ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY HANDBOOK
Note to Users

This document showcases the experiences of several municipalities from across the province in addressing changing economic circumstances that face Ontario’s municipalities. It is intended to provide examples that may inspire similar successes across Ontario. However, it is not a replacement for local analysis and decision-making. Municipalities are responsible for making local decisions, which includes responsibility for compliance with common law and applicable statutes or regulations. The showcase kit summarizes complex matters and does not include all details. Legal and other requirements change from time to time.

For these reasons, the handbook should not be relied on as a substitute for specialized legal or professional advice in connection with any particular matter. Independent legal and professional advice should always be obtained in connection with any new proposal. The user is solely responsible for any use or application of this showcase.
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**FOREWORD**

**Would you be ready?**

As the local television station news van pulled into Middlebrook Falls’ city hall parking lot, a crowd began to gather. The town was buzzing with rumours and everyone knew there was about to be a major announcement. The lead story on the 6 o’clock news was that Ardex Mill was setting up a new mill location on the outskirts of this relatively small community in Ontario. Within the Middlebrook Falls official plan, town council had the foresight to describe parts of the settlement area for potential employment uses.

The Ardex Mills president sang the praises of the local economic development and planning team. He noted that the quick response time, the excellent customer service and the wealth of knowledge provided by the economic development team were the major factors that convinced Ardex Mills to make Middlebrook Falls the home of their new Ontario location.

The company found that there was support from the community, strong local leadership, a commitment to establishing partnerships and regional collaborations, and many unique attributes within the town.

These factors provided the conditions for a company and its employees to flourish and grow.

If someone was looking for an opportunity in your community, would you be ready?

**“What’s in it for my community?”**

This tool kit contains keys to success that have been developed by academics and tested on the ground by Ontario communities. It offers guiding principles that can help to lead your community to sustainable prosperity. All readers can apply these principles to their own situation and community and work towards their own successes.

It promotes building a sustainable community based on what makes your community unique. It may help you to develop strategic plans that integrate your municipality’s unique attributes with land use planning and economic development strategies, which could result in the retention and attraction of new business.

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“For municipal leaders across Northwestern Ontario, economic development is more than just a buzzword - it is a key consideration in every decision. The creation or retention of even one job has a significant impact in northern communities and must be paramount.”

- Ron Nelson, President, Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association
Executive Summary

This community showcase is an opportunity for communities from across the province to share their unique experiences in dealing with the changing economic circumstances facing Ontario municipalities. Other success stories will potentially be added in the future.

The cases included in this handbook are just some of the many success stories of communities dealing with common problems in innovative ways. These municipalities have tackled tough economic times head on and have successfully transformed and reinvented themselves to build stronger, more prosperous communities.

As these communities tell their stories, several common innovative practices become apparent. Their stories provide examples from which other municipalities can learn, and practices that other municipalities can use and adapt to their own circumstances.

KEY COMMON FINDINGS

1. Unique Attributes: Identify unique attributes and determine how to use them to the municipality’s advantage.

2. Research & Marketing: Investment in researching and marketing a municipality is often essential to successful community development. Many Ontario communities are finding innovative ways of marketing themselves to build local industry and attract new business investment.

3. Partnership and Regional Collaboration: Partnership and regional collaboration across a wide range of stakeholder groups, including business, local government, educational institutions and citizens, plays a very important role in community transformation. It is also important to understand how others in your area are linked, inter-dependent and compete in a global market.

4. Local Leadership: Local leadership is often the starting point for positive change and development within a municipality. Having a strong local champion is often a major factor to community success.

5. Quality of Life: Communities should focus on the quality of life within their municipality if they wish to attract business and a talented work force.

6. Long Term and Strategic Planning: Long term and strategic planning is essential for a community in the establishment of a vision and priorities to better serve the needs of its citizens. This planning will prepare them to complement aspects of the plan when opportunities arise.
7. Citizen Engagement, Youth Empowerment and Vision: Engaging citizens and identifying the community vision is a foundation for community long-term planning and guides the development of a community to meet the needs and wants of citizens. The meaningful participation and involvement of the youth of a community plays a critical role in the sustainable development of a municipality.

8. Social Diversity and Inclusion: Some municipalities realize that embracing the diversity of their population can serve to strengthen their community and can present many new opportunities.

9. Business Expansion and Retention Programs: Many municipalities focus on business expansion and retention programs to improve community economic readiness, provide jobs for their citizens and build a stronger local economy.

10. Adaptability and Innovation: Municipalities have learned that being able to recognise changes in circumstances promptly, adjusting plans and being adaptable are major keys to success. Many communities have recreated themselves as they generate and identify imaginative and innovative solutions, or new ways of doing things.

11. Economic Diversification: Many communities credit their success to the planning and building of a community that has a broad economic base and a variety of income and employment opportunities that will better support their municipality in the face of change.
PART A
METHODOLOGY

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing examined research findings on municipalities undergoing transformation from a variety of sources. Eleven key common community practices became evident and were termed the community keys to success.

To support the research findings, a survey was developed and administered to seven municipalities in Ontario. These communities which represent various regions of the province were chosen as a starting point based on a variety of characteristics. They had to be representative of the various regions in Ontario. They also had to represent the variety of industries and settings found in Ontario communities: e.g. resource harvesting, manufacturing, rural and urban.

A case study for each municipality was then developed to highlight the particular keys to success used, the lessons learned, and how the municipality went about initiating their transition to success. Each case study outlines the early challenges or economic crisis that precipitated the planned changes, the community’s response and the successes achieved.

All the municipalities, either through targeted planning or their post-evaluations, identified most of the keys to success.

In the development of the case studies, the ministry team worked closely with each community to ensure all the data, issues and lessons were captured appropriately.

How to use this handbook

This handbook tells the stories of the seven communities that, when faced with new challenges, applied many of the same practices to improve the future of their municipality. These communities continue to make inroads towards their own unique futures. Other success stories will potentially be added in the future.

Learn the keys to success. See how other communities used them to develop their strategies. For each case study you find relevant, see how the keys were applied. You may then adapt these methods and develop strategies that address the challenges and economic transformation in your community, based on your own community’s unique strengths and perceived weaknesses.

Engage with participants. The tool kit includes the contact information for each of the municipal case studies. These contacts may help provide more detailed information about their process as well as their strategy.

“Regional collaboration allows for the pooling of resources when it comes to attracting foreign direct investment. The sharing of costs, people, project time, and leads allows a region to get a much higher profile at events and also offer potential investors a greater mix and depth of skilled workers and infrastructure.”

- George Hanus, President, Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance
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Each community was surveyed, and they identified the factors they felt were important to their success. While other factors noted in the table may have been important, the checked factors are considered by the local community to be key.
COMMUNITY KEYS TO SUCCESS: DEFINITIONS

The following provides explanations of the key success factors found in this handbook as well as some additional factors that played a supportive role in the transformation of many communities in Ontario.

Unique Attributes

Many successful communities are very effective at identifying their unique attributes and determining how best to utilize those attributes. These can range from human, geographic, natural or financial resources within a community. Analyzing your unique attributes sometimes requires looking at potentially perceived negative community aspects in a different way to see how they can be turned into an asset. Some of the best success stories have been from communities that have been able to turn their obstacles into opportunities. Sometimes it requires changing from the old patterns of thinking. Success can often come from building on what is working in your community and not focusing on what is wrong.

A community’s uniqueness can often be at the core of its competitiveness. How a community leverages or creates a uniqueness of place can help set it apart from other municipalities. It is important to note that you cannot copy another community’s unique attributes. Each community must focus on what is special and unique to their particular municipality.

Research & Marketing

Creating a community profile based on the systematic recording, gathering and analysis of community information can be an effective input and feedback mechanism that will lead to sound community development plans and decisions by community leaders. Having this information readily available for potential investors enhances a community’s investment readiness.

Community profile information can be effectively used to also develop a community marketing plan, aligned with the community’s strategic plan. Marketing plays a vital role in economic sustainability or growth, especially in the present global market. To attract business, industry, or visitors, a community can market itself locally, regionally and beyond. A marketing program may include advertising in printed publications, the use of other media, public relations, promotions, and an Internet presence. Some success stories have included communities that focused on their community first impression branding of their community or a lifestyle theme.

Partnership and Regional Collaboration

Many successful communities of all sizes focus on collaboration and partnership development across a wide range of stakeholder groups, including business, local government, educational institutions and its citizens. This may be of particular importance to medium and small size municipalities. Partnership can also take the form of cooperation between multiple communities to work together for a common goal in one or more areas of interest. Often smaller municipalities have limited staff and resources to
dedicate to economic development. Some of the greatest successes occur when such communities work together to pool resources and ideas for the benefit of all municipalities in a region. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and regional collaboration can significantly improve a community’s and region’s chance of success.

**Local Leadership**

Having strong community leadership or a local champion is often the starting point for positive change and development within a municipality. Meaningful and lasting change often starts with local people and their knowledge. Leadership is at the foundation of building and sustaining a healthy and thriving community. Strong leadership in a community ensures that the best ideas are brought forward from the citizens and that there is commitment to action by decision makers.

**Quality of Life**

In today’s global economy the manner in which communities create and maintain a competitive advantage has changed forever. Today a municipality’s ability to attract and retain highly educated talent needed for sustainable growth has become a vital factor. However, attracting and retaining this talent is challenging. When it comes to choosing where to locate, workers consider more than just pay and benefits. Workers, more and more, evaluate the quality of life of a community when deciding where to live and work. People want their communities to be safe, friendly, healthy and prosperous, with high quality amenities such as health services, education, shopping, recreation and parks. Strategic businesses take such interests into consideration when deciding where to invest. Communities focus on their quality of place if they wish to attract business and a talented work force.

**Long-Term and Strategic Planning**

Transitioning a community is a long-term process that is often community driven and supported over multiple administrations. Municipalities must therefore be strategic in their planning and focus their time and resources where they will gain the most benefits. Once a community has a plan, it may help to build some benchmarking or self assessment into the process to help determine and report back progress and challenges. In addition, recalibrating the plan according to changing circumstances is critical to ensure a community stays on track and committed to its vision.

**Citizen Engagement, Youth Empowerment and Community Vision**

Citizen engagement is based on the belief that people have the right to and possess the desire to have a say in the decisions that affect their communities. Citizen engagement may aid in the development of a community vision and plan that people will be committed to implementing and that will be more closely aligned with local government decisions. Many rural regions of the province recognise that if they are to build a future for their community, they must invest in their youth. Younger generations are the future of our communities. Access to education and youth facilities are key community youth supports that can assist youth to be future leaders in a community. Communities often look to their
youth to help generate ideas. Empowering youth is a simple step to increasing young people’s pride in their community and allows them to realize that they can contribute to making their community stronger and more prosperous for the future. This sense of empowerment could be the one single act that brings them back to live in the community when they start families of their own. A community development plan and vision must be based on a consensus approach and on clearly defined goals. All other plans and actions can then support the community vision and plan. In the case studies, many of the successful strategies did not come by bringing in outside experts, but came from grass root mobilizations within a community.

**Social Diversity and Inclusion**

Knowing who your citizens are is a critical factor to successfully transition a community. This is important for all sizes of communities to ensure effective and representative citizen engagement. This can be as simple as knowing the demographics of a community and supplying the services and programs that meet their needs including supports that address social diversity and inclusion. Often the strength of a community can be equal to its ability to embrace diversity.

Some communities have created population strategies. Such strategies may examine how to attract the return of a lost demographic, how to attract a new demographic, or how to outreach to specific demographic groups, for example, how to foster communication with local immigrant communities.

**Business Expansion and Retention Programs**

Small businesses are the source of many jobs and innovation that contributes to the healthy economy in a community. Many successful communities have strategically supported new and expanding local businesses. Additionally, youth can gain skills and experiences in entrepreneurship. Small businesses that focus on how they can make their own success by selling or serving locally or outside the community are likely to bring more success in to the community.

**Adaptability and Innovation**

For communities to be successful in this highly competitive global economy, they must be innovative, flexible and adapt quickly to the ever changing economy. Throughout the research, communities that accepted and embraced change and looked for new ways to do things, stood out from other communities. Innovation can lead to new industry and opportunities, such as what we have seen with the green economy boom in many communities. Communities that are flexible enough to think of new processes and ideas have made successful transitions.

**Economic Diversification**

It may be important to diversify the types of industries and sectors as much as possible within a community. The community can still focus on its current employment base, but it is important to ensure the economy is not dependent on a single industry or sector.
The more diversified a community becomes, the better it will weather a downturn in its transitional sector(s). Creating two to three jobs in different business areas can be the first steps to creating a stronger and more diversified local economy.
MEETING THE CHALLENGE
CASE STUDIES OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES
BY MUNICIPALITIES IN ONTARIO

CALEDON
ELLIOT LAKE
HAMILTON
INGERSSOLL
KENORA
PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY
WELLAND

Note:
Not all case studies use the same census years. The data included in each case was specifically chosen to reflect the time period when each municipality was encountering a time of transition.

PART B
CALEDON: FROM GOOD TO GREAT-MARKETING YOUR STRENGTHS

KEYS TO SUCCESS

As part of the Greater Toronto Area, Caledon has the infrastructure required by industry and offers an attractive natural rural landscape which sets it apart from many of the other GTA municipalities. Caledon sought to research the unique attributes of the community for the purposes of marketing them to current and potential residents and businesses. Caledon already had a diversified economy, but in this regional and global marketplace they realized that they needed to further diversify their economy, work with their partners to create new high quality jobs and continue to improve Caledon's quality of life.

CHALLENGE

Provincial environmental requirements had to be taken into consideration in Caledon's development plans. The community had to balance protection of the environment by offering developers less of its land area with the continued desire by council to encourage industrial and commercial assessment growth and job creation to match the skills of its residents. Caledon was facing land use planning and development pressures, while wanting to maintain its rural character and attract business growth. The town was also losing employment in its legacy industries.
TURNING POINT

International corporations were attracted to the rural and smaller town quality of life offered by Caledon. However, these companies were also attracted to many other similar communities in North America. This realization spurred Caledon to look at new marketing opportunities - one being joining an inter-municipal economic alliance.

RESPONSE

The municipality set out to find what the current businesses needed and incorporated those needs into a strategic plan. The community leaders understood that business retention and expansion was their key to sustainable economic development.

The town initiated an exhaustive research project to understand and create easy access to key town data to be better able to respond to outside investment opportunities as quickly as possible. Response time was critical to maintaining interest for foreign investment. To respond to these questions from outside investors and better support businesses residing in town, they also established the Economic Development Department.

In conjunction with the survey of the business community, Caledon sought to understand the unique traits on which to promote the town. While gathering this information, they joined forces with the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA) to market the Greater Toronto Area and Caledon internationally.

Lastly, the town set out an aggressive green development initiative called the Green Development Program to encourage developers to build to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. LEED ranks and measures a building’s environmental performance and is managed through the Canada Green Building Council. LEED became a point they use to sell Caledon as one of the greenest communities in the province.

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CALEDON

Population
57,050

Main Industry
- Advanced Manufacturing Fabricated Structural Metal
- Plastic Products
- Food and Agribusiness Management
- Scientific and Technical Services
- Specialized Design Services
- Engineering Services
- Tourism
SUCCESS

Caledon took several deliberate and manageable steps forward. Caledon’s success came from the process they used to understand local business and potential outside investment needs. For example, the town can now respond to investment inquiries within the same business day.

By joining the GTMA, Caledon was able to partner with the rest of the municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area and reach new markets.

The community has been successful in attracting international companies such as PepsiCo, The Gap, and Best Buy, amongst others. As their greatest asset, Caledon continues to promote the community’s quality of life for its residents and businesses and marketing its unique advantages to outside investors.

Caledon, through improved processes and alliances, continues to provide investors with the information they need quicker than they have done before. That speed highlights to potential investors that the community is ready to do business and is responsive to business needs. Coupled with a high quality of life, Caledon is confidently growing from good to great.

For more information about Caledon please visit caledon.ca/edc

“The Town of Caledon’s Economic Development Department recognizes the needs of business and understand that in today’s economic climate, decisions need to be made in a timely manner. The Town of Caledon has and continues to strive for excellence in ensuring that we provide our customers with relevant and accurate information, providing them with the assistance they need to make critical decisions on how to best proceed and grow their business.”

Norm Lingard, Manager of Economic Development Town of Caledon
Elliot Lake: A Showcase of Natural Beauty and Quality of Life

Keys to Success

The community of Elliot Lake worked together to create a vision for their city. Much of the community’s success was based on the collaboration between the municipality and its citizens, business and the provincial government. Showing strong local leadership, the council and the mayor took the great ideas put forth by the community and turned them into action. A strong emphasis was placed on long-term planning and council set up an office to chart the community’s economic future. That office supported the city with the appropriate tools to counteract any future economic shocks and build economic development capacity. Building on the city’s attributes, special attention was placed on marketing the natural beauty and quality of life in Elliot Lake, especially as it pertained to its potential to become a successful retirement destination.
**CHALLENGE**

Elliot Lake was once known as the Uranium Mining Capital of the World. After two large periods of decline in the mining industry, Elliot Lake had witnessed over 4,500 layoffs.

The first of these declines was minimized when the community came to an agreement with Ontario Hydro to purchase their uranium. Although the agreement with Ontario Hydro stabilized the city, they were still heavily dependent on mining and would again face major closures in the 1990s. As the environment changed, the community recognized that it needed to diversify and prepare for a period of great transition to reinvent itself.

**TURNING POINT**

The decline of the mining industry was devastating to the community. By the mid-1980s, Ontario Hydro realized they had contracted for an over-supply of uranium concentrates and had to reduce the surplus. In January, 1990, Rio Algom announced the closure of two uranium mines, scheduled for March, 1991, affecting 1600 workers. Denison made a similar announcement affecting 450 miners. By 1996, all uranium mining had stopped in Elliot Lake.

**RESPONSE**

The city developed a recovery plan. Part of the community’s response was to research, prepare and have a plan in the event of available investment funding opportunities.

As a result of their readiness, the city was successful in obtaining Ministry of Northern Development & Mines (MNDM) funding when one of their new programs became available. The city used this money to create a Municipal Economic Development Agency (MEDA). The city used the funding to create an Economic Development Office. A discussion paper was developed by MNDM in March, 1989 and by June staff had identified potential provincial and federal ministries that needed to be involved if a community economic downturn occurred.

In 2006, there was a resurgence of interest in becoming more investment-ready. The community worked with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) to determine how to support their current businesses, how they could expand them and how they could garner more attention from the private sector.

The community leaders reached out to citizens to capture their ideas into the strategic planning process. This allowed council to identify six main pillars that it would use as the foundation of the community’s recovery plan. One of these pillars was to position the city as a retirement community and another was to open a Drug and Alcohol Treatment facility.
SUCCESS

Many of the successes resulting from the community’s recovery plan were achieved through the Economic Diversification Strategy. These successes include the Elliot Lake Retirement Living Program, the Elliot Lake Research Field Station of Laurentian University and the Oaks Drug Addiction and Alcohol Treatment Centre.

The city has also been successful in repopulating the community. Much of its success has largely been due to marketing the quality of life rather than the traditional production-based economy. Cottage lot development helped stabilize the economy as part of this initiative. The city has aggressively marketed and sold cottage lots on the lakes. To date, over 200 lots have been sold and lot development and cottage construction have provided a strong boost to the local economy. Retail and service sectors are stronger, from an employment perspective, than they have ever been.

The community is strong and prosperous with a population of approximately 11,500. It boasts a strong infrastructure and prosperous economic environment, full of shops, restaurants, and other retail establishments, that is comparable to that of any modern small city. It has a first-class hospital with helipad, police and fire protection, local transit service, excellent schools, a municipally owned and operated airport and a wide array of recreational, social and leisure facilities and programs. Elliot Lake now promotes itself as a safe, clean, affordable community in a friendly rural setting.

For more information please visit elliotlake.com.

“It has always amazed me since coming to Elliot lake in 1993 how committed and willing local folks have been to give of themselves to help their community survive and move forward. Without this there would not be an Elliot Lake today.”
- Richard Kennealy
GM of Elliot Lake Retirement Living Inc.

“I am proud of the resiliency and determination of the citizens of Elliot Lake throughout the difficult period and life altering experience. Elliot Lake has become a symbol of inspiration and hope for hundreds of single industry communities in Canada and beyond.”
- George Farkouh
Mayor of Elliot Lake 1988-2006
Hamilton’s geography has been its unique attribute from the time the first textile company was established to when the steel and auto industries dominated the economic activities. It has a well-developed business expansion and retention program and a streamlined land use planning model with a strong focus on customer service for its businesses and citizens, which has allowed for a more timely and efficient planning and development process. Collaboration with institutions, associations, stakeholders and other levels of government has also been a major key to Hamilton’s success. Today, Hamilton has maintained its population and kept a low unemployment rate through a diversified economy and attention to planning economic development strategies. The people that make up its labour force value quality of life; they find

**CHALLENGE**

Hamilton has long been known as the Steel Capital of Canada. Structural changes in manufacturing (including steel) over the last 30 years from off-shore production to the introduction of high-tech industries have had profound impacts on the city’s economic and social fabric. The city was also challenged with increased social service costs, environmental remediation issues and a population base with below-average household incomes. In addition, it had to address aging infrastructure, uneven development of the waterfront and lack of development in the north end. As a percentage of household income, property taxation levels in the City of Hamilton were already one of the highest in Ontario.
TURNING POINT

A soft market and an extended downturn in the auto industry in 2008 resulted in significant job losses. As new growth moved away from urban centres into the surrounding suburban areas, urban downtowns such as Hamilton suffered from a lack of investment, both public and private. Companies began to close offices located in the city to reduce administration and ease costs.

RESPONSE

To deal with the various issues facing Hamilton’s future, Hamilton approved a cluster based Economic Development Strategy. Like the previous two versions, this strategy focused on a number of interdependent themes, namely diversification, innovation, and cost competitiveness.

To increase the city’s economic diversity Hamilton developed its own plan to aggressively expand and retain business. Associated with this, Hamilton’s national award winning Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement (ERASE) Program was designed to create opportunities to redevelop brownfields. Hamilton also promoted its geographic proximity to the Great Toronto Area to capitalize on its easy access to a highly skilled, educated work force.

Hamilton recognized its economic vulnerabilities as over reliance on the manufacturing sector and earlier failure to invest in technology and innovation. Challenges were tackled with a team approach and consultation with business and citizens. A strong emphasis was placed on diversifying the community’s economy and strategically marketing the city as a great place in which to live and do business.

Hamilton worked hard to foster partnerships with the private sector and post secondary institutions, to encourage entrepreneurial excellence and to build its knowledge economy. The city placed a high priority on financial sustainability, economic growth that embraced clean technologies and improved citizen and business centered service delivery. The city addressed long needed waterfront improvement investments. Development charges were strategically exempted for industrial uses because of the vast economic spin-off for a community. In 2008, council increased the Planning and Economic Development budget, investing money in research and marketing to understand its strengths and successes while promoting its unique attributes to others.

Population
504,559

Main Industries
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Tourism
- Technology
- Agriculture
- Business
- Health Sciences
- Biotech Agriculture
- Food and Beverage
- Port Authority
- Film and Culture
SUCCESS

McMaster University and the city partnered with the federal government and various industries to open research centres such as the Green Automotive Resource Cluster (Green ARC), the Xerox Centre for Engineering, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, and the McMaster Innovation Centre. The proposed Mohawk College campus includes a Mobility Hub, linking City of Hamilton public transportation services with provincial counterparts, such as GO Transit. The development of the Hamilton Wastewater Innovation Institute is bringing together universities, the City of Hamilton and the Ontario and Canadian governments to develop policy solutions for emerging water quality problems with emphasis on new wastewater technologies. The Small Business Enterprise Centre was moved to city hall to create a “One Stop Shop” for businesses which has allowed for more efficient service delivery for business and citizens.

The city also took advantage of a large rural area. Its agriculture industry is growing and now generates over one billion dollars a year for the local economy. The city has also enhanced its web presence and is a leader in Geographic Information System selector site tools. All municipal reports are now accessible online, social media has been adopted and a smart phone application to help people obtain specific city information is under development. Hamilton has also been successful in improving the quality of life for its citizens. Partially due to the affordability of living, the relatively lower cost of housing and access to excellent health care and education facilities and services, the city has not only been able to retain but also attract citizens and businesses.

For more information please visit hamilton.ca.
By the year 2008 the Town of Ingersoll understood that the shift to a creative and knowledge-based economy would require young adults across Ontario and other communities to have further educational opportunities. Through grass-root approaches, the town used Citizen Engagement to develop Short and Long-Term strategies that would result in a youth education to labour strategy. This strategy recognized that if the town’s youth left for outside education, they needed to create employment opportunities that would draw them back. The town also worked in partnership with other municipalities in the area to attract new investment to the region. The Town of Ingersoll developed a collaborative community strategic plan and a comprehensive marketing strategy that played an important role in branding Ingersoll as a festival community, created opportunities for new investment, as well as creating an attractive place to come and live.

**CHALLENGE**

With ten per cent of the community’s population employed in the auto industry and manufacturing, the 2008 economic downturn was not kind to Ingersoll. Many businesses had to lay off staff. Youth were departing to continue post secondary education in other towns and cities and not returning. The older generation with jobs in the uncertain local auto and manufacturing industry were also considering leaving the community in search of more secure employment.
**TURNING POINT**

With work opportunities declining in the community, the local businesses that did remain open lost revenue, in particular in the downtown community. The result was slowed economic activity in the municipality with concerns that it would get worse in the next five years.

**RESPONSE**

The town exercised a strong leadership role in a community planning process, collaborating with the historically highly-engaged citizenry. The intent was for community development to be synonymous with economic development. The logic was that if the community was not benefiting from economic growth, then that growth was not solving Ingersoll’s challenges.

The community analyzed the town’s future with a view to finding a solution to retain the current youth population, and provide training opportunities for all residents. The result was a two pronged approach. The first was to build a centre that would attract and train local youth - the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre (FYATC) - which includes mass media and small business supports.

The second approach was to strategically and innovatively research business models on how to bring post secondary educational institutions together in a partnership where they could co-locate in Ingersoll.

Ingersoll became a member of the Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA). This partnership allowed the member communities to work together to attract new investment to the region.

The town adopted a comprehensive research and branding strategy of its own to promote the community’s creative quality of life image. Ingersoll, in coordination with SOMA, developed marketing coordination plans for both short and longer term strategies.

**SUCCESS**

To address the engaged citizenry, council releases monthly progress reports on Ingersoll’s community/ economic status. With respect to the focus on youth, the FYATC is now an internationally renowned centre, fully equipped with educational, recreational, and related hands-on entertainment production facilities. Young people no longer need to leave town to gain experience in growth industries. Directing four per cent of the town’s budget to the youth centre has quickly resulted in positive results.

Ingersoll has received the distinction of Youth Friendly Community in Ontario. The FYATC has emerged as a model for youth engagement in community planning. The centre, which started with municipal funding and a Rural Economic Development (RED) grant from the Ontario government, has now...

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**Population**
11,750 (2006)

**Main Industries**
- Manufacturing
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Food Processing
- Agriculture
adopted an entrepreneurship approach. It is leveraging funds from the provincial and federal governments and has entered into partnerships with private sector foundations. It is offering a business enterprise development program for youth, of which a total of 1,050 young people have come through the centre. In Ingersoll, 42.5 per cent of youth between the ages 12 and 18 have a membership at the centre. It is performing so well that the University of Guelph is completing a study on the centre and its overall benefit to the entire community.

As a sign of its marketing and promotion success, Ingersoll received the Economic Development Council of Ontario’s (EDCO) Tourism Marketing/Promotional Award in 2010. The award recognized the Ingersoll Tourism Guide 2010, the Ingersoll Festival Town of Ontario poster and their four issues of the Here in Ingersoll magazine.

The centre has been so successful that it has been awarded over $600,000 from the Ontario Trillium Fund to launch the Oxford County Youth Entrepreneur Skills and Career Program. The funds will be delivered through the eight Community Employment Services regional offices to reach all youth in Oxford County.

Ingersoll has also managed to attract Conestoga College to provide special training for power line technicians, making Ingersoll the second town in Ontario (first in Southern Ontario) to have such a program. This program is seen as integral and will provide excellent support to the future sustainability of the community.

Lastly, the town has researched an educational model used in several U.S. jurisdictions to explore how to apply this model to Ingersoll. The model involves housing multiple post secondary campuses within the same complex. This model would allow the youth in Ingersoll, and the surrounding areas, to gain an internationally recognized degree without leaving their community. The return on investment is yet to be seen, but the town’s leadership is betting that a large number would stay, given their roots are entrenched with the positive experience of growing up in Ingersoll and their desire to want the same for their children. The community development approach is

“Because of a proactive municipal council the Town of Ingersoll is a living testament to the significant economic successes that have been achieved largely in part by the investment into authentically engaging youth in meaningful activities and civic opportunities, giving way to the lasting change in the community that is evident today.”

- Jason Smith, Manager, Fusion Youth Activity & Technology Centre Town of Ingersoll
already paying off as the town is also attracting new families from all over Ontario who want to take advantage of the educational opportunities.

For more information on Ingersoll please visit Ingersoll.ca.

For information on the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre please visit FusionYouthCentre.ca.

“What I found so compelling about the story of the Fusion Youth Centre in Ingersoll was the manner in which those who planted the initial seeds, the Town Council and Municipal Staff, the local MPP, and local entrepreneurs, decided at the outset to bring youth together to inform the growth of the idea.”

- Irwin Elman
  Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth
When the major pulp and paper mills were closing after 80 years in Kenora, leaders were challenged to rethink their economic strategies. Leadership from several community members was instrumental. Being a small town in one of the more remote areas of the province, the people of Kenora understood that it could not go forward on its own. The city collaborated with other levels of government and obtained funding for shovel ready projects that helped to gain and maintain some economic momentum. Additionally, Kenora’s regional approach marketed its quality of life. They focused on advertising the north as a region which included Kenora and placed special emphasis on marketing it to new businesses as an Office on the Lake. Kenora considered the diversity of its population and fostered positive relationships with area First Nations.

In 2006, Kenora’s largest employer closed its pulp and paper mill after 80 years.

Kenora is located in northwestern Ontario, on Lake of the Woods, only 50 km from the Manitoba border and over 2,000 km from Toronto.
TURNING POINT

The estimated economic impact of the mill closure was $61 million to Kenora’s economy and a $1.5 million direct impact to the city’s tax revenues. Over the next two years, four more forest-related companies closed, leaving Kenora in the position of having to reinvent itself in order to survive.

RESPONSE

The city hired an Economic Development Officer and set up a regionally based Economic Development Commission to put together an Economic Development Plan. The plan focused on business development, particularly in the value added forestry sector, tourism and special events, education and training, relationship building with residents, visitors and new residents, and the identification of key economic infrastructure projects. It also included a plan to transition itself from a pulp and paper mill town to a destination and lifestyle community, attracting business, visitors and new residents to the community. The plan was built on Kenora’s strengths and natural attributes, including its location on Lake of the Woods and its proximity to Winnipeg and Manitoba.

The city invested $7.5 million in the revitalization of its downtown and a further $4.5 million in its harbourfront. This support has attracted private sector investments, most notably in a $60 million condominium development by a major Winnipeg developer.

Partnerships at the local and regional levels have been key to the community’s success. The partnerships were developed with local business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the local Business Improvement Areas, the local Hotel Association, the Young Professional’s Network, the Lake of the Woods District Property Owners’ Association, education and training organizations, area First Nations and other municipalities in the region. This has helped to ensure that everyone in the region is working towards the vision outlined in the plan.

Between 2009 and 2010, when the Federal Action Plan was announced, the City of Kenora had several shovel ready projects identified in its Economic Development Plan, which helped them secure infrastructure funding.

The proximity to Winnipeg and being a cottage playground to Winnipeg and the rest of Manitoba, were considered valuable attributes to draw upon. Kenora developed programs to
encourage cottagers to spend more time at the lake. Kenora's strong telecommunications infrastructure was the basis for the Office @ the Lake program, which encouraged cottagers to stay and work, rather than returning to the city. The city is currently developing another program to encourage these same cottagers to retire at the lake. This program plans to build on an emerging trend of young, active retirees interested in living a full life at the lake.

SUCCESS

The city followed its Economic Development Plan. Significant infrastructure investments brought business inquiries to the community.

A comprehensive, all season Tourism Strategy has also been developed. Kenora has taken the lead in several regional marketing partnerships promoting Northwestern Ontario events and outdoor activities to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Kenora led discussions with Ontario’s Tourism Marketing Partnership to explore these new markets for Ontario. The arts and culture sector in Kenora has exploded with the creation of an umbrella arts organization, a writers’ group, and two music production studios.

Post-secondary education and adult training opportunities are being explored in partnership with First Nations’ training organizations.

Positive relationships between First Nations and the City of Kenora underpin all of these strategies, and continue to form the basis for discussions on other economic development initiatives.

For more information please visit Kenora.ca.

“At a time of impending crisis, both cultures sat down and discussed their different approaches but the element that was common to all of us was the relationship to the land. With that foundation, the city and First Nations were compelled to work together towards a common benefit. It has been a learning experience, but worth the journey. It continues to be a leading component in rebuilding our community and relationship.”

- Adolphus Cameron, Member, Common Ground Working Group and Lake of the Woods Development Commission Board
“The shut down of the mill was a catalyst. The community pulled together and created a recovery plan. One project led to the next project until we had some momentum going. I cannot say enough about the leadership shown by a council that invested in its recovery at a time when it had lost a significant amount of tax revenues. Having a plan and the people and partners for implementation of the plan is key. We needed external resources to help pay for major infrastructure projects, but the plan was a made in Kenora solution based on our natural assets.”

- Jennifer Findlay, EDO City of Kenora
PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY: GROWING THE CREATIVE-RURAL ECONOMY

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The transformation of Prince Edward County from a state of an old economy with a stagnant agriculture sector and a declining and aging workforce to the current state of a thriving and innovative rural economy has been a result of long-term planning, partnership and strong leadership. These approaches were the key to the county’s resurgence as a creative rural economy with agriculture and related industry, information technology and health care related businesses. Building unique attributes such as a retirement community, a rich arts and cultural community, an emerging wine and culinary scene and a growing tourist industry based on these assets have been key elements in the county’s transition.

CHALLENGE

Since its settlement, agriculture has been the backbone of the county’s economy. In the backdrop of languishing agriculture and transitional tourism, the county experienced multifaceted economic challenges. A loss of farm employment and economic diversification expedited youth out-migration which were key economic threats to the county. These issues were exacerbated over the years by the routing of highways 2 and 401 farther and farther away from the county.
TURNING POINT

In addition to loss of farm employment, major employers such as the Prince Edward Heights Hospital School were closing. The closure of such large employers, combined with out-migration, reduced employment, entrepreneurial opportunities and economic diversity. This resulted in a declining population, a dwindling tax base and a loss of services. The county needed to transition its economy if it was to be economically sustainable.

RESPONSE

While agriculture continued to be the backbone of the economy, Prince Edward County set out a long-term plan to diversify the agricultural base. This included strategic support for the county’s wine sector.

The council developed and adopted a creative rural economy strategy to guide the development of the arts, culture and heritage industry and to attract and retain creative individuals. The four pillars of the county’s economy, as identified by the municipal Economic Development Strategy, are: agriculture, tourism, commerce and industry, and arts, culture and heritage. These pillars are supported by a strong network of construction industries and service providers.

Over time, the strategy has evolved from four pillars to five clusters. The five clusters are comprised of Creative Talent/Occupations, Gastronomy, Green Business & Services, Healthcare and Wellness, and Creative Industries.

Prince Edward County’s main competitive advantage, its quality of place, is paramount and at the centre of everything they do to attract and maintain creative talent.

The economic transformation strategy of the county is based on the ability to leverage existing community attributes. The county aligned local attributes and community strengths to meet the changing demands of the market. Collaborative partnerships and effective use of media were also key elements to showcase local attributes and strengths.

The attraction of pre-retirement and retired population groups that enjoy rural lifestyles was also a key strategy to revitalize the county’s economy.

SUCCESS

The county is increasingly recognized for its thriving, innovative and creative rural economy. It is developing a new sector centered on the growing wine industry,
galleries, artist studios, music festivals and the revitalization of the Regent Theatre—all indicators of a rising creative class.

Today, high value agriculture, manufacturing and value-added industries are a key element of the county’s economic success. A strong food processing industry has evolved to support the county’s agricultural base including cheese production, vegetable packaging, and small scale meat processing. Other significant manufacturing firms include one of Canada’s largest kayak and canoe producers, which recently relocated to Prince Edward County. Many of the county’s firms demonstrate strong innovative practices reflecting the county’s focus on creativity and innovation.

Prince Edward County capitalizes on its unique quality of place and lifestyle to attract and retain people in creative occupations. A growing and multifaceted arts community contributes to the county’s unique culture. The total number of the county’s culture related businesses increased by 26 per cent from 2003 to 2007, including culture related industries with high employment concentrations. Boasting and hosting an impressive talent pool of media, television, movie and creative artists, Prince Edward County is now one of the top employers of artists in the province.

For more information please visit Prince-edward-county.com.

“Transitioning a community’s economy is a challenge – the results make it rewarding.”
- Economic Development Office Prince Edward County
To promote economic growth, the City of Welland created a community development strategy that aligned with regional and provincial strategies, and included a shared vision based on **partnership**, **consultation** and **research**. **Innovation**, **flexibility** and a willingness to explore and adopt unfamiliar strategies were critical for the successful transition. Strategies were developed to work with its existing competitive strengths, to leverage community assets, and to forge strong local partnerships with private sector, social institutions, non-governmental organizations and all levels of government. Welland is now moving forward to achieve a high and rising standard of economic and social wellness for its residents that include ensuring a vibrant, safe, healthy and caring community.

Following the decline of the steel industry over the past decade, Welland, a city significantly dependent on industrial manufacturing, experienced the multi-faceted challenges of economic restructuring. The community and others in the region were left with a legacy of brownfield sites, decreased manufacturing employment and a declining and aging workforce. To some extent, the manufacturing job losses were offset by gains in transportation, call centre and retail service sectors.
TURNING POINT

 Downsizing of the manufacturing industry led to 15,000 jobs lost in the automotive sector between 1990 to 2008 in the Niagara region. Closure of the John Deere manufacturing plant in 2009 resulted in the loss of another 800 jobs. Youth out-migration from Welland had been a predominant trend and the lower employment opportunities further intensified this trend. Its tourism sector, the second largest in the Niagara region, had suffered since 2001 and had not been able to recover.

RESPONSE

 Welland developed its own vision for economic growth to complement the One Voice for Development shared by partners in the Niagara Development Corridor. A two-level response was carried out addressing local strengths, opportunities, key issues and impediments to economic growth at the community level in Welland as well as at the broader level with the Niagara region partners. The benefits were shared economic resources, such as a skilled labour market, cultural amenities, and access to a more diversified business and industry base.

 The community economic development strategy for Welland was adopted by the city in 2004 as a guide for community initiatives aimed at building a stable and diverse economic base. This strategy focused on the existing competitive strengths within the community as well as new opportunities for prosperity.

 While Welland maintained manufacturing jobs to sustain its income generation and economy, it also diversified its industrial base into other sectors (green technologies, bio-manufacturing, and health and wellness) to achieve economic stability and future business confidence. Diversification strategies were based on existing competitive strengths.

 Universities and colleges in the Niagara corridor provided education and training necessary to produce highly skilled workers as well as the research that would spawn spin-off companies. This created the environment necessary to attract investment into the area and ensure existing businesses remained competitive. The city has easy access to world-class automotive research centres at Niagara College, Brock and McMaster Universities. The $90 million Niagara College expansion is expected to become a strong catalyst in transitioning Niagara’s economy.

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<th>Population</th>
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<td>50,331 (2006)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Main Industry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Equipment Manufacturing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Machinery and Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing</td>
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<td>• Service Industries</td>
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SUCCESS

Overall, Welland’s economic performance has remained fairly stable in recent years with contraction in the traditional manufacturing sector and growth in the advanced manufacturing and service sectors. The city is now positioned as an economic gateway into the region. Inexpensive housing, higher learning institutes nearby, proximity to the border and major trade corridors, connections and proximity to major rail, regional and international airports - Buffalo, Toronto, Hamilton and major highways, provide this unique and strategic advantage.

An experienced manufacturing workforce and a good workforce training infrastructure also contribute to the city’s competitive and sustainable advantage. For example, Welland has a ready-to-go experienced labour force with strengths in precision machining, metal forming, electrical and connectivity, hydraulics and power distribution.

Several major infrastructure supports have been completed, or are underway, that have also helped to spur growth in Welland and improved the quality of life for the residents. These include a new Civic Square, a Community Wellness Complex ($9.2 million) and the Life Science Corridor and waste management operation, a former brownfield site which is expected to create a new revenue stream of $5 million over the next 10 years.

Welland is committed to fostering a strong, healthy economy through strategic action that builds upon its existing competitive strengths. As the city moves forward with its development strategy, it actively seeks innovative approaches to further promote a strong, diversified and integrated economy.

For more information please visit Welland.ca.

“The turning point for Welland’s transformation came in 2 waves: first the community visioning exercises demonstrated that we had strong community support to make changes. The second wave occurred when the envisioned plans began to be implemented and the resultant investments in buildings, infrastructure and employment lands were in place to not only be used but celebrated by the community.”

- Craig Stirtzinger
City Manager,
Corporation of the City of Welland
WHAT NEXT?

Innovative thinking and great ideas can happen anywhere and Ontario municipalities are proof of that. This handbook has captured just a few of the interesting examples of communities in transition in the province. We encourage communities to share their stories and experiences and to help other transitioning and investment ready communities.
**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Should you have any questions or comments on the document please contact:

**Central Municipal Services Office (Toronto)**

**General Inquiry:** 416-585-6226  
**Toll Free:** 800-668-0230  
Servicing: Durham, York, Peel, Halton, Simcoe, Muskoka, Dufferin, Niagara, Hamilton, Toronto

**Eastern Municipal Services Office (Kingston)**

**General Inquiry:** 613-545-2100  
**Toll Free:** 800-267-9438  

**Northeastern Municipal Services Office (Sudbury)**

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**Toll Free:** 800-461-1193  
Servicing: Cochrane, Algoma, Manitoulin, Sudbury, Parry Sound, Nipissing, Timiskaming

**Northwestern Municipal Services Office (Thunder Bay)**

**General Inquiry:** 807-475-1651  
**Toll Free:** 800-465-5027  
Servicing: Thunder Bay, Kenora, Rainy River

**Western Municipal Services Office (London)**

**General Inquiry:** 519-873-4020  
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**Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

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