University of Guelph
  - Welcome Wagon
  - Chambers of Commerce
  - Community Immigrant Retention in Rural Ontario Program implemented by OMAFRA
  - Churches

## 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)

- Will post entry in the Wardsville community blog re: this process
- Make sure that research is aligned with government funding priorities e.g. jobs and employment
- Share these priorities with the Social Planning Council, Community Futures, Municipalities and other organizations with interests and passion for rural development and sustainability
- Continue my effort to get students from Fanshawe college to pick our community as a research project (urban design and planning dept). Tried last year and I shouldn't give up.
- Share compiled information amongst our communities and compare and contrast the data.
- Form sector based task forces to tackle particular interests
- Bring Transition Town to Eastern Canada - contact the Centre for Applied Renewable Energy
- Make researchers aware of Gateway RRC
- Community Futures Development Corporations (CFDCs) can continue answering question of local capacity
- Try to influence this process to get attention and research on the issue related to the impacts that climate change will have on rural communities and how we can begin the process building resilient communities
- Connect with more health professionals in the area
- Access the resource base to obtain research applicable to your own community
- Continue to work at building community partnerships
- Share these question priorities with Lake Huron Learning Collaborative, Huron United Way, Huron County Planning & Development Department, Community Futures Development Corporations, Arts and Cookery Bank in West Lorne, Huron Manufacturing Association to help with strategic planning and future initiative
- Ask Harold when the summary report will be available for distribution
- Continue connecting, linking, and collaborating
- More funding
- Get our local elected representatives to buy into these issues.
- Encourage forums like the Health Care forum, Renewable Energy Expo, etc..
- Examine the implications of single tier, or upper/lower and separated municipalities has on tax base sustainability
- Networking and building a contact list

## Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

*What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural community and economic development and making the Huron, Perth and Middlesex region a vital community (economic, social, health)?*

### Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 5) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 63

Total number of voters (N): 9

Rank	Issue	Comments	Comment Votes	Total Votes
1	Education and Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural school closings touches numerous issues - economic, social, health - focus on size rather than best use of school to community as a community centre</li> <li>Greater awareness of the value of non-traditional industries in the area</li> <li>Literacy of all sorts - basic literacy, digital literacy</li> <li>Need for educational satellites in communities (post-secondary)</li> <li>School closures</li> <li>School population is affected by loss of family farms</li> <li>Declining enrolment in schools</li> </ul>	3    3 1  0 0 0	7
2	Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers have responded to the challenge: "get more efficient". Result: fewer farms, fewer jobs, fewer support businesses, less spin-offs, more corporate ownership. Not to mention: hog industry and the result of H1N1 flu scare and the insistence of media to call it the "swine flu". Corporate control of farming: Monsanto et al. On the plus side: we have the local food movement. What will the impacts of &gt;\$100 per barrel oil be?</li> <li>Demise of the Family Farm</li> <li>Family farm succession challenges</li> </ul>	5     0 0	5
2	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to create employment opportunities</li> <li>Attracting jobs (skilled jobs) to small municipalities</li> <li>Mismatch: lack of skilled workers for jobs and lack of jobs for skilled workers</li> <li>Greater challenges recruiting professionals in rural area</li> <li>Underemployment due to lack of skilled jobs</li> <li>Lack of attractive, professional employment opportunities</li> </ul>	3 1 1  0 0 0	5
2	Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning based upon past trends don't necessarily reflect what the future will be like, climate change will be a game changer for rural communities because they rely on a stable climate are still largely resource based</li> </ul>	2	5

		<p>economies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to engage rural communities around the issues of climate change, breakdown of ecosystem services and biodiversity</li> <li>• Policies and regulations that relate to environment, runoff</li> </ul>	2 1	
5	Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the next generation going to support the health care costs of the aging baby boomers</li> <li>• Health care access limited causing out-migration and inability to attract new businesses</li> <li>• Medical professional shortage</li> <li>• Small hospital viability, shortage of LTC beds</li> <li>• Difficulty in attracting medical professionals</li> <li>• Large service delivery areas for social and community health practitioners = long travel times</li> <li>• Health: transition of health services. Small rural hospitals are losing services (but also gaining some). People see changes only as losses.</li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 0 0 0 0	4
6	Demographic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The baby boom echo has now grown up. No immigrants. Our older professionals are retiring and leaving for the city, e.g. teachers, lawyers, real estate agents, the leaders we need to stick around. Lack of people to do volunteer work. Lack of leaders. Older seniors must leave in order to find assisted living</li> <li>• Aging population</li> <li>• Lack of retirement facilities</li> <li>• The baby boomers will be retiring and taking their knowledge and skills with them out of the workplace. Many people believe this is a golden opportunity for youth, but youth are not making it into the workforce in these hard economic times</li> <li>• Retirement issues, creation of LHINs and what they mean to a community</li> </ul>	3     0 0 0 0	3
6	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural transportation</li> <li>• No access to major highway systems</li> <li>• There is no public transportation available between rural towns or to larger centres</li> </ul>	3 0 0	3
8	Government Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure of organizations to cooperate – municipalities, social services, schools, tourism, non profits</li> <li>• How to introduce systemic changes into a rural area</li> </ul>	1 1	2
8	Watersheds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to build a resilient watershed in ways that tackle multiple policy issues</li> </ul>	2	2
10	Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth engagement</li> <li>• Population is quite low in the 20s age group, causing few entertainment opportunities</li> <li>• Youth retention</li> </ul>	1	1

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outmigration of youth</li> </ul>		
10	Broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High speed internet</li> <li>• Lack of high speed broadband connectivity to all</li> </ul>	1 0	1
10	Tax Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to maintain a tax base that will sustain the community</li> <li>• Municipal tax structure that provides incentive to seek large square footage factories rather than next generation of creative economy careers</li> <li>• Small tax base</li> </ul>	1 0 0	1
10	Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural poverty specifically as it relates to lack of employment alternatives for the unemployed</li> </ul>	1	1
10	Renewable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are barriers to the adoption to renewable energy technologies, such as the moratorium on the connection to the grid, perception of health issues related to wind turbines Lack of resources in local rural governments to develop forward thinking, innovative, policies and initiatives</li> </ul>	1	1
10	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources in local rural governments to develop forward thinking, innovative, policies and initiatives</li> <li>• Increasing regulations related to environment, liability, etc. are urban based and don't take rural communities into account</li> </ul>	1 0	1
16	Green Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to put an economic value on ecological goods and service both public and private</li> <li>• Health issues with the wind projects is a concern</li> </ul>	0 0	0
16	Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak support system and financing for libraries relative to urban funding</li> </ul>	0	0
16	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we measure progress of our sustainability initiatives</li> <li>• Transitioning an oil dependent economy to making communities resilient</li> </ul>	0 0	0
16	Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure of organizations to cooperate – municipalities, social services, schools, tourism, non profits</li> <li>• How to introduce systemic changes into a rural area</li> </ul>	0 0	0
16	Value-Added Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exporting rather than processing</li> </ul>	0	0
16	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business people are busy, there are many good programs available, but how do we get the message out</li> </ul>	0	0
16	Gender Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning barriers to women wanting to establish businesses on a farm that are not farm related</li> <li>• Employment and business opportunities for women</li> </ul>	0 0	0
16	Red Tape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paperwork/red tape/reporting burden for municipalities – especially environment, water, sewage etc</li> </ul>	0	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 = 5) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 52

Total number of voters (N): 9

Rank	Issue	Questions	Votes	Total Votes
1	Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we change mindsets to think bigger and for the long term i.e. make sustainable decisions both at the level of the decision/policy makers and for the everyday person?</li> <li>How do we show leadership and pursue the leading edge of important changes needed for sustainability and still be relevant to the average citizen?</li> <li>What are the best practices in rural sustainability planning?</li> <li>When oil permanently rises to &gt;\$100 per barrel, what impacts will that have? Will rural communities become more or less viable? What do we do to prepare? How do we keep our commuters? What issues will we be faced with?</li> <li>How should we engage the community around the issue of climate change, ecosystem services and fossil fuel depletion?</li> <li>How does a community maintain a tax base to support sufficient services?</li> <li>Can the technology savvy generation Y's teach us something about new technology and sustainability? And similarly, can the "mature" generation that lived through the great depression teach us something about living sustainably within our means?</li> <li>In a community that has been devastated by the collapse of one of its two (automotive and agriculture) traditional industries, what sorts of new economic drivers have been successful in other communities which have faced a similar collapse?</li> <li>How can we create communities that are self sufficient in food?</li> </ul>	1 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 0	6

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do we have the infrastructure and capacity to build a society that is not based on fossil fuel usage?</li> <li>How do we educate our rural citizens on climate change and give them the availability to assist in problems of climate change?</li> </ul>	0 0	
1	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can planning for school closures, and proposals for "super schools" look at issues of transportation, efficiency, environment, community resiliency, to choose the best location for schools?</li> <li>How can post-secondary opportunities be made available to rural residents to foster entrepreneurship and job creation?</li> <li>How do we encourage higher educational institutions to promote and set up satellite and resources in small, rural communities?</li> <li>What is the local literacy rate, by local municipality (not currently available)? How do changes in literacy rate impact health care, concern for the environment, employment and economic success? How does digital literacy fare in rural municipalities versus urban areas? What are implications of lower digital literacy in knowledge based creative economy? What programs are making a difference? How do you define digital literacy? How does digital literacy 3.0 definition differ from prior views?</li> <li>How do we promote online education in rural communities?</li> <li>How do similar communities test scores compare in comparable communities with closures versus those without? What are options and uses for schools outside of school hours that would make them more sustainable? Can we think outside the box in how we put to use rural schools in our communities? What impact does closing a school have on volunteerism, on youth sports enrolment (i.e. on the bus rather than able to participate in sports), on crime rate? What's the correlation between communities with schools and local literacy rates?</li> <li>What educational outreach, initiatives or tools are the most effective for addressing rural illiteracy?</li> <li>Rural Schools - how do similar communities test scores compare in comparable communities with closures versus those without? What are options and uses for schools outside of school hours that would make them more sustainable? Can we think outside the box in how we put to use rural schools in our communities? What impact does closing a school</li> </ul>	2 2 1 1 0 0 0 0	6

		<p>have on volunteerism, on youth sports enrolment (i.e. on the bus rather than able to participate in sports), on crime rate? What's the correlation between communities with schools and local literacy rates?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What educational outreach, initiatives or tools are the most effective for addressing rural illiteracy?</li> <li>• Do we engage our rural children in the importance of education?</li> </ul>	0 0	
<b>3</b>	<b>Renewable Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we overcome the barriers to adoption of renewable energy technologies and climate change mitigation?</li> <li>• What are the best practices for alternative land use and ecological services performed by rural landowners and farmers?</li> <li>• As an investor/farmer, how do I do a cost/benefit analysis of alternative energy options?</li> <li>• What are the opportunities and strategies to develop bio technology i.e. bio fuels, 'farmaceuticals', nutraceuticals, etc.?</li> </ul>	2 1 1 0	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Youth Retention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the best practices for retaining youth? Attracting immigrants? Attracting entrepreneurs? Attracting cultural creative? Helping communities embrace change in order to attract newcomers?</li> <li>• How do you retain youth and give them the skills that are needed in the community so that they can find jobs in their home community?</li> </ul>	3 1	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the existing best practices and case studies for rural transportation networks?</li> <li>• Is there an efficient, cost-effective form of public transportation that can be provided in rural municipalities?</li> <li>• How do we assist communities with affordable rural transportation programs?</li> <li>• How can communities work co-operatively and creatively to address rural transportation issues?</li> <li>• Poor access to capital is limiting both economic diversification and social enterprise, even though there is a lot of "old wealth" in small towns and rural areas. What financial instruments can be created to mobilize the available private capital?</li> </ul>	2 1 0 0 0	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Health Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What incentives/enticements or resources are effective in attracting health care practitioners to rural communities?</li> <li>• What are other communities doing to gain exercise for the citizens so that heart/diabetes levels are not so high e.g. bike trails?</li> </ul>	2 1	<b>3</b>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is our community affected by lack of hospital and LTC beds in the community?</li> <li>What are the illnesses/diseases most prevalent in rural areas?</li> </ul>	0 0	
5	<b>Value-Added Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a resource based economy like Agriculture, Forestry, Mining etc. what are the ways that the community can get the most out of this economic base and create value added spin off economic benefits? This is also applicable to Wind Energy, we have the wind resource, how do we generate further economic benefit?</li> <li>How can rural economies progress from primary to processing and knowledge industries?</li> </ul>	2 1	3
5	<b>Skilled Jobs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Opportunities. How do rural municipalities attract businesses that will provide the skilled, based-based, and digital jobs?</li> </ul>	3	3
5	<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we put more of the grocery dollar into the hands of the producer? How can producers connect with consumers directly to educate folks on the health benefits of eating fresher and local? How do we take transportation costs out of our food system? Is efficient better? Better than what? Could local eating resolve some of our health care challenges as a society from high blood pressure to salt intake to preservatives intake and fast food culture? How do we moderate the legislation that is directed at production of food in Canada to make it accomplish the actual goal of healthier food while not penalizing and over regulating the smaller producer? How do we liberate consumers from the tyranny of mass marketing of unhealthy food?</li> <li>How do we assist in promoting agriculture?</li> </ul>	3 0	3
10	<b>Downtown Revitalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What types of business successfully exist in Downtown cores? Lists of successful businesses in vibrant downtown communities. What are missing in downtowns to make them more vibrant?</li> <li>What economic value can be attributed to a healthy small town business district/downtown in terms of employment, quality of life, and business attraction?</li> </ul>	1 1	2
10	<b>Agri-business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the future of agriculture and agri-businesses in rural Ontario? Is there a future for the small, family farm? Do you have to be a large, corporate-style entity to survive?</li> </ul>	2	2
12	<b>Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the impact on the economy and the quality of family by having access to quality childcare?</li> </ul>	1	1
12	<b>Watershed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we develop a strategy for building a resilient watershed in a way that tackles multiple</li> </ul>	1	1

		policy issues?		
12	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can information sharing be better delivered between/among communities at government level to maximize scarce resources (both people and \$)?</li> </ul>	1	1
12	Demographic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we deal with the lack of leaders due to the demographics issues?</li> </ul>	1	1
12	Gender Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we create planning policies that will support women owned/operated non agricultural business on farms?</li> </ul>	2	2
12	Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aging population - youth - immigration questions? What are the most likely new immigrant groups in Canada who will consider locating in rural communities? What settlement services are required in rural communities that don't currently exist? How racist are our rural communities?</li> </ul>	1	1
18	Cultural Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we capitalize on cultural economic development? How do we convince municipal leaders to invest in cultural planning?</li> </ul>	0	0
18	Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we attract or stimulate start up of businesses providing valuable employment?</li> </ul>	0	0
18	IT/Broadband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the abilities of people in rural areas to adjust to Information Technologies (IT)?</li> </ul>	0	0
18	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we build develop affordable housing for rural seniors?</li> </ul>	0	0

## Appendix C – Session Overview

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

- Identify Western Ontario knowledge needs and resources
- Prioritize research needs and opportunities
- Share experience and knowledge
- Build lasting relationships and communication channels
- Serve Western 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 Huron, Perth and Middlesex region a vital community (economic, social, health)?
2. **Research wish list:** 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?
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 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.