



NORTH SIMCOE ECONOMIC ACTION INITIATIVE

STRATEGY DOCUMENT – PART 1

Vision and Strategy

November, 2011

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Vision and Strategy

1.0 Introduction

North Simcoe is an area of Simcoe County made up of four municipalities:

- Midland
- Penetanguishene
- Township of Tay
- Township of Tiny

While each of the four municipalities is distinct and has their own municipal objectives, all share an interest in area economic development. To this end the four municipalities established a “Statement of Intent” to pursue common economic goals (See Appendix A). This document further elaborates the principles found in the Statement of Intent, identifying the economic development strategy and objectives for the North Simcoe area.

2.0 Background

Managed economic development is a core discipline of financially sound municipalities. Understanding this, municipal governments have committed time and resources to ensure economic development is a cornerstone of their community building.

Over the last decade North Simcoe has taken steps to build its own economic development capability. The North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corp (NSCFDC) has been involved in four recent economic strategy exercises. The nine municipalities of the Severn Sound Environmental Association (SSEA) have developed an economic “pillar” as part of its Sustainability Plan. The Southern Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce managed a shared “economic development office” for a period of time. These initiatives, while having met with some success, have not been able to focus the necessary resources and municipal interest to effectively implement economic development in North Simcoe.

In early 2011 the four North Simcoe mayors met to determine what should be done. Mindful of the work underway with the NSCFDC exercises and Severn Sound Sustainability Plan, they decided more action was needed. Out of this agreement was born the Economic Action Initiative (EAI). The EAI is based upon the principles:

- action oriented
- covers all four municipalities

- leverages private sector capabilities

The EAI is a path towards a full economic development capability - it is not the endpoint. It will begin by fostering cooperation among the municipalities and the private sector while delivering early measurable results. Over the next few years it will evolve into a managed approach to economic development supporting all of North Simcoe.

3.0 Vision and Objectives

The EAI has borrowed the work and wisdom from the many recent North Simcoe community consultations and economic strategies. This section presents key elements from those studies as the foundation for the work of the EAI.

3.1 Vision

By 2020 North Simcoe will become a well balanced open community linked closely to the Georgian Bay waterfront and economically founded upon:

- *an education-lead innovative industrial base and*
- *a world class (four season) tourism experience*
- *health care services*

3.2 Mission

The EAI, comprising the communities of Midland, Penetanguishene, Tay and Tiny, will work in partnership with community-minded individuals, groups and organizations to maximize economic prosperity in the North Simcoe region.

Benefits will accrue to the four communities by growing the region's unique industrial, institutional, retail, agricultural, tourism and recreational base in a financially, environmentally and socially sustainable manner.

3.3 Values

The EAI will be guided by the following values in implementing its programs:

- 1) A Shared Commitment to the Four Municipalities
 - economic development involves the four municipalities of North Simcoe
 - use of common economic tools and messaging
 - balanced sharing of costs with rewards
- 2) Partnering with the Community (where appropriate)

- involvement of community partners
 - involvement of business sector
 - extensive community consultation
- 3) Action and Sustainability
- clear objectives with measurable timelines and results
 - long term commitment and resourcing
- 4) A Strategy Lead Economy
- development of the area strategy and its regular review
 - confirmation of results to strategy and targets

3.4 Strategy

1. Build an Educated Workforce

The area's economic future will be based upon knowledge related business and businesses. This knowledge will stem from education - education of our own population and also in attracting specific talents from outside the area. An educated population and the related business opportunities are essential for the area's future success.

The area is fortunate to have two foundation pieces already in place – Georgian College and Lakehead University. The Georgian College “trades” mandate is a natural locus for trades based industries in the area. Lakehead University provides a variety of on and off campus programs that will keep our young people in the area and also serve to assist research.

2. Assist a Changing Manufacturing Base

Many of our future jobs will come from industries already in the area. The latest economic downturn underscores the transformation of our economy from manufacturing to service; from low cost labour to high value knowledge. Local manufacturers are challenged by the distance from market, the cost of transportation and a lack of local business infrastructure.

Providing a business friendly climate and organizing the collective innovation of established companies is essential to our future prosperity. Good manufacturing opportunities exist. They will be best exploited by agile companies ready to invest significant levels of knowledge and capital.

3. Develop Four Season Tourism

North Simcoe has an abundance of significant tourism assets – Georgian Bay waterfront, Ste. Marie Among the Hurons, Martyrs’ Shrine, Discovery Harbour, Wye Marsh, aboriginal culture, area artists, proximity to Toronto, and soon to come the Keewatin in Port McNicoll. The challenge has always been to organize, brand and properly invest in our tourism industry.

Our most important asset is our common waterfront. Appropriate protection and development of this waterfront is essential as it affects the common interest of all four municipalities.

Developing a quality four seasons experience that links our tourism assets is critical to building the area’s tourism economy.

4. Invest in Healthcare

There have been many significant recent investments in the area’s healthcare assets – Georgian Bay General Hospital, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, Bayfield House and Georgian Village to name a few. North Simcoe is also gifted with a high proportion of seniors, being viewed by many as a retirement community. Provincial economic studies point to the need for geriatric and healthcare services in the decades ahead.

The potential for training PSW and geriatric care personnel as well as provide the homes and services for the aging will be a growing proportion of our area’s economy.

5. Institutional

The long term prosperity of the North Simcoe area will be assisted by continuing to build on the existing presence of educational facilities in our communities, including elementary and secondary school options in both English and French. Partnerships with the School Boards should be strengthened and pursued to provide high school students with courses and co-operative education in the areas of skilled trades & technology; health care; aboriginal studies; environmental sciences (i.e. OELP); and specialized language studies (French immersion, Michif, etc.).

Links with post secondary institutions will be explored to expand the programs, internships and apprenticeships offered by Georgian College, Lakehead University, College Boreal and/or Laurentian to provide viable options for graduating students to pursue their chosen career in North Simcoe. The expansion of the University Partnership Centre (UPC) at the Midland campus of Georgian College would be one such opportunity.

In addition, there will be a renewed focus on workforce development to support local employers and employees through upgraded skills and training delivered here in North

Simcoe. Seniors and retirees in our community will benefit from lifelong learning opportunities through continuing education. The Francophone community of North Simcoe will be supported through French language training and employment services through various service providers.

By building upon these educational opportunities and nurturing the investment and business opportunities that will flow from the institutions through their programs and services in the community, all of North Simcoe will benefit.

6. Agriculture-Bioscience

The North Simcoe area is blessed with a diversity of agricultural based businesses. Historically and culturally, this sector has been a key contributor to the overall economic viability of the area. It is the intent of this initiative to work with existing agricultural based businesses with an aim to leverage existing infrastructure and investment to identify new opportunities for sustainable development in this sector. As well, the attraction of new agricultural based businesses will be a fundamental component of the plan.

Opportunities identified to date include the development of an comprehensive Agricultural Action Plan to improve the long term viability of the existing sector, exploring public/private partnerships, improving the connections between the production and consumption of goods and services and developing educational programs for sustainable agriculture. It is also recognized that there may be significant economic opportunities between existing or traditional farming techniques and practices and emerging sustainable technologies such as bio-fuels/green energy production and distribution.

Appendix A - Message from the Mayors

Statement of Intent

Economic development is essential for the future of the four municipalities of North Simcoe. Accordingly the four mayors of the North Simcoe municipalities have:

- initiated the creation of the Economic Action Initiative (EAI)
- approached their respective Councils and have gained their agreement to further define and identify the resources required for the EAI

The Terms of Reference for the EAI must be established by the Councils of the four North Simcoe municipalities. That said the four mayors endorse the following principles as the basis for the work of the EAI.

- 1) We agree to work together in common cause to attract business to the area
- 2) We agree to work with our collective staff's to prepare for opportunities within each of our areas (designated lands/ lands that would be easy to adapt to different applications/zoning adjustment opportunities/vacant buildings that could be converted quickly, etc).
- 3) Once an opportunity is identified we agree to support whichever of our communities the business intends to operate in. We will not compete with one another once an opportunity is brought forward
- 4) We agree to act in matters of economic development as if we are one community called North Simcoe.

Mayor G. Marshall
Town of Penetanguishene

Mayor S. Warnock
Township of Tay

Mayor R. Millar
Township of Tiny

Mayor G. McKay
Town of Midland