

# HURON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

## FINAL PROJECT REPORT



**An Award-Winning Economic Development Program delivered in partnership by  
the County of Huron, Huron Business Development Corporation and the  
Rural Economic Development Fund of the  
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs**

**June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 – May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010**



**Brief Description of Project:**

Huron Economic Development Matters (HEDM), led by the County of Huron and Huron Business Development Corporation, was a recipient of Rural Economic Development Funds for a three-year term (June 2007 – May 2010). Over the duration of the program, \$726,545 was directly invested in local economic development projects in three broad project areas: community revitalization, economic growth and youth engagement. Eighty-seven (87) distinct economic development projects were launched under the program in collaboration with 79 individual partners. Additional private and public investments of \$4,300,694 were leveraged from other sources for a total of \$5,026,239 invested in economic development projects throughout Huron County. Over that time period, 421 Huron County businesses were directly assisted with start-up or expansion through services provided by the Huron Economic Development Matters Partnership. As a result, 2,949 jobs were either created or maintained in Huron County. With an average one-time public cost of \$458 per job created and maintained, the efforts of Huron Economic Development Matters now provide senior level governments with an annual return-on-investment of approximately \$7M generated through income taxes.

**Objectives and Results:**

Huron Economic Development Matters was devised by the County of Huron, its nine member municipalities, and the Huron Business Development Corporation as a means to address 4 key barriers facing the regional economy at the time. These included:

- A rate of business closures that had begun to outstrip new business start-ups, leading to a decline of the overall enterprise base;
- Threats to export-oriented companies in Huron County from stiff off-shore competition combined with a high value of the Canadian dollar;
- Impending labour shortages caused by an imbalance of workforce retirements compared to new labour force recruitment;
- A general decline in downtown viability caused by a range of demographic, economic and social factors.

A broad-based strategic approach was taken to address these issues focusing on 3 major program pillars:

I. **Community Revitalization Efforts** in 5 program areas:

- Business Retention & Expansion Initiatives
- Downtown Revitalization Initiatives
- Community Enterprise Projects
- Newcomer Recruitment Strategies
- Community Leadership Training

**A total of \$5,026,239 was invested in economic development projects throughout Huron County during this program resulting in the creation or preservation of 2,949 local jobs.**

II. **Economic Growth Efforts** in 4 program areas:

- Business Planning for Emerging Opportunities
- Invest-in-Huron Marketing Campaigns
- Industry Call Program
- Workforce Improvement

III. **Youth Engagement Efforts** in 3 program areas:

- Workplace Skills Initiatives
- Youth Internships
- Youth Enterprise



*55,000 copies of the Huron Perth Buy Local Buy Fresh Map were printed and distributed.*

Over a three-year period, the Huron Economic Development Matters Initiative was instrumental in providing support to eighty-seven (87) distinct economic development projects involving a total of seventy-nine (79) partner groups and agencies.

**I. Community Revitalization Efforts**

Thirty-three (33) initiatives were launched under Community Revitalization, including:

- Five (5) Business Retention & Expansion Initiatives in Goderich, South Huron, Bayfield, Wingham and Brussels;
- Seven (7) Downtown Revitalization Initiatives in Blyth, Goderich, Bayfield, Exeter, Seaforth, Clinton and Dungannon;
- Thirteen (13) Community Enterprise Projects, including:
  - Shakespeare-to-the-Shoreline
  - Bayfield River Valley Trail
  - Lake Huron Learning Collaborative
  - “Noted” Young Women Vocal Artists CD
  - Huron County Cultural Plan Implementation
  - Buy Local, Buy Fresh Direct Farm Marketing Map
  - Celebration of First Nations Festivals (2)
  - Bluewater Bug Flag Designation
  - West Coast Blues Festival
  - Rural Roots Concerts in the County
  - Bayfield Festival of Song
  - Howick Farmers’ Market



*The town of Exeter has a new logo resulting from the Exeter Downtown Marketing & Branding Initiative.*



Left: The 2009 West Coast Blues Festival was a huge success, drawing visitors from abroad.



Right: The featured performers on Huron County's "Noted" CD.

- One (1) Newcomer Recruitment Strategy, the Huron County Local Immigration Partnership Council;
- Six (6) Community Leadership Training Initiatives, including:
  - Three (3) 10 Steps to Community Action Classes
  - Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) Conference
  - Strength in Numbers Buy Local Forum
  - Customer Service Excellence Training
  - Advanced B, R & E Training
  - Transition Training for Community Leaders



Left: A large number of Huron County leaders in attendance for the Strength in Numbers Buy Local Forum in Clinton.

Right: The Huron County delegates to the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies Conference (BALLE).



## **II. Economic Growth Efforts**

Fifteen (15) initiatives were launched under Economic Growth, including:

- Eight (8) Business Plans for Emerging Opportunities, including:
  - Commercial Production of vitis vinifera wine grapes
  - Business Models for 10 Huron Specialty Cheeses
  - Co-operative marketing of Huron County Beef Products
  - Cultural Marketing Plan for Reuben R. Sallows Gallery
  - Master Plan for Port Blake Recreation Area
  - Market Feasibility for Goderich Arts & Cultural Centre
  - Food Enterprise Opportunities Initiative
  - Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint
  
- Four (4) new web-based promotional vehicles for Huron County, including;
  - [www.investinhuron.ca](http://www.investinhuron.ca)
  - [www.shopinhuron.ca](http://www.shopinhuron.ca)
  - [www.creativehuron.ca](http://www.creativehuron.ca)
  - On-line content for Promotion of a Huron County Film Industry
  
- An Industry Call Program that visited 65 company representatives to identify and address barriers to business growth in the manufacturing sector;
- An Attracting Renewable Energy Manufacturing Opportunities Initiative to stimulate new investment in the region's green economy;
- An Advanced Aircraft Manufacturing & Maintenance Training Initiative to create new jobs in the region's aviation industry.



*Left: Goderich Aircraft International, located at Huron Park, has become an Advanced Aircraft Manufacturing and Maintenance Training facility.*

*Right: A 'think tank' on how best to move Huron County into a period of economic growth through an Economic Development Opportunities Blueprint.*



### III. Youth Engagement Efforts

Thirty-Nine (39) initiatives were launched under Youth Engagement, including:

- Fourteen (14) Workplace Skills Initiatives for Youth
  - Huron Employer to School Development Fund
  - S.T.E.P. Technology Skills Camps (2)
  - Spokes On-line Learning Portal
  - Centre for Applied Renewable Energy Career Fairs (2)
  - Willing Workers Youth in Transition Program
  - First Step to Leadership Training for Youth
  - 2009 Huron Perth Career Symposium
  - Service Excellence Training Certificate Program
  - Skills Opportunities Showcase Mobile Trailer
  - Med Quest Health Care Skills Camps (2)
  - Manufacturing Workforce Development Project
  
- Twenty (20) Youth Internship Placements:
  - Brussels Downtown Heritage Researcher
  - HealthKick Huron Summer Programs Leader
  - Sallows Gallery Curator Interns (2)
  - Huron County Immigration Partnership Council
  - Gateway Rural Health Research Institute
  - Huron Community Family Health Team
  - South Huron Chamber of Commerce Events Coordinator
  - Blyth Festival for the Arts Marketing Intern
  - Walton Motocross Marketing Promoter (2)
  - Huron East Tourism Ambassadors (2)
  - Bayfield Chamber of Commerce Programs Coordinator
  - Huron County Health Unit - Youth Spark Coordinator
  - Township of Morris-Turnberry History Book Researcher
  - Huron Tourism Association Marketing Internship
  - Sloman School-on-Wheels Student Curator
  - Township of North Huron Community Developer
  - Goderich B.I.A. Downtown Business Developer
  
- Five (5) Youth Enterprise Initiatives
  - Huron County Youth Council
  - South Western Ontario Opportunities Project
  - Lake Huron Watershed Youth Summit
  - Engaging Youth in Arts & Culture – Epic Shift Festival
  - Above the Falls Ropes Challenge Course



*The Technology Skills Camps gave students a chance to explore a wide range of careers in the skilled trades.*



*The Above the Falls Challenge Course creates jobs for youth and gives youth a chance to develop leadership skills.*

### Other Results of Project

In 2009, Huron Economic Development Matters was the recipient of the EDCO Award for Best Economic Development Plan in Ontario. This award, given by our peers, demonstrates the respect the program has garnered across the province over the past 3 years. It is confirmation that rural communities benefit most from coordinated, collaborative regional approaches to

economic development that address several barriers simultaneously using a series of broad-based, but complimentary initiatives.



*Huron Economic Development Matters – an award winning project.*

The partnership model exemplified by Huron Economic Development Matters has received great interest from abroad. It was showcased at the ROMA/OGRA convention in 2007 and the Ontario East Municipal Conference in 2009. The program model has been adapted to other Ontario regions as well, including Perth County and Bruce County. Huron Economic Development Matters is a reflection of success for the County of Huron, Huron Business Development Corporation and OMAFRA.

### Benefits of the Project (direct, indirect, short term, long term):

Over the course of its three-year mandate, the Huron Economic Development Matters Initiative was responsible for the following direct, immediate, short-term benefits:

- **329 enterprises** benefited from participation in B, R & E exercises;
- **65 manufacturing firms** benefited from participation in the Industry Call Program;
- **15 farm operators** benefited from training in direct farm marketing through the Food Enterprise Opportunities Project;
- **335 community leaders** benefited from enhanced leadership skills by attending such programs such as 10 Steps To Community Action; Business Alliances for Local Living Economies, Strength in Numbers Buy Local Forum; Customer Service Excellence Training; and Advanced B, R & E Training;
- **2,722 youth** benefited from an increased awareness of skilled career opportunities through participation in Youth Engagement efforts including Workplace Skills Initiatives, Youth Internships and the creation of Youth Enterprise.

In the long term, did Huron Economic Development Matters make a difference by:

#### *Increasing the number of business start-ups compared to closures?*

- **421 enterprises** were launched or expanded operations with the direct assistance of services provided through the Huron Economic Development Matters Partnership; this represents a growth rate of approximately 7.25% in Huron County's enterprise base.

*Ensuring jobs for the workforce as we transition into a new economy?*

- **2,949 people** found work in Huron County as a direct result of services provided through the Huron Economic Development Matters Partnership; this represents a growth rate of approximately 9.2% in Huron County's employment base.

*Influencing the number of youth choosing a career in Huron County?*

- **38% of Huron County youth** surveyed in 2010 intend to find a career in Huron County. This compares to 44% when last surveyed in 2005. (Note: this figure comes as a surprise and disappointment to project partners, as the opposite trend was expected, given the number of youth engagement projects supported).

*Enhancing the long-term viability of our communities?*

In the end, did Huron Economic Development Matters make our world a better place? It can be safely said that there is a new sense of optimism and hope in many Huron County communities that can be traced back directly to the Huron Economic Development Matters Initiative.

Consider that:

**Bayfield** - has much to take pride in these days, including the fact that its beaches and marina are now designated under the Blue Flag Initiative –while a new walking trail exists along the Bayfield River Valley and a new Bayfield Main Street streetscape plan is being developed– these are key assets now assured for residents and visitors alike;

**Benmiller** - has a new attraction – it's an Above the Falls Ropes Challenge Course that is already bringing visitors from far field to develop their leaderships skills while enjoying all that the area has to offer;

**Blyth** - is looking spruced up these days – new paint, new storefronts as local merchants and the local Council come to understand the benefits of civic pride that come from façade improvements;

**Brussels** - has a much greater appreciation for its past due to the efforts to catalogue, document and celebrate the many historical assets possessed by the village and its residents. These are now becoming the basis for moving forward strategies;

**Clinton** - took a real hit with a major downtown fire in 2009; but things are looking up as local merchants capitalize on the findings of the Town's Identifying Business Opportunities Analysis to capture new emerging market opportunities;

**Dungannon** - is undergoing what only can be described as a renaissance, with a renewed interest in the community, an enhanced self image, and the revitalization of volunteer efforts for community betterment;

**Exeter** - is full of excitement as it becomes one of only a handful of towns to participate in the provincial Downtown Revitalization Program – a designation largely due to revitalization efforts undertaken over the past 3 years;

**Howick** - will have a new venue at which to meet, greet, socialize and do business as the new Howick Farmers Market gets up and running;

**Huron Park** - is booming these days with a new Advanced Aircraft Manufacturing & Maintenance Training Facility launched in partnership with Goderich Aircraft International and Fanshawe College – 46 new jobs to date with another 200 expected in the next few years;

**Goderich** - is growing according to plan. A new butcher shop has opened up on the Square, while plans are coming along nicely for a Regional Arts & Cultural Centre – both these were identified as high priorities in the Town's Identifying Business Opportunities Analysis;

**Seaforth** - is once again showing others the way with the establishment of the Gateway Rural Health Research Institute – the only community-based research facility of its kind in Canada;

**Wingham** - is reaping the benefits from a closer working relationship between Council and the business community as a result of the B, R & E initiative.



Take a closer look at the many good things happening in the Huron County economy for the past 3 years and you will find one thing in common – they have been supported by the staff, volunteer and financial resources provided by the Huron Economic Development Matters Program – a best practice model for rural economic development.

**Financial Summary – June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 to May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010**

<b>BUDGET LINE ITEM</b>	<b>PROJECTED COSTS</b>	<b>ACTUAL COSTS</b>
<b>Community Revitalization</b>		
Business Retention & Expansion	\$120,000	\$141,781
Downtown Revitalization	\$126,000	\$138,156
Community Enterprise Development	\$135,000	\$113,407
Newcomer Programs	\$ 80,000 *	\$ 4,000
Economic Leadership Programs	\$ 30,000	\$ 6,743
<b>Economic Growth</b>		
Business Planning	\$111,000	\$217,631
Invest in Huron Marketing	\$165,000	\$264,301
Industry Call Programs	\$199,000	\$ 90,601
Kaizen Productivity Training	\$ 59,000 +	\$ 24,342
<b>Youth Engagement</b>		
Workplace Skills Initiatives	\$ 75,000	\$ 74,625
Youth Enterprise	\$ 82,000	\$ 83,764
Youth Internships	\$128,000	\$155,718
Canadian Youth Business Foundation	<u>\$ 40,000</u> ^	<u>\$ 36,742</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,350,000</b>	<b>\$1,351,811</b>

**BUDGET NOTES:**

\* Newcomer Programs were not implemented during the course of Huron Economic Development Matters as the timeline for delivery was dictated by a new program funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada/Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture. The new Huron County Local Immigration Partnership Council was launched as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 and is a direct result of the Huron Economic Development Matters Partnership.

+The Kaizen Productivity Training Initiative did not take off as planned due to a lack of interest from smaller manufacturing companies. As a result, a new plan was devised and implemented to address manufacturing workforce needs under the Huron Manufacturing Association's Workforce Development & Training Plan.

^The Canadian Youth Business Foundation was not implemented due a lack of interest from young entrepreneurs. Funds were reallocated to other youth engagement initiatives under Workplace Skills Initiatives; Youth Enterprise and Youth Internships.