

# Huron Economic Development Matters

*Helping entrepreneurs make good things happen in Huron County!*

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## Huron receives top award in Ontario for Economic Development strategy

Huron County was recently nominated for three Economic Development Council of Ontario (EDCO) awards and took top honours in all three. In the Tourism category Huron received the top awards for the special event with Doors Open Haunted Huron, also receiving an award of merit for the restyled Ontario's West Coast Brand. The Huron Economic Development Matters (HEDM) partnership between Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC) and The County of Huron received the award for Best Strategic Plan in the Business Development category.

"This year, over 150 entries were judged" stated 2009 EDCO President Aileen Murray, Ec.D (F). "The competition allows local communities to see just how they stack up against other municipalities when it comes to promoting location, investment & tourism opportunities"



**Kerri Herrfort, Huron's Downtown Revitalization co-ordinator, Ken Oke, Huron County Warden, Pamela Stanley , HBDC President, Rick Sickinger , Heritage and Cultural Partnership co-ordinator and Jenna Ujiye, Huron's Tourism Marketer.**

we are as economic development agencies."

"It is nice to get recognition for the event, the major significance being that six of the county's municipality worked together"" said Rick Sickinger, Heritage and Cultural Partnership co-ordinator .

The Ontario's West coast brand has been around 15 years and went through a re-styling process in 2008. "The Ontario's West Coast Brand is the image for our County," stated Jenna Ujiye, Tourism Marketer for the County of Huron "The recognition of Ontario's West Coast brand will help to build great tourism profile for the community."

EDCO is the country's largest provincial economic development association with a membership of close to 600.

Rick Sickinger and Jenna Ujiye were on hand to accept the tourism awards and Pam Stanley and Warden Ken Oke accepted the HEDM award during the Annual Conference of the Economic Development Council of Ontario. "It is an honour to receive this award as the competition is very stiff" stated Paul Nichol, Economic Development Manager for HBDC. " This demonstrates how effective

Huron Economic Development Matters is a partnership between:

**Like our look?**

We often get comments about the HEDM newsletter and do our best to respond to them. One comment received recently was how difficult this page can be to read on a computer screen. You spoke, we listened and the result is a new easy-read format. Enjoy!

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# Year-end report on the state of Huron's economy

The following report highlights the major activities and achievements for the past year under five pillars of service delivery – Small Business Development; Economic Development; Community Revitalization; Youth Engagement; and Training.

In 2008, a total of **33,430 individual client contacts** were served at the Huron Business Centre in Seaforth, up 8% from with the previous year's total of **30,959**. The tangible results of this activity are outlined as follows:

## IN SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

**2,039 consultations and inquiries** were served with entrepreneurs regarding their plans to start-up or expand their business ventures.

**8 new businesses** were launched in 2008 with the support of the **Self Employment Benefit Program**, offered in partnership between Employment Ontario, the County of Huron and the HBDC. These businesses currently employ 15 people.

**167 mentoring sessions** were held with business owners, resulting in **12 business start-ups and expansions** and an additional **31 jobs** created throughout Huron County.

**697 people attended business management workshops** on a variety of topics from marketing to bookkeeping as part of the ever-popular **Better Business Series**.

**775 participants** attended HBDC-sponsored **Business Networking Events** that brought together business owners from the 4 main pillars of the Huron County economy – agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and culture. Sponsored events included:

- Huron Perth Buy Local Buy Fresh Launch Event in Seaforth (25);
- Growing Your Opportunities Direct Farm Marketing Workshops in Clinton (20);
- Huron Manufacturing Association Annual General Meeting in Goderich (44);
- HMA Awards of Excellence in Goderich (290);
- Annual Tourism Event & Brochure Swap in Zurich (150);
- Heritage & Cultural Partnership Spring Celebration in Goderich (42);
- Merging With The Green Economy Symposium in Goderich (112);
- Huron Women in Networking in Holmesville (92);

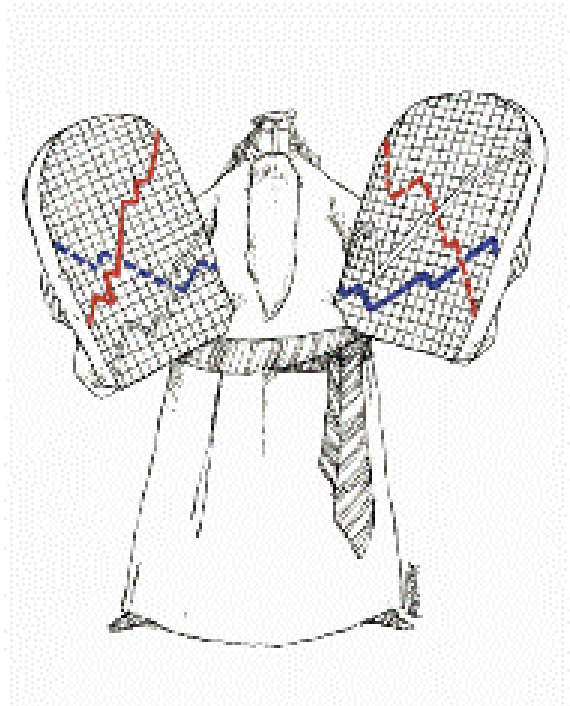
**16 individuals** sharpened their business management skills by enrolling in on-line programs offered through HBDC's **Community Futures Development Institute**.

**\$1,106,726 in commercial loans** was approved to **19 Huron County businesses** in 2008, resulting in the creation of **105 new jobs** throughout the region.

## IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

**4 Business Planning Initiatives** continued this year to explore emerging opportunities in the Huron County economy. These included:

- Marketing Plan for Cultural Assets and the **Reuben Sallows Gallery**



## .....Economic Development continued

- Feasibility Study for a **Centre for Fine & Performing Arts**
- Climatic Assessment for the **Commercial Production of Wine Grapes**
- Feedstock Inventory for **Bio-fuels Opportunities for Producers Initiative**

Business and lifestyle opportunities in Huron County were showcased provincially at the 2008 International Plowing Match held in Teeswater. Huron County representatives were on hand to unveil new marketing materials under the **Invest-in-Huron** banner.

65 one-on-one consultations were held with Huron County industrial leaders as part of the HMA-led **Industry Call Program** to determine business challenges and opportunities for dealing in a volatile economy.

The Huron Manufacturing Association developed and endorsed a new industry-led **Workforce Development & Training Plan** that ensures access to a highly-skilled labour force for local manufacturers.

### IN COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION:

Support to implementation of development strategies arising from **Business Retention & Expansion Initiatives** continued in **Goderich** and **South Huron**.

Funding was awarded to the Huron East Economic Development Committee to pursue a new **Business Retention & Expansion Initiative** in **Brussels** in the upcoming year.

Financial support was also given to the Exeter Business Association to launch a **Marketing & Branding Initiative for Downtown Exeter**.

**200 Huron residents** were engaged in efforts to learn about best practices in economic development at events such as:

**Strength in Numbers** workshop in Clinton (75);

**Huron Community Matters Conference** in Brussels (98);

**Business Alliances for Local Living Economies** in Boston, Massachusetts (11);

**Local Economies in Transition** Roundtable in Benmiller (38).

**52 representatives of Huron County businesses and organizations** enhanced their customer service skills by completing the **Customer Service Excellence** training program delivered by HBDC staff.

Funding was obtained from the McCall McBain Foundation to launch the new **Gateway Rural Health Research Institute** in Seaforth – the only community-led organization of its kind in Canada – and 2009 winner of the national Community Futures Initiative Award.

Support was provided to several other worthwhile community initiatives that are improving the economic, social, cultural and environmental health of Huron County. These include:

Implementation of the exciting new **Huron County Cultural Plan**;

Promotion of local farm-gate sales through publication of the **Buy Local Buy Fresh** producer locator map with over 100 entries;

Sponsorship of the first-ever **Celebration of First Nations** series of cultural events that attracted 335 participants to locations throughout Huron County.

Efforts to engage community partners in the creation of a **Huron Immigration Partnership Plan** paid off with an announcement from Citizenship & Immigration that funding was approved for strategy development in 2009.

**24 Huron County residents** developed their community leadership skills by taking part in the renewed **10 Steps Rural Leadership Survival Series**, offered twice in 2008.

**HEDM Approvals :**

(September 08–January 09)

The following economic development projects have been approved for HEDM funding:

- A total of \$43,000 was approved for the HMA Workforce Development and Training Plan.
- \$12,000 was approved to support the implementation of a BR&E Program in Bayfield.
- \$5,000 was approved from the Workplace Skills Camp Fund to assist in the organization and presentation of the 2009 Huron/Perth Career Symposium.
- \$1,400 was approved from the Workplace Skills Camp Fund to the Foundation for Education Huron/Perth to offer the Service Excellence Certificate Program to local youth in 2009.

# Ec. Dev. review of the year past

**IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:**

**6 local youth** received a taste of small business by operating their own summer ventures with the support of the **Summer Company Program**.

**238 young people** took part in HBDC-sponsored youth skills initiatives, including:

- Economics of Staying in School (75)
- Service Excellence Certificate Program (101)
- Technology Skills Summer Camp 2008 (25)
- 2008 Huron Med-Quest Camp (24)
- 2008 Huron County Business Plan Competition (7)
- Small Business Week Youth Entrepreneur Profiles (6)

**9 young people** gained valuable job experience and networks by participating in the **CED Youth Internship Program**. In addition to developing their job skills, these interns lent support to many economic development initiatives, including:

- Consumer Business Opportunities Survey in downtown Goderich;
- Co-ordination of Community Events in South Huron;
- Marketing of Tourism and Lifestyle Opportunities in North Huron;
- Capturing of Market Opportunities Arising from Walton Motocross;
- Enhancements to the award-winning Spark youth website;
- Tourism Ambassador Program in Huron East;
- Co-ordination of Med Quest 2008 Camp in Seaforth;
- Marketing of Cultural Tourism assets at Sallows Gallery in Goderich;
- Operation of Chamber of Commerce office in Bayfield.

**22 young leaders** from across Huron County came together to form the first **Huron County Youth Council**, designed to provide a voice to Huron County Council on matters affecting youth in the region.

Efforts continued in earnest to develop a business plan for the **Above the Falls Ropes Challenge Course** at Falls Reserve Conservation Area near Benmiller that will channel proceeds into youth programming throughout Huron County.

**IN EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING:**

**556 Huron County residents** found new jobs this year with the support of employment services provided by HBDC staff at the **5 Centres for Employment & Learning**.

In addition, with the announcement of the closure of **Volvo** in Goderich, HBDC staff were on-hand to provide extensive employment needs assessments and case management services to **309 laid-off workers**.

**19 healthcare workers** continued their training as part of Year 2 of the **Registered Practical Nurse Training** program delivered by Georgian College in Seaforth and sponsored through the **HealthKick Human Resources Initiative**.

**We're on the web!**

[www.smallbusinesshuron.ca](http://www.smallbusinesshuron.ca)  
[www.huroncounty.ca](http://www.huroncounty.ca)

## Career Symposium set for end of April

As many as 2,000 students from across Huron and Perth Counties will fill the Seaforth Arena on April 28th and 29th this year when the Huron/Perth Career Symposium comes to town.

Building on the success of past symposia, Career Symposium 2009 has been organized to showcase leading local industries and to provide valuable and timely information about the various education and employment opportunities available in our communities. The symposium is a jointly lead endeavour of Foundations of the Avon Maitland District School Board, the BGHPGT Training Board, Community Matters, HealthKick, the Business Development Corps of both Huron and Perth and a variety of other partnering agencies.

The Huron Economic Development Matters committee has contributed financially to the event to the tune of \$5,000. Organizers expect as many as 100 exhibitors to participate in the two-day event, including local employers, employment related organizations and post secondary institutions. All area high school as well as Grade 8 students will be encouraged to attend.

In addition to the great information which will be on display at the Career Symposium, the event will include a chance for young people to try their hand at the trades thanks to an interactive display being provided by Tim Martens of the Huron Perth District Catholic School Board. The focus of the Symposium is on employment opportunities which will retain or return students to the area for future employment. The day will include breakout sessions and panel discussions on a variety of topics relevant to youth attendees and the local community. It is hoped many community members outside the school system will also benefit from attending. In addition to providing valuable hands-on information about the employment opportunities in Huron and Perth, Career Symposium will also serve as this year's Community Matters Conference when dinner and a keynote address are offered in the evening after the school buses have left.

For more information about Career Symposium 2009, call Wes at 519-600-2273, ext. 262.



## Feeney takes on workforce development

Last year, to further address the needs of its membership, the Huron Manufacturing Association commissioned the development of a comprehensive work plan known as the Workforce Development and Training Plan. At its most recent meeting, the HEDM Committee approved core funding for the implementation of the plan and gave a nod to the hiring of John Feeney as its coordinator.

John, a former HBDC and current HMA board member, recently worked with Huron's Senior Economic Development Officer Mike Pullen on a wide reaching Call Program. That successful program provided the HMA with a number of findings and it is these findings that form the basis of action for the Workforce Development and Training Plan. The plan itself has a number of components, not the least of which is to encourage new business start up. Other components to be overseen by Mr. Feeney include making the best use of current funding, collaborating with other organizations in Huron, promoting the HMA and communicating with its membership.

The Workforce Development and Training Plan will spend a good deal of time focusing on education for youth and new-entrants preparing to enter or re-enter the manufacturing sector workforce and will strive to develop better relations with local schools. The HEDM fund will provide an average of \$25,000 per year over the coming three years to carry out the ambitious plan.



**Former HBDC board member John Feeney will oversee the Workforce Development and Training Plan.**

# Funding for Communities in Transition

The County of Huron, in collaboration with the HEDM Committee, has ultimately been successful in garnering financial support from the provincial Communities in Transition fund.

The \$300,000 in funding, which required a revised proposal before being approved, will allow six local projects to move forward. Local partners have committed an additional \$138,000 to the various projects all of which focus on economic development.

“(With approval of this funding) the County of Huron and its partners are prepared to move quickly on the implementation of these six projects,” said Mike Pullen, Huron’s Senior Economic Development Officer.

The six projects noted in the application include an assessment of the assets of the Volvo Road Machinery facilities and the Goderich harbour. The end product of the assessments will be the marketing of the Volvo buildings and lands as well as to determine the potential for expansion of the harbour.

Other projects include assessing the feasibility of turning the former Centralia College into an aeronautics and/or airplane refurbishing training facility; to review the possible usages of the existing infrastructure at the Richard Levan Airport in Wingham; to accelerate core economic development marketing strategies; and a long-term project which will create an economic development blueprint for Huron County.

## This issue’s Mystery Picture



**You probably recognize the two gentlemen in this picture (shame on you if you don’t!!) but the question is: Where did this high level meeting take place?**

**All will be revealed in the next HEDM Newsletter.**

# Last issue’s mystery man was definitely NOT being arrested

In the Fall issue of the Huron Economic Development newsletter, we asked you to identify the person in this photo and to determine whether or not he was being arrested when the picture was taken.

Well, mystery solved! That’s Craig Harrison, Program Manager of the Willing Workers Youth Employment Project. And while he was speaking with a police officer when the photo was taken, he would like to make it very clear that he was not being arrested. In fact, Craig spends much of his working day making sure young people have the right information and support so they can make good choices in life and not run afoul of the law.



**Craig Harrison is the Program Manager of the Willing Workers Youth Project.**

On the day the HEDM camera visited the Willing Workers’ home on Hamilton St. in Goderich, Craig was arranging to have local OPP officers stop by the office to speak with the young people who gather there about what they do. The point of the visits is to help break down the barriers which often exist between youth and police officers.

It apparently works and Craig is still a free man.