



THE MONIESON CENTRE

CREATING VALUE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Discovery Workshop Report

Renfrew

October 8, 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 Pembroke, ON. Forty-One community leaders and business people from Renfrew County 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 Diane McKinnon, Executive Director of the Renfrew County 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 Dana Jennings and Jeff Dixon for their 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.



QUESTION 1

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

Top Issues:

1. **Communication challenges.** Many of our areas lack cell phone coverage and broadband access.
2. **Shortage of health care professionals.** We need more doctors, nurses, medical technologists, technicians and other allied health professionals.
3. **Unskilled workforce (both in trades and professionals).** We need info on skilled training and retraining, including attitude change. As well, we have a shortage of lesser skilled labour for retail, call centres, etc.
4. **Support for innovation.** We lack a strong medium for innovation to create new business sectors to assist the transformation beyond traditional sectors such as logging, tourism. There is also a fear and reluctance to change the status quo .
5. **Large size of County.** Our County's size limits accessibility to education, health care, employment, social networking, public transportation and other services with geographical economies.
6. **Improved road infrastructure.** Better secondary highways and twinning Hwy 17 across county are needed.
7. **Tourism attitude adjustment.** We need to create a mindset that supports growth in the tourism sector and development policies appropriate to rural Eastern Ontario.

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. **What is our niche and how can we celebrate it?** Study the competitive advantage of each community and build on those assets. Research how to obtain County unification, highlighting strengths of each town, village, and hamlet, and using global examples.
2. **How can we implement existing identified strategies?** Existing identified strategies and actions (i.e. Eastern Ontario Prosperity Plan) need an implementation plan. This research should include community activation, that is, ways communities could further come together to foster economic growth utilizing non-governmental resources. What can we do with what we have to increase self-reliance?
3. **How can we sustain our agriculture and forestry industries?** Research how to better sustain these key industries including creative uses for their wastes.
4. **Is tourism feasible for Renfrew County?** Develop a tourism feasibility study for the different communities in the County. Identify alternate tourism products and markets outside of the immediate area which could increase business traffic and revenues.
5. **What rural economic development best practices can we learn from?** What has worked in similar communities (regionally and globally) that we could utilize here?
6. **What funding opportunities exist for infrastructure renewal?** Investigate creative funding opportunities for infrastructure renewal including how to access funding outside the Municipality.
7. **How can we recruit healthcare professionals?** Research how other areas attract healthcare professionals. What are healthcare professionals looking for when choosing a community (money? Lifestyle? Recreation?)
8. **How can we improve transportation in our County?** Research how public transportation and inter-County linkages can be improved.
9. **How can we build Aboriginal participation in economic development?** Develop a cooperation strategy to include Algonquins of Pikwakanagan into broader regional economic development initiatives. How can we harness the potential of Aboriginal economic development and build external partnerships to support those developments?
10. **What policies will create a welcoming environment?** How can we encourage inclusionary behaviour (policy) in our county to assist in immigration, retention and creating a welcoming environment?

QUESTION 3

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

Federal and Provincial Government

1. Canadian Forces Base Petawawa - management, leadership research
2. Ministry of Culture & Heritage
3. Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities (MTCU)
4. Ontario Federation of Agriculture
5. Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)
6. Employment Ontario Resource Centres
7. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)

Municipal/County Organizations

1. Renfrew County Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)
2. "Buy Local"
3. Arts and culture organizations
4. Building Canada Fund
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. Communities in Bloom
7. Community and Cottage Associations
8. Community Planners
9. Eastern Ont. Wardens' Caucus (EOWC)
10. Enterprise Renfrew County
11. Eastern Ontario Development Fund (EODF)
12. Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP) through RCCFDC
13. High school and college student associations
14. Local planners and official plans
15. Ottawa Valley Economic Development (OVED) Partners Group
16. Ottawa Valley Tourist Association (OVTA)
17. Renfrew County Stewardship Commission
18. Renfrew County Woodlot Management Association
19. Seniors organization
20. Service clubs (Kinsmen, Kinettes, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Knights of Columbus, etc)
21. Trends Opportunities Priorities Strategy (TOPS) group
22. Deep river women's networking group

Websites

1. County connections (see renfrewcountyconnections.cioc.ca)
2. Municipal web sites

Reports

1. "Community Matters" needs assessment from Deep River
2. 10-year Capital Needs Assessment for County of Renfrew
3. 2008 Forestry Report from County Forestry Association
4. County of Renfrew 5-year Economic Development Action Plan

5. County of Renfrew Business Retention & Expansion Survey & Report
6. County of Renfrew Official Plan
7. County of Renfrew Trails Strategy
8. Eastern Ontario Broadband Gap Analysis
9. Eco-Tourism study done by Fleming College for Greater Madawaska Township
10. Economic Impact Study done for Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley-June 2006
11. EOWC Futures Direction Report
12. Forestry studies available
13. Individual municipal strategic plans
14. Local studies by large retail organizations
15. MNR Algonquin Park Forestry Masterplan
16. Numerous Forestry Studies & Reports for last 3 years
17. OMAFRA Strong Rural Communities Report
18. Ontario Business Improvement Area Association - Ongoing Tourism Study Via University of Waterloo
19. Province of Ontario Fiscal Capacity and Service Review (in process)
20. OVED Action Plan
21. Retail GAP analysis-Done by Algonquin College for City of Pembroke
22. Town of Renfrew-Downtown study
23. TOPS Labour Market Reports completed annually
24. United way - community assessments
25. Downtown revitalization studies

Other

1. Atomic Energy Canada Limited - researchers
2. Eastern Ontario Regional CFDCs
3. Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)
4. Physician Recruitment Teams
5. Professional facilitators for continued participation
6. Vision 20/20 Report
7. Farmers' markets

QUESTION 4

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

1. **Expansion of post secondary opportunities in Renfrew County, including another university/college satellite campus.**
 - Algonquin College proposal to build new campus is funded by Ontario Government and construction is near completion.
 - Expansion of college programs offered at Algonquin.
2. **Engagement of youth in Renfrew and higher youth retention.**
 - Hold a couple of youth forums.
 - Survey Renfrew County youth who are studying outside of the County: What would bring them back here after school to work/play?
 - Positive impact on youth at risk
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3. **Completion of one business case for a priority sector for the purpose of developing a template for interested communities.**
4. **Extension of HWY 417 past Arnprior. // Secondary highway road improvements.**
5. **At least one new doctor at each of the hospitals in Renfrew County.**
6. **Broadband connectivity is available Renfrew County wide.**
7. **Pilot project in operation. // Have in development a new implementable initiative that will address our highest priorities.**
8. **A website which hosts information/resources about the research that is going to take place concerning the issues brought up today.**
9. **Tourism Investment Attraction Strategy is completed.**
10. **Niche clearly identified & people actively participating in change & implementation**
 - Accurate identification of opportunities - not what we assume they are, but what they actually are - accompanied with action steps to utilize each opportunity effectively.
 - Renfrew County will be identified as the RURAL destination of choice. New residents and visitors are attracted by our unique social and natural heritage.
11. **Action plan developed. // A feasible business plan developed.**
12. **Follow-through and implementation of the study to achieve the projected results. Examples of results in other communities that can help sell the project to local governments and community groups.**
13. **Community engagement.**

- A Champion to mobilize projects.
- Increased participation at a community level
- Community involvement in growth processes

14. Renfrew County is recognized in Ontario as being an inclusionary society that welcomes immigrant investment, cultural diversity, and encourages economic growth.

15. Recover 400 jobs in Pembroke creating sufficient tax base to keep up with infrastructure demands.

- No more job loss in the forestry and agricultural sector.

16. Productively changing workforce (easier access to training for employed & unemployed, high skilled work opportunities).

17. Municipalities and communities working together and collaborating more.

- Renfrew County Rural and Urban communities have a mutually supportive development strategy.
- A framework for a comprehensive County wide plan is created and implemented to support economic development.

18. Affordable broadband internet access is available throughout all of the Ottawa Valley.

19. Delivery of the best practices study to all communities.

Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

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

Voting Results

Multiple Selection (maximum choices = 6) (Allow bypass)

Number of ballot items: 21

Total number of voters (N): 15 teams at the computers

Votes	Rank	Needs and Challenges	
12	1 (tie)	Communication, notably cell phone and broadband access	
12		Need for health care professionals: doctors, nurses, medical technologists and technicians. //Rapid recognition of "off shore" professional qualifications, both healthcare and others.	
11	3	Unskilled workforce (both in trades and professionals) //We need info on skilled training and retraining, including attitude change. //Availability of lesser-skilled labour for retail and call centres //Building of Algonquin campus	
9	4	Create a medium for innovation to create new business sectors to assist the transformation beyond traditional sectors (e.g. logging, tourism) & encourage change; fear & reluctance to change status quo	
8	5	Size of County limits accessibility to education, health care, employment, social networking, public transportation	
7	6	Improved road infrastructure: twinning Hwy 17 across the County and better secondary highways.	
5	7	Creating a mindset that supports growth in the tourism sector //Investment/experience/policies to fund/coach shift to new economic options, i.e., tourism; Development policies appropriate to rural Eastern Ontario.	
4	8 (tie)	Youth retention and creating opportunities	
4		We need info on our connection to the global economy, in particular what we offer and what they need	
4		Aboriginal involvement in various economic development initiatives and sectors	
3	11 (tie)	Export market diversification for forestry and agriculture. //New forest product dev & secondary processing.	
3		Tax and public policy. Reliance on 85% residential tax rates to support services; need to increase commercial and industrial tax base and rates.	
1	13 (tie)	Community capacity: our community's (including businesses) ability to accommodate the growth required	
1		Dealing with high business education tax rates vs. weak ratings of public school education.	
1		Need for a County-wide strategic plan & communication thereof	
1		Political will - proactive vs. reactive	
1		Succession planning: as workforce ages and people leave, how do we maintain continuity?	
1		Child poverty: high rate in our County	
1		Downtown revitalization, vibrancy - local spending	
0		20	Lack of population growth

Note: prior to voting, the group brainstormed ideas and then merged the similar items. Below in non-bold are the merged items. These items are ordered as they were originally brainstormed (i.e. not as they were ranked by the group). Items that did not have any ideas merged are not included.

2. Communication, notably cell phone and broadband access

- Improved & affordable high-speed broadband internet access and expanded cellular telephone coverage.
- Broadband access to all of Renfrew County to support business and economic development, educational services, health care, etc.

4. Improved road infrastructure: twinning Hwy 17 across the County and better secondary highways.

- Transportation; distance to market, cost of sales.
- Improved transportation to move people and goods within the county and to other regions.

5. Youth retention and creating opportunities

- Need to retain youth in the County

6. Need for health care professionals: doctors, nurses, medical technologists and technicians. //Rapid recognition of "off shore" professional qualifications, both healthcare and others.

- Health Care; Physicians, home support, overcoming distance in access - clinics.
- Shortage of doctors
- Shortage of medical staff (doctors, nurse practitioners)

7. Unskilled workforce (both in trades and professionals) //We need info on skilled training and retraining, including attitude change. //Availability of lesser-skilled labour for retail and call centres //Building of Algonquin campus

- Availability of skilled labour and apprentices to support AECL, manufacturers, construction & refurbishment; need skilled professionals: physicists, engineers, technologists, technicians.
- We need info on skilled training and retraining, including attitude change.
- Lack of job opportunities (both for trades and professionals)
- Building of new Algonquin College Campus to address several economic development/educational issues. Job creation, retain youth, attract more youth to region, skilled labour force.

8. Community capacity: our community's (including businesses) ability to accommodate the growth required

- Industry Growth - Housing is an issue - not enough housing to support industry growth, Small Business Growth - cost of importing required supplies - shipping and exporting, Investment Readiness - investment at a county level to be able to support growth, High Speed internet to keep the community at a level where they can stay up to date with global community; Large geographic area - challenge for health care, communication sharing of resources - Community Activation.

12. Tax and public policy. Reliance on 85% residential tax rates to support services; need to increase commercial and industrial tax base and rates.

- //Crown land supports industry such as forestry and tourism, but doesn't directly provide a tax base.

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: 17

Total number of voters (N): 46

Votes	Rank	Research Issue
35	1	Define our niche & celebrate it; Study the competitive advantage of each community and build on those assets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research how to obtain County unification highlighting strengths of each town, village, and hamlet using global examples Develop an External Communication Strategic Plan (branding and marketing opportunities in the Ottawa Valley).
26	2	Implementation plan for existing identified strategies and actions (i.e. Eastern Ontario Prosperity Plan). //Community activation: research ways communities could further come together to foster economic growth by implementing non-governmental resources. What can we do with what we have to increase self reliance?
25	3	How to better sustain the forestry and agriculture industries (including creative uses for wastes from these industries); Innovation to create new businesses (e.g. new products, forestry etc).
22	4 (tie)	Develop a tourism feasibility study for the different communities in the County. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify alternate tourism products and markets outside of immediate area to increase business traffic & revenues. Develop a tourism investment attraction strategic plan.
22		Rural Economic Development Best Practices: What has worked in similar communities globally that we could utilize here?
19	6	Creative funding opportunities for infrastructure renewal (and recommendations for new technology solutions); Accessing funding outside the Municipality
16	7 (tie)	Research how other areas attract health care professionals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are health care professionals looking for when choosing a community (e.g., money? lifestyle? recreation?)? Research how other countries recognize off-shore professional qualifications, both healthcare and others.
16		Research how public transportation both within the county and linkages to outside the county can be improved.
15	9 (tie)	Develop a cooperation strategy to include Algonquins of Pikwakanagan into broader regional economic development initiatives. //How to harness the potential of Aboriginal Economic Development and external partnerships to support those developments?

15		How can we encourage inclusionary behaviour and policy in our County to assist in immigration, retention & creating a welcoming environment (e.g. culture, education, etc.)
14	11	Business case study analysis: education/training, skills development
11	12	Researching the capacity to change within a community
10	13	Research commercialization of select technologies (AECL, CFB etc) through licensing agreements and development of new local manufacturing ventures (value-added flexible business networks, virtual corporations).
9	14	Components to an expanded County website that would include information required to attract investors as well as link investors to local resources.
5	15	Business Case Study Analysis - Downtown Revitalization
3	16	Find out why child poverty is so high.

Note: prior to voting, the group brainstormed ideas and then merged the similar items.

Below in non-bold are the merged items. These items are ordered as they were originally brainstormed (i.e. not as they were ranked by the group). Items that did not have any ideas merged are not included.

3. Research how other areas attract healthcare professionals.

- How to train more doctors at the university level -- why aren't enrolment numbers increased when there is such a demand for new doctors??!!

4. Rural Economic Development Best Practices: What has worked in similar communities globally that we could utilize here?

- Best practices study of like communities. Consolidating fragmented knowledge
- //Rural Econ Dev Best Practices

5. Define our niche & celebrate it; Study the competitive advantage of each community and build on those assets.

- Determine our competitive advantage with respect to our given assets and what the global economy requires that we could provide
- More detailed information on natural heritage features; fishery, Champlain Sea geology etc.
- What are ALL of the county's resources - identify all resources to show not just the quality and quantity, but availability - are there areas we are over looking we could further develop to maximize potential - outside of the obvious

6. Creative funding opportunities for infrastructure renewal (and recommendations for new technology solutions); Accessing funding outside the Municipality Recommendations for new technology solutions for affordable infrastructure as improvements to existing roads, waste management, sewer & water etc.

- Research access to funds for economic and community development.
- How do we get provincial ministries to work collaboratively to fund capital economic development projects? Rather than a single ministry paying the cost, why can't many ministries share the cost when a project addresses several economic development issues?

12. Implementation plan for existing identified strategies and actions (i.e. Eastern Ontario Prosperity Plan).

- Learn how to mobilize the community to implement initiatives.

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 Renfrew County 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 Renfrew County?

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.