



Discovery Workshop Report
Hastings
September 17, 2008

INTRODUCTION

This report is part of The Monieson Centre's Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) Project, a three-year endeavour to connect academic knowledge with economic development needs in Eastern Ontario. The report is a summary of information collected at a 3-hour workshop in Bancroft, ON. Eleven community leaders and business people from the Grenville region gave feedback on their community's economic development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in 14 other communities in Eastern Ontario, will guide the research pursued over the course of the KIS project.

The workshop was hosted by Bob Cloes, General Manager of the North & Central Hastings and South Algonquin Community Futures Development Corporation. Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, introduced the KIS project and Erik Lockhart, Associate Director, Queen's Executive Decision Centre, facilitated the workshop. Special thanks belong to Anne Beaubien for her coordination of the workshop. The KIS project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

For more information, visit www.easternontarioknowledge.ca.



Community Futures Development Corporation
of North & Central Hastings and South Algonquin

QUESTION 1

What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making North Hastings a vital community?

Top Issues:

1. **Lack of cooperation between the various municipalities:** How do we bring all community groups together to provide a common focus for moving forward?
2. **Employment:** Lack of primary full time decent wage jobs;
3. **Technology infrastructure:** Lack of access to high speed internet and lots of cell challenged areas;
4. **Industrial base:** There is little manufacturing and value added industry and there has been a massive downturn in the resource sector, especially forestry;
5. Getting on the **Queen's Park radar.** How do we convince our Provincial government that rural Ontario is alive and well and not everyone wants to live in big urban centres?
6. Affordable **public transportation;**
7. Access to suitable **vocational and skills training;**
8. Retention of **young adults;**
9. Lack of a cohesive and inclusive **economic development strategy** and process;
10. **Servicing a senior population** that is higher than the provincial average (cost, health, housing etc.).

QUESTION 2

If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?

1. **Who visits here, when and why?** Feasibility studies are needed about tourist opportunities that haven't been developed in the region.
2. **What economic development models and strategies** work best in a rural area (with all the ED models out there... what really works best for us?)
3. **How do we stack up?** We need comparisons of like-communities so that we know how NH stacks up with similar sized areas re: tourism, econ dev, population migration, volunteer participation, grant successes, politics etc.
4. **Where do we get the funding?** What is available to us in terms of capital, funding, and financial resources so that we know how to find financing that fits the local businesses and economy?
5. **How can we add value?** How can we expand the forestry industry to include manufacturing i.e. what are uses for the type of forestry products we have here?
6. **Cutting through the red tape?** What govt. regulations hinder business growth and how can paperwork be streamlined?
7. **What assets do we have?** Need an inventory of resources and assets we already have (e.g. health, recreation, tourism, business). Then determine how we can capitalize on them.
8. **What do we need to do to attract newcomers** to a rural lifestyle?
9. What are the **benefits and costs of amalgamation** (with 14 municipalities in Hastings)?
10. **Going green?** What are the environmentally friendly industries that would generate jobs? How can we attract such industries? For Example, power generation using forestry by-products.

QUESTION 3

What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above?

Federal and Provincial Government

1. CFDC - access to capital, community capacity building, local initiative funding ...CFDC and the number of surveys // CFDC // CFDC // CFDC and the number of surveys
2. Ministry of Tourism newsletters - actual written newsletter mailed to operators

Municipal/County Organizations

3. Local Chamber of Commerce, BIA organizations
4. Chamber visitor records
5. Community care North Hastings can provide senior demographic information
6. Economic Development Dept. Hastings County (Andrew Redden) // NHEDC // North Hastings Economic Committee and CFDC Strategic Plans // North Hastings Strategic Plan (draft 2008) CFDC
7. Hastings County BR& E survey going on right now
8. Main street Revitalization Projects
9. Revitalization -residents, business surveys, location analysis, self assessments, asking visitors where they come from
10. Municipal Office Staff, Revitalization Committees and staff, and Municipal staff assigned to ED
11. New mineral study in Mayo Ward, Twp Carlow/Mayo, Freymond Lumber
12. North Hastings civic centre committee for recreational needs
13. Economic summit- Andrew Redden, Economic Development

Websites

14. www.2ontario.com
15. YLM Hastings County web page
16. Cobosc, Statscan, Strategis

Others

17. Transportation project underway - Gord Mcdonald CCNH
18. Inter community Cooperative organizations (e.g. Comfort country, Interagency monthly meeting)
19. Local Champions - community leaders
20. Local forest associations and SFL
21. NOTO e-newsletters nature and outdoor tourism organization
22. Study of sawmill residues and potential development (e.g. bio-oil, ethanol, combined heat and power plants)
23. Tapping known skills and proven experiences individual by individual

QUESTION 4

If this project is to be successful, what are the things that you would see in place in the next two years?

Better access to information

1. Concise information on how to tap into government resources.
2. We would have the information and data required to write successful grants.
3. The information we would require to do things is available.
4. Information would be distributed back to the community in timely fashion.
5. Access to an electronic or human resource to which or whom I could direct a question and get an answer or be directed to where I might find it.
6. Community groups would have equal access to the information needed to strengthen the dollar economy and the social economy.

Improved business climate sustainable in the longer term

7. The business climate in rural communities is favorable to influx.
8. We are able to use the research to create full time employment in north Hastings.
9. More support and follow-up is provided.
10. Sustainable ongoing support.

Easily understood and relevant report findings

11. A clear, simple research package that various community groups can use as a tool, addressing our top concerns - we keep re-inventing the wheel with limited dollars and never have comprehensive (complete, up to date) research.
12. Data is distributed in language that all can comprehend.
13. Demographic studies that are specific to NH and not skewed by larger areas.
14. Strategies focused on smaller rural regions like those in our region.

Better relationships / linkages

15. Networking capability with other members of the project - Pembroke, Renfrew etc.
16. Successful programs shared.
17. Regional sharing of events open to all areas and beyond.
18. Municipalities have come to the table as joint and equal partners in some initiatives.
19. Have a clear understanding of the goals of each of the organizations serving the area so they can function effectively without overlap to move the area forward.
20. More effective rural networking.

Intangible benefits

21. Small communities develop local and regional pride.
22. Convince the province that rural areas are worth investing in.
23. Eric's 6 burning issues solved so we can start on the other 25.
24. A North Hastings calendar of events.
25. We will have some clout in dealing with the bureaucracy.
26. We need a local understanding in all municipalities about the importance of the KIS project to us.

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

What are the pressing issues, challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making the Grenville Region a vital community (economic, social, health)?

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 7) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 23

Total number of voters (N): 14

Total # Votes	Needs and Challenges
9	1. Lack of cooperation between the various municipalities. //How do we bring all community groups together to provide a common focus for moving forward? //Lack of coordinated effort in the past which has fractured relations. //How do we overcome the local power base biases?
7	2. Employment //Lack of primary jobs (fulltime with decent wage)
7	3. Access to high speed internet //Bell Canada - providing decent service //Cell dead areas
6	4. Little industry, manufacturing, and industrial development; no value added; downturn in resource sector (i.e. forestry)
5	5. How do we convince our Provincial government that rural Ontario is alive and well and not everyone wants to live in Toronto?
4	6. Affordable public transportation
4	7. Suitable skills training //access to vocational training
4	8. Retention of young adults
4	9. A modern understanding of economic development as an inclusive process //lack of a cohesive economic development strategy
4	10. Servicing a senior population that is higher than the provincial average (cost, health, quality housing to attract retirees etc.)
3	11. Affordable post secondary education nearby
3	12. Leadership - some municipal decision-makers not visionary leaders... Volunteer burnout ..need for younger volunteers
2	13. Equal access to educational opportunities (available courses x high schools)
2	14. Affordable housing and limited rental stock
2	15. Demographic study needed
2	16. Doctor shortage
2	17. Distance from major centers and access to associated resources (e.g. Libraries, big pool, YMCA, services, professionals, etc.)
2	18. Government bureaucracy
1	19. Better roads, community transit, and infrastructure support for bridges
1	20. More effective & efficient rural infrastructure
1	21. Literacy - adult, workplace etc.
1	22. Compete with areas closer to Toronto for tourist dollars
1	23. Efficiency of resource applications. Why does every application for assistance take as much in resources to complete as we get in benefits?
0	25. Isolation - networking, plugged into groups

Appendix B – Rough Ideas for Question 2

Question 2: If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?¹

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: 19

Total number of voters (N): 18

Total # Votes	Requested Researcher Activities
10	1. We need feasibility studies about tourist opportunities that haven't been developed in the region (who, why) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find out how to access tourism ministry - How to expand the tourist season beyond the 8 weeks of summer - Who visits North Hastings – collect tourism demographics
9	2. What economic development models work best in a rural area and specifically NH?
9	3. Comparisons with like-communities -How does NH stack up with similar sized areas in terms of tourism, economic development, population migration, volunteer participation, grant successes, politics etc.). How have they dealt with issues x, y, z and what are some best practices being used elsewhere?
8	4. What types of financial resources are available to us (ex. capital, funding, financial resources etc.)? How can we find financing that fits the local businesses and economy?
6	5. How can we expand the forestry industry to include manufacturing and create value? What are other potential uses for the types of forestry products manufactured in NH?
6	6. What government regulations hinder business growth? How can paperwork be streamlined to minimize red tape (e.g. grants etc.)?
5	7. We need an inventory of resources/assets we already have (e.g. health, recreation, tourism, business). How can we capitalize on existing assets?
5	8. What do we need to do to attract newcomers to a rural lifestyle?
5	9. What are the benefits and drawbacks of amalgamation?
4	10. What are some green industries that would generate jobs? We need information on industries that we could attract that would be environmentally friendly, such as power generation using forestry by-products.
3	11. We need residence needs surveys to find out exactly what residents want from the greater North Hastings community. We need to build a business case for new business by evaluating the current mix of business and identifying gaps.
3	12. We need information on attracting residential development & investment.
3	13. How can we achieve a standalone rural self sufficiency considering that government policy focuses on major population centers.
3	14. How can we remedy the current lack of availability of development lands?
2	15. We need demographic studies to determine who lives here now (current levels of education are

	key).
2	16. We need up to date quality rural statistics that are not distorted by major population centers.
2	17. Would a casino work in NH?
2	18. What are some cutting edge technology related employment opportunities?
2	19. What do we need to do to ensure the present industry is supported?
1	20. How can we get high speed/high tech to prevent the widening information gap (i.e. access to info)?
1	21. How can we provide educational opportunities in communities with major literacy issues?
1	22. How can we tap into Toronto/Ottawa infrastructure (e.g. government information, the right dept, person etc.)?

Appendix C – Session Overview

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

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

Discovery workshop groups **explore four topics**:

1. Burning issues. What are the challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making Hastings 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? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?
3. Local capacity. What are the local resources (organizations, capabilities, past work etc.) that might contribute to addressing the issues identified above?
4. Defining success. If this project is to be successful, what are the things that you would see in place in the next two years? what must happen in order to ensure that the KIS project makes a positive impact on Hastings?

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 your region's burning issues with respect to economic development". 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.