



HALIBURTON COUNTY BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION REPORT

FINAL REPORT
MAY 2011

Prepared By:
Shelley Hirstwood Consulting
1439 Buller Rd Minden ON K0M 2L1
shelley.hirstwood@gmail.com
www.shelleyhirstwood.com

Table of Contents

1.0	Executive Summary	3
2.0	Background	4
2.1	Haliburton County	4
2.2	Business Retention and Expansion	5
3.0	Methodology	5
3.1	Project Organization and Management	5
3.2	BRE Process	5
3.3	Data Interpretation	6
4.0	Results	7
4.1	Business Profile	7
4.2	Future Plans	10
4.3	Markets	13
4.4	Inputs	15
4.5	Information/Assistance Requirements	16
4.6	Human Resources	18
4.7	Financial Institutions	19
4.8	Store Front Retail Businesses	20
4.9	Tourism	21
4.10	Local Community	23
5.0	Barriers to Growth	26
6.0	Action Plan	27
6.1	Action Item: Seasonal Market	27
6.2	Action Item: Business Support	28
6.3	Action Item: Business Development	29
6.4	Action Item: Workforce Development	30
6.5	Action Item: Infrastructure Improvements	31
6.6	Action Item: Marketing/Communications	32
6.7	Action Item: Municipal Improvements	33
6.8	Action Item: Transportation	34
6.9	Action Item: Community Support and Services	35
7.0	Next Steps	36
8.0	Conclusions	37

1.0 Executive Summary

The County of Haliburton is located in Central Ontario covering 4000 km², providing residence for over 16 000 people. Haliburton Highlands promotes a high quality of life offering recreational activities for all seasons, robust arts and cultural community and a strong business sector creating an ideal location for development and investment.

The Business Retention and Expansion project was initiated by the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce with the objective to facilitate business planning and growth by identifying and interviewing local companies, associations and service groups to determine needs, barriers and opportunities. 15% of the businesses were interviewed resulting in a significant representation of the business sector.

The businesses boasted a high quality of life and are satisfied with the essential services, support from municipality, land costs and labour costs. There is generally a positive attitude regarding the future of the business community reflected by the number of planned expansions and capital investments.

There are many positive attributes to the business community, however the businesses highlighted many barriers to growth including the seasonality of the market, financial support, labour attraction and training, information accessibility, marketing and infrastructure. These barriers are addressed with a comprehensive action plan that contains strategies and evaluation tools.

The community based approach of the Business Retention and Expansion project will create local commitment while developing a knowledge base of what drives their local economy and how they can become proactive in setting the direction for long term community sustainability and growth. This will ensure the community 'buy-in' necessary to implement the BRE Action Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 HALIBURTON COUNTY

The County of Haliburton, often referred to as Haliburton Highlands, is located in Central Ontario. The County contains the Village of Minden, Village of Haliburton and smaller communities including Wilberforce, Gooderham, Irondale, West Guilford, Eagle Lake and Fort Irwin. The county borders Algonquin Park on the north and encompasses a multitude of natural lakes and rivers. The County is serviced by two hospitals and offers elementary, secondary and post-secondary education institutions.

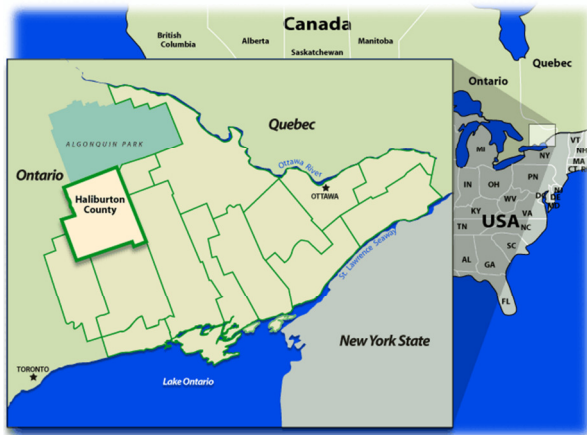


Figure 1: Location of Haliburton County

Haliburton County's economy is based primarily on the tourism industry which is demonstrated by the 3:1 ratio for summer residences compared to annual residences. Employment primarily caters to the seasonal population including residential construction, accommodations, services and retail businesses. The demographics display an aging population trend which will impact the local market and labour base in the future (Figure 2). The seasonality of the economy has a significant impact on employment rates. As of April 2011, the County unemployment rate is 9.5% which is higher than the provincial rate of 7.7%¹.

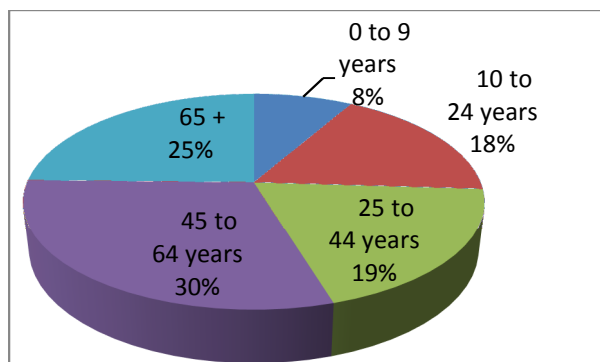


Figure 2: Haliburton County Demographics

¹ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011 www.hrsdc.gc.ca

2.2 BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION (BRE)

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is a planning process to determine the needs and demands of a particular area to ensure a sustainable, strong business sector. A BRE works to establish and strengthen key partnership while creating the ground work for an effective action plan. The process is typically initiated through community organizations by way of an interview process. A survey is created to reflect all the potential business and community hurdles that may affect the area in the short or long term. The survey is best distributed through an interview process which works to build partnerships while ensuring the questions are properly understood. The survey provides an opportunity for a cross section of businesses to provide their knowledge to create an effective and comprehensive strategy for businesses retention and expansion.

The business community is typically the backbone of a rural community supporting the employment sector, providing services and an opportunity for growth. It is essential that the county is aware of the current state of the business community in order to develop an effective action plan. A BRE works to establish and strengthen key partnerships while creating the ground work for collaboration and leveraging of resources.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The project was spearheaded by the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce and funded through the Haliburton County Development Corporation. The committee overseeing the project included the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Haliburton County Development Corporation, the County of Haliburton and U-Links.

The Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit organization committed to the growth of business and the enhancement of social, cultural and educational standards that contribute to the economic prosperity of Haliburton County. The mission of the Chamber is to provide members with networking, advocacy, education, value added programs and leadership opportunities. The Chamber is committed to providing the leadership and representation that enables the Chamber to be the voice of business in our communities.

3.2 BRE PROCESS

The BRE process was initiated by the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce with the objective to facilitate business planning and growth by identifying and interviewing local companies, associations and service groups to determine needs, barriers and service offerings. The survey was an adaptation of the Gravenhurst OMAFRA BR&E survey which was revised by the committee to represent the local region. The survey was created to identify opportunities for local trade, resolution of issues, and

determining the roles, opportunities and challenges to be addressed by local business associations, government and service groups.

The survey was randomly distributed throughout the region primarily by personal interviews. A total of 98 businesses, 15% of existing businesses, were interviewed representing a cross section of all the municipalities and business sectors (Figure 3).

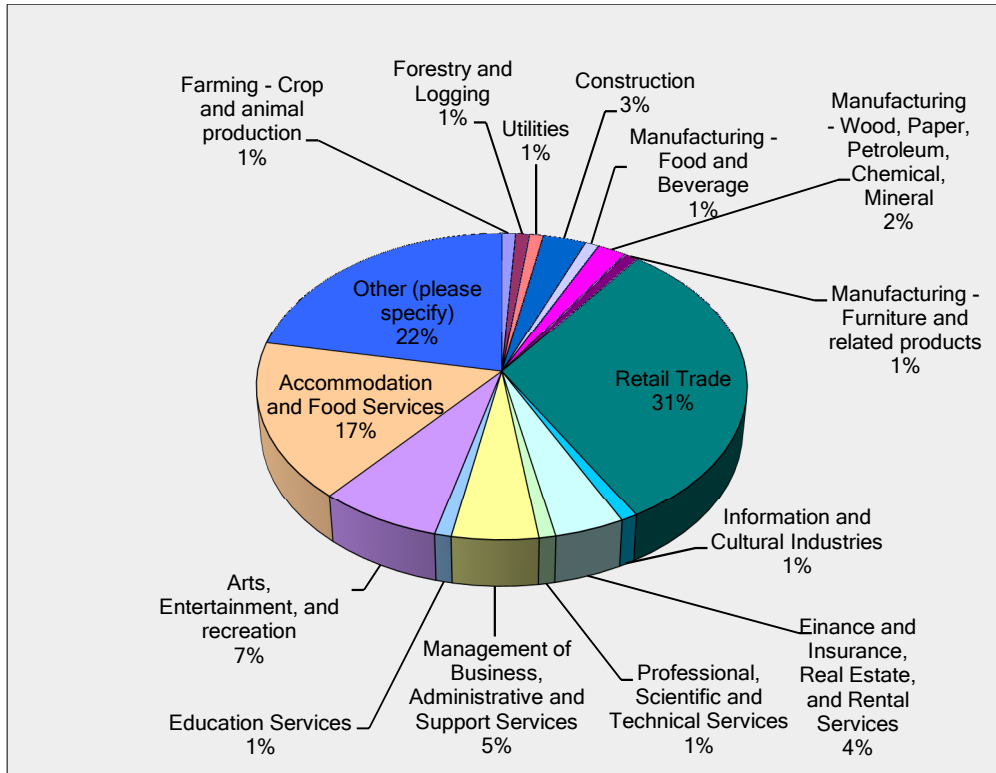


Figure 3: Primary business types interviewed

3.3 DATA INTERPRETATION

The information from the surveys was compiled on a survey program, Survey Monkey, and then generated into graphs and charts to accurately measure and assess the interview responses. The surveyed businesses represent approximately 15% of the total businesses in the county providing a statistical significant analysis. The results provide both quantitative and qualitative information based on the information collected in the survey.

4.0 Results

4.1 BUSINESS PROFILE

The business profile examines the existing business community identifying the type, size, employee numbers, location and facilities. It is essential to understand the existing situation in order to develop an effective plan to strengthen and expand the business community. The business profile provides the background information and an understanding of the current business community.

In terms of the businesses legal form, approximately half of the businesses (43%) indicate they are corporations, followed by sole proprietorships (32%) and partnerships (16%) (Figure 4). These businesses are primarily small businesses with approximately 80% of the businesses employing nine and under employees (Figure 5).

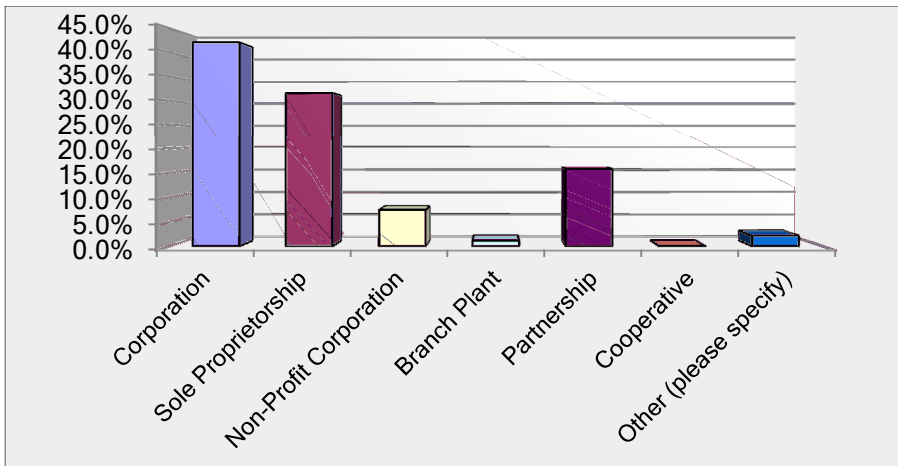


Figure 4: Legal form of businesses

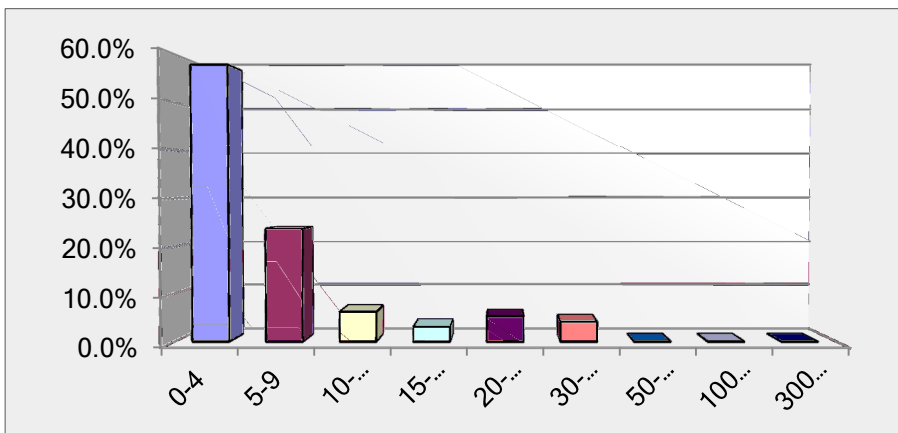


Figure 5: Number of employees at each business location

Close to 90% of the businesses were started in the county and have been operating in the community over a range of time. Approximately 14% of the businesses have been started in the past 3 years suggesting opportunities for business growth. Approximately 60% of the businesses have been in existence over 10 years indicating sustainable business operations (Figure 6). However, the aging operations suggest a need for succession planning in the near future.

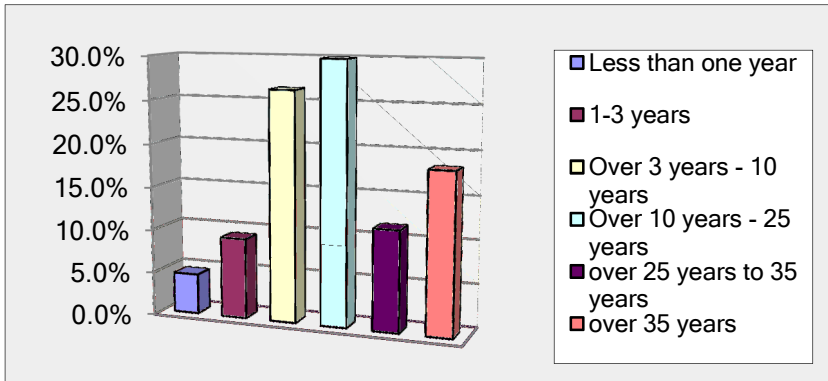


Figure 6: Years of operation

Generally the businesses are satisfied with their location with less than 10% of businesses expressing dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction is due to external and structural factors. There is an inability to attract and hire labour along with poor community support. Structurally, there are issues relating to the age of the building, inadequate utilities and the site being too small (Figure 7).

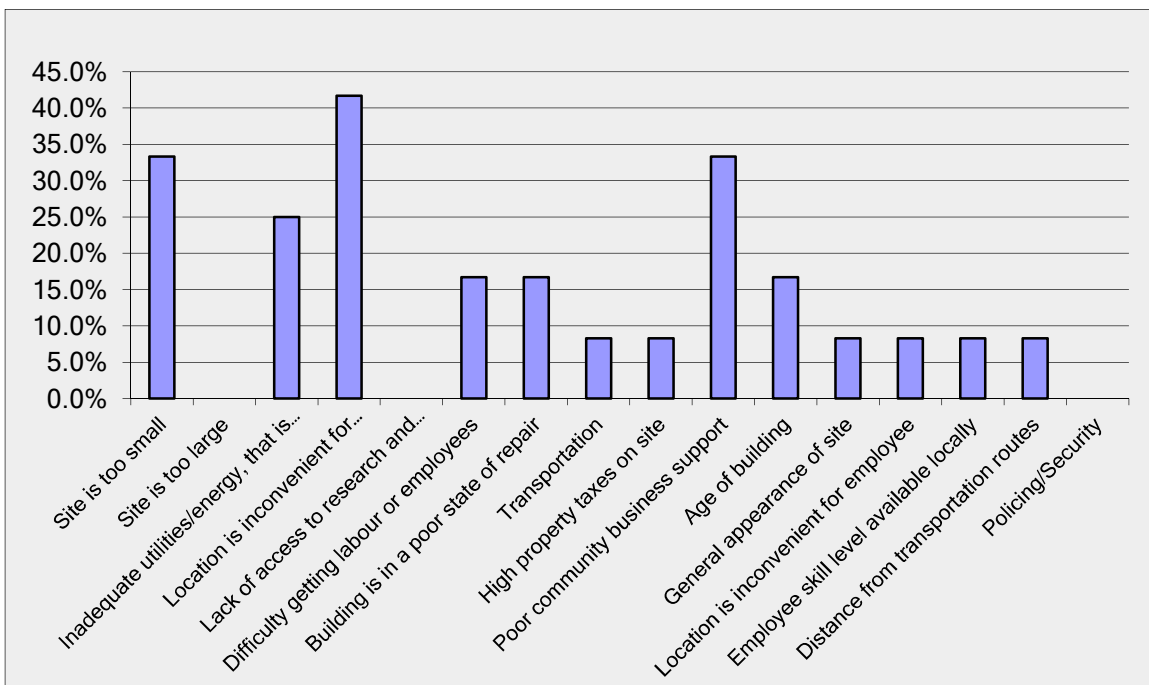


Figure 7: Reasons for location dissatisfaction

Accessibility to energy and technology are essential items especially in rural communities. The majority of the businesses use electricity/hydro, however there is a need for information regarding energy efficiency and management reflecting the increasing energy costs. The majority of the businesses already have the necessary technology although there are still gaps (Figure 8). The businesses that have not implemented the technology is generally due to the lack of infrastructure or the effectiveness for the business (Figure 9).

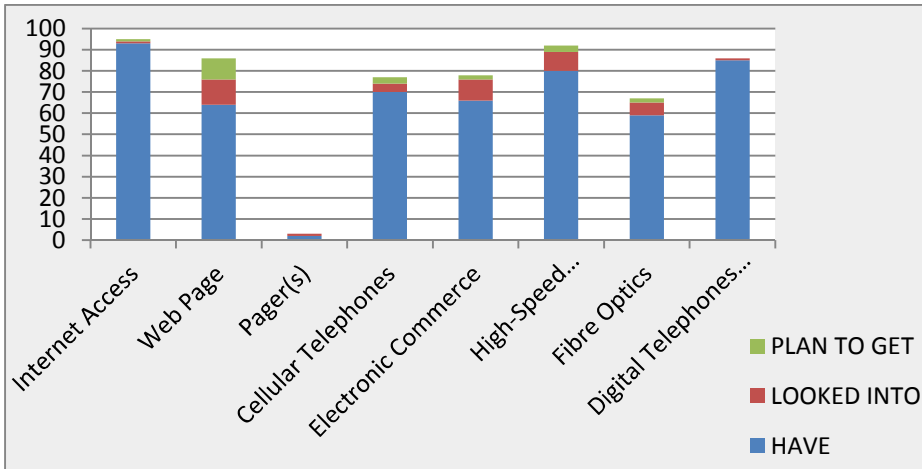


Figure 8: Technology used, researched or in the future plans for the businesses

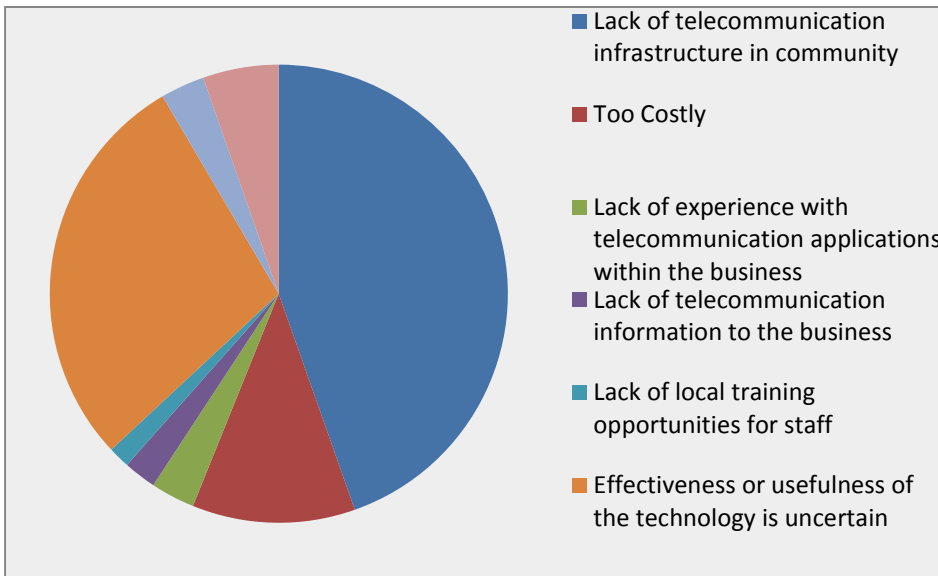


Figure 9: Reasons for not implementing technology

Overall Haliburton County is comprised primarily of small businesses that are optimistic and satisfied with their location. Generally the businesses recognize the importance of business planning, business management, technology and internet access. However, there is a need for succession planning, increased community support, energy efficiency information and access to telecommunication infrastructure in the community.

4.2 FUTURE PLANS

The businesses were asked questions regarding their future plans within the next 2 years. Most of the plans reflect positive changes resulting in business expansion. Ontario small and medium employers account for more than 40% of economic activity in the province and employ over half of Ontario workers². This demonstrates the important impact of growth in small businesses throughout the region.

Approximately 10% of businesses plan to relocate in the next 2 years, however all the relocations are planned within the community. Additionally 30% plan major renovations in the next two years and 44% plan to expand their operation in the next two years. The expansions will result in an increase in work force, additional services for customers, additional investment in equipment and technology, increased floor space and additional product line (Figure 10).

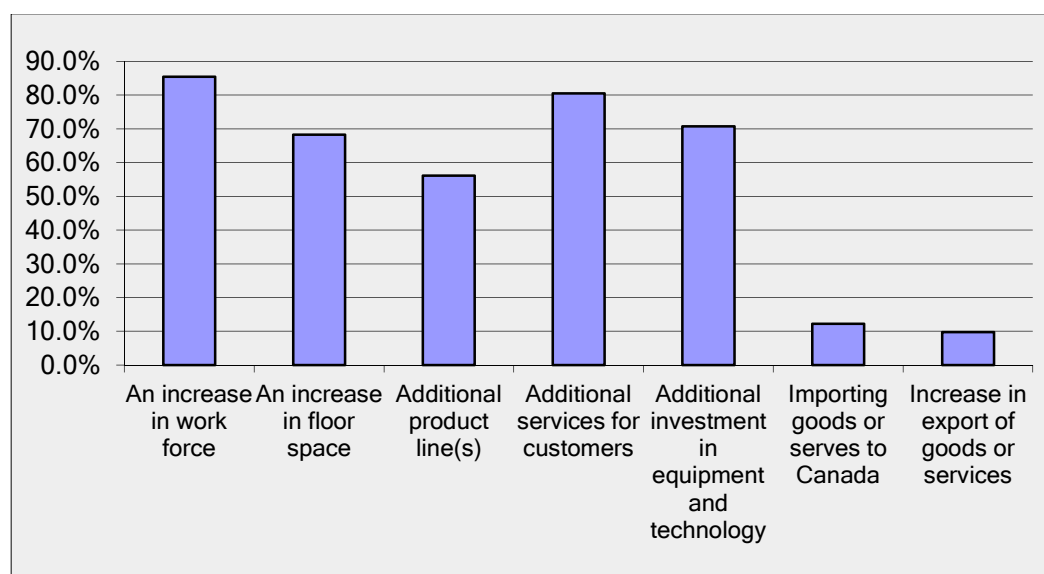


Figure 10: Business expansion results

The largest hurdle to expanding current businesses is financing, labour availability and availability of buildings. Businesses indicated they would benefit from information regarding markets, financing, local by-laws, strategic partnerships, labour force training, availability of buildings, labour availability and utilities/infrastructure.

Currently, 1% of existing businesses plan to close due to lack of profitability, unable to find a purchaser and retirement further supporting the need for succession planning. These businesses indicated that assistance with financing, finding a new site, employee purchase and/or improvement to local infrastructure would prevent the closure of the business.

² Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, 2007. Snapshot of Small and Medium Enterprises in Ontario. November 2007. www.sbe.gov.on.ca

There are many advantages and disadvantages to doing business in the area which are reflected in the identified barriers to growth (Figure 11, Table1).

Advantages:

- Quality of life
- Support from municipality, local businesses and local residents
- Municipal taxes
- Land costs
- Labour costs
- Telecommunication infrastructure

Disadvantages

- Availability of skilled labour
- Transportation costs
- Availability of transportation
- Access to markets
- Access to supplies
- Size of local market
- Access to training facilities
- Telecommunication infrastructure

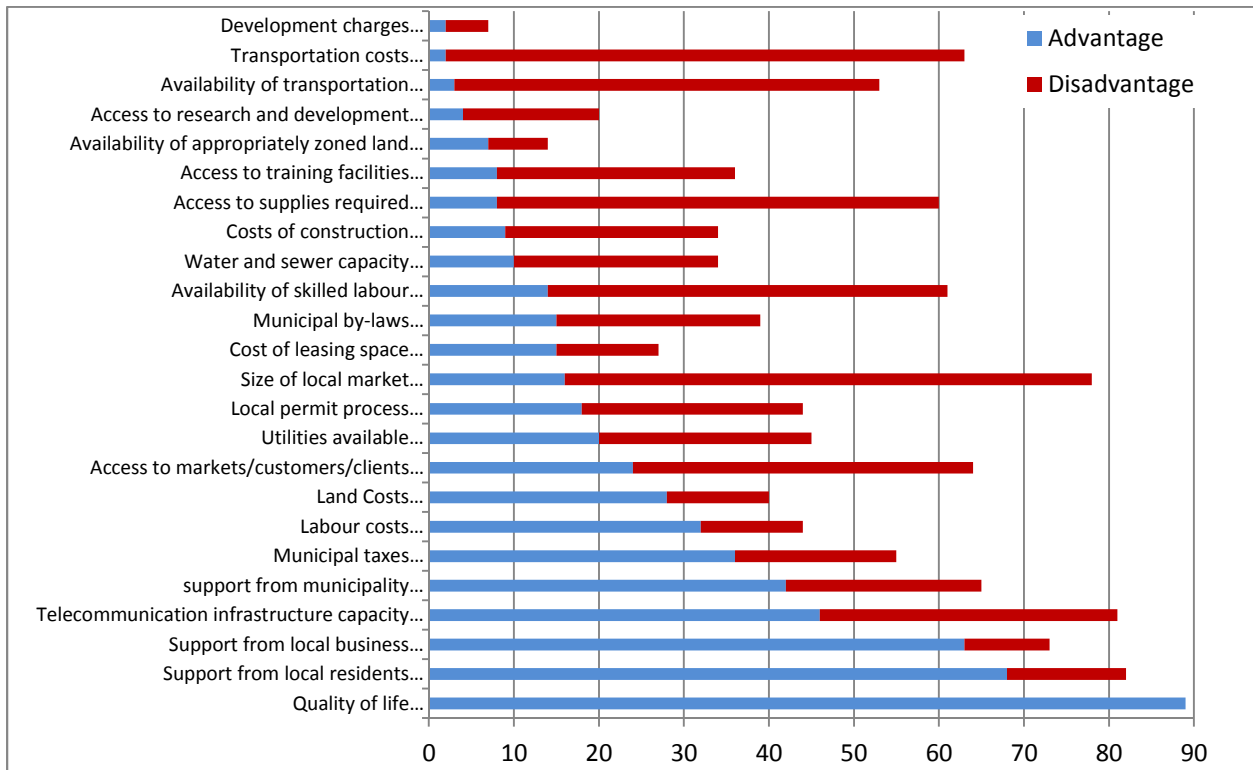


Figure 11: Advantages and disadvantages to doing business in the county

Table 1: Barriers to expansion

Most Significant Barrier to Expansion	Response Percent
Seasonality of business	35.4%
Access to capital	19.5%
Other (please specify)	18.3%
Availability of staff	6.1%
Provincial government policy and regulations	4.9%
Marketing	4.9%
Municipal government policy and regulations	2.4%
High fuel costs	2.4%
Lack of communication services (phone, fax, internet service)	2.4%
Federal government policy and regulations	1.2%
Transportation costs	1.2%
Training of staff	1.2%
Lack of electricity	0.0%
Competition for other tourist businesses in the area	0.0%
Packaging opportunities	0.0%

Overall the future plans are optimistic and show trends of expansion which will increase services and employment opportunities. However, there is an extensive need for accessible information to assist businesses with expansion and planning.

4.3 MARKETS

The markets section is focused on information pertaining to market share, sales volume, customer needs and marketing programs. This information is important for remaining competitive while identifying strategic partnerships that work to leverage resources.

The primary market base is in Canada with approximately 3% of total sales in the United States and 1% of total sales outside Canada and the United States. The sales are split between the local community (54%), Ontario (42%) and Canada (4%). Almost half (43%) of the businesses experienced an increase in sales, 29% of businesses experienced a decrease in sales while 28% of businesses experienced uneven or no change in sales over the past 2 years .

There are many factors that play a role in maintain competitiveness. Some of the most important factors for our local businesses include improvement of customer services, workplace health and safety, availability of telecommunication, energy costs, workforce skill development, improved business management and local market development (Figure 12).

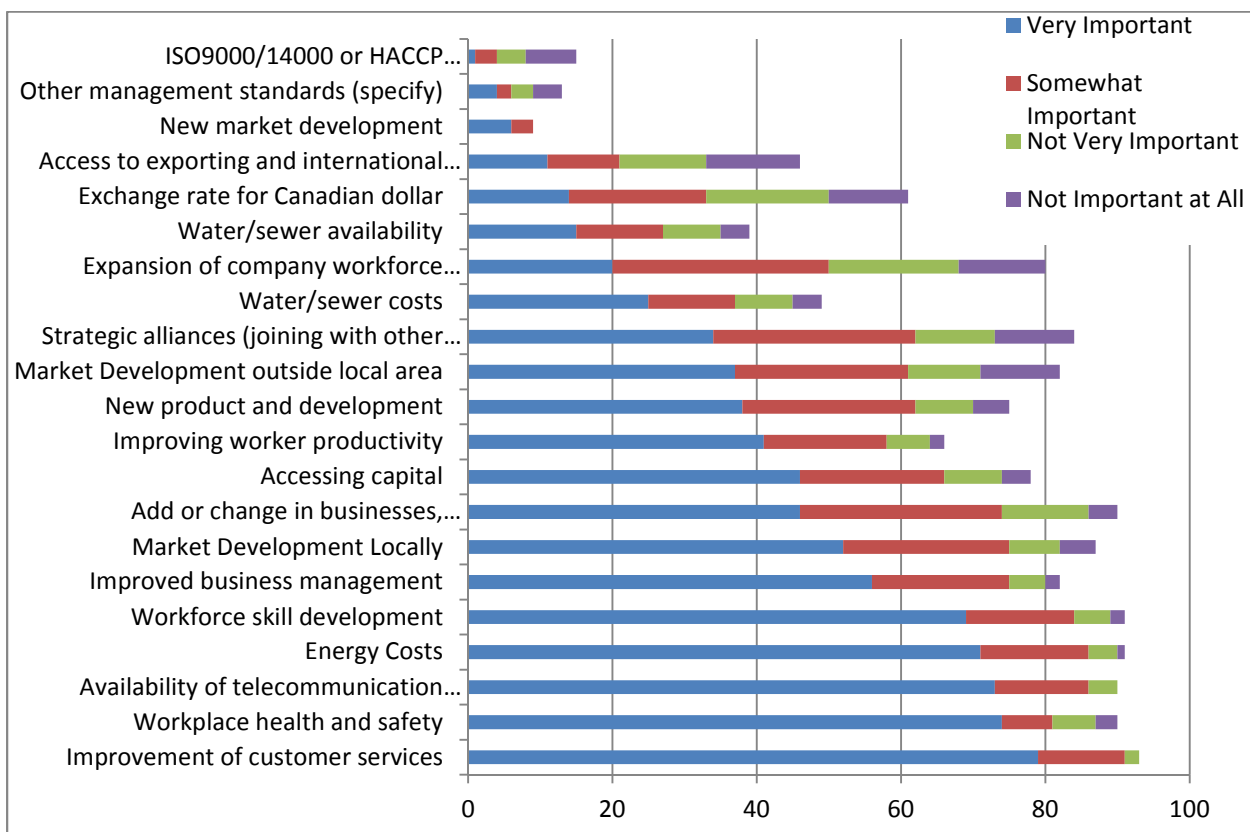


Figure 12: Factors in the next five years effecting competitiveness

There is significant competition inside and outside the county. Approximately 78% of the businesses are aware of direct competition in the area (similar products or service) while competition exists outside the area selling to the same market (Figure 13).

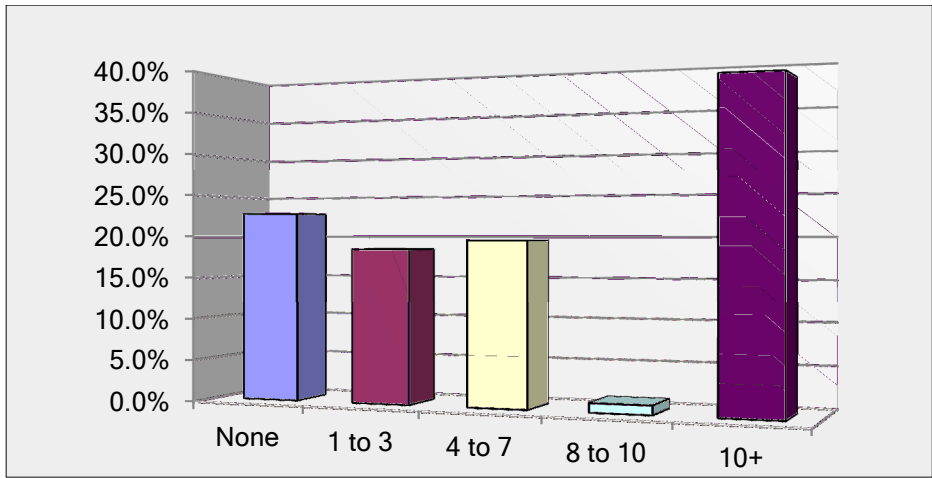


Figure 13: Number of competitors outside the area that is selling to their market

Customer needs are primarily identified through informal customer complaints (94%) while other methods include electronic transmissions, customer calls, marketing publications and surveys (Figure 14). This demonstrates a need for proactive methods such as market research and surveys to identify customer needs ensuring the businesses retain a competitive edge. In rural communities it is important to take proactive measures such that the business won't be impacted by negative word of mouth.

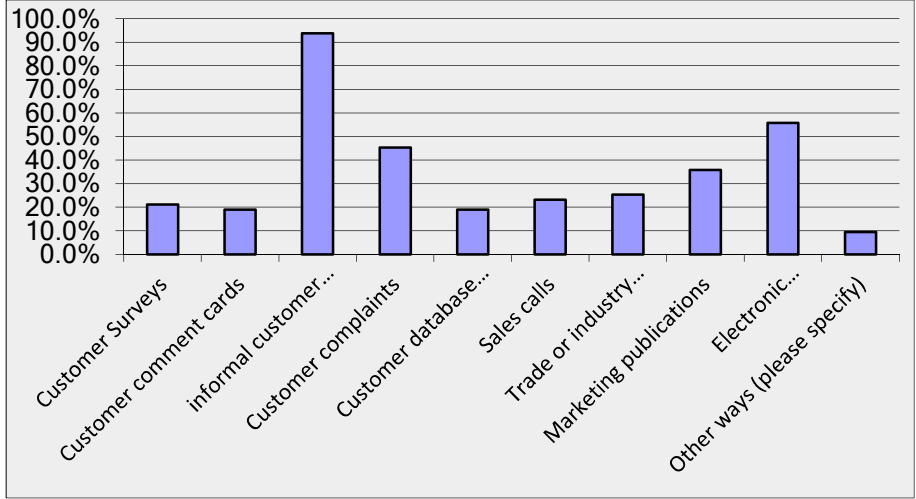


Figure 14: Methods to identify customer needs

4.4 INPUTS

Inputs identify where businesses purchase products and services. This works to identify gaps and opportunities to increase local support and purchase of inputs in the county.

Currently only 15% of products and services are purchased within the community (Figure 15). The reasons that products are not purchased locally include the availability, increased local price and the quality of products available. Typically the products are not available and/or not competitively priced for businesses to purchase them.

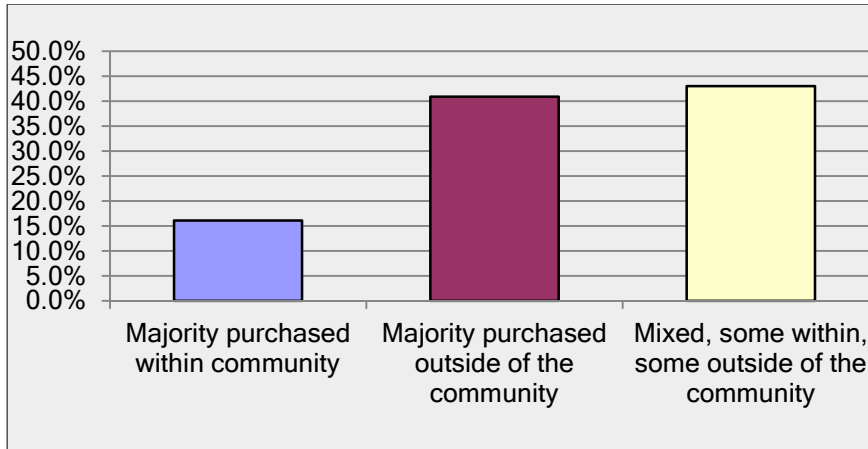


Figure 15: Location of products and services purchased by the businesses

4.5 INFORMATION/ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS

Access to information and assistance is essential for local businesses to grow and remain competitive. Additionally, information helps strengthen the local business community while attracting new businesses fostering growth throughout the region. Assistance is most frequently accessed and considered good to excellent through Municipal Governments, the Chamber of Commerce and the Community Futures Development Corporation (Figure 16).

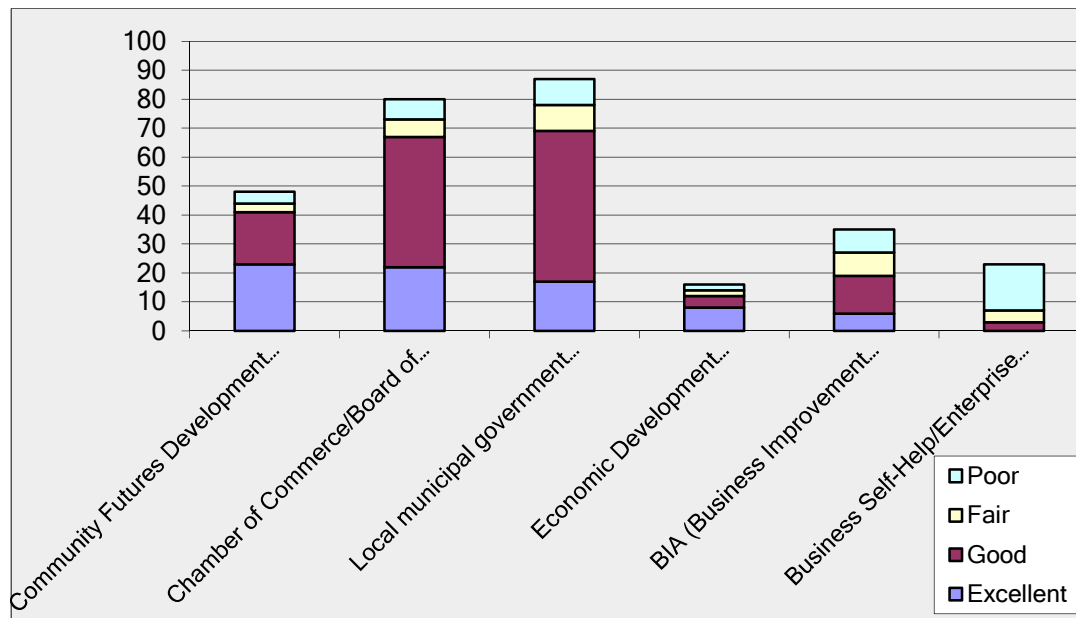


Figure 16: Level of service with local organizations and government agencies

The most significant information gaps and topics requested by the businesses include financial assistance and marketing (Figure 17). This information includes financial support for hiring students, marketing, financing and sources of capital, job training assistance, financial support for training, research grants, energy management and efficiency, financial management.

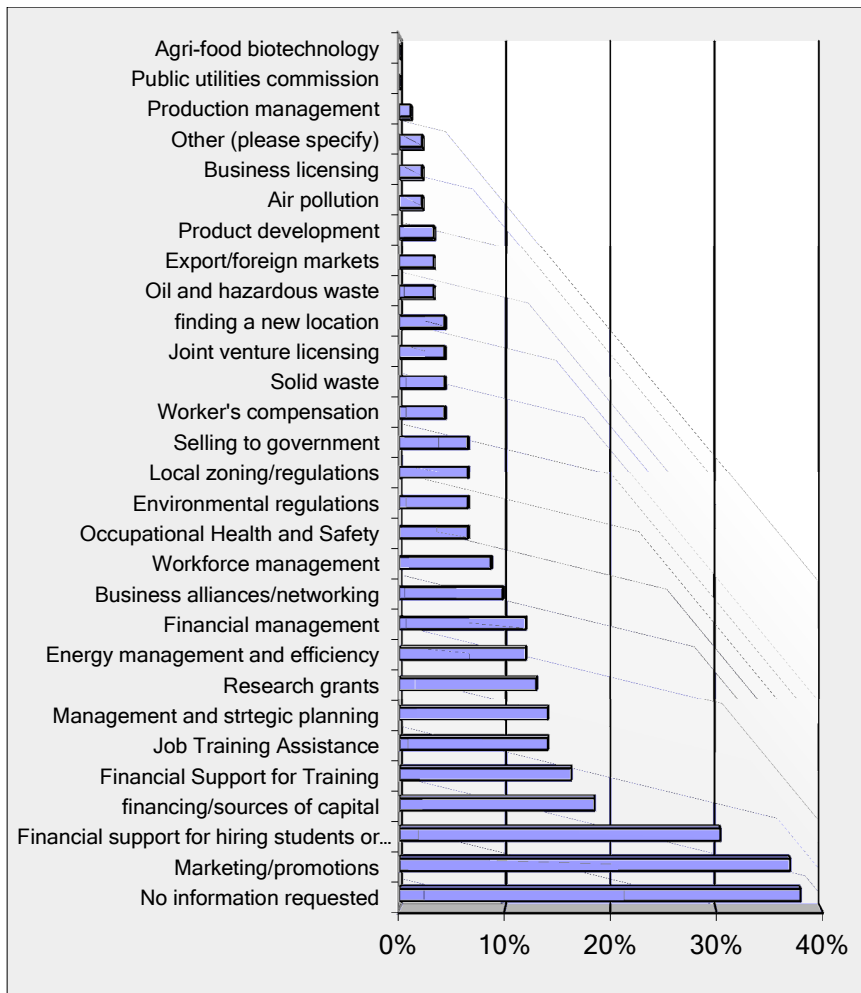


Figure 17: Percentage of information requested for each topic

4.6 HUMAN RESOURCES

Human resources and labour is essential for businesses to operate. Small and medium businesses generate over half the employment opportunities in the province³. Over the next two year, the numbers of employees are expected to either stay the same (45%) or increase (45%) which corresponds with the expected business expansions. None of the businesses are expecting the number of employees to decrease which reflects an optimistic view of the business community.

Employee training is important for the businesses such that employees are more efficient and effective which allows the businesses to remain competitive. Currently 18% of the businesses don't provide any training while the average training is 1-10 hrs/employee/year (Table 2).

Table 2: Employee Training

Hours of Training/Employee/Year	Response Percent
0	18.4%
1 to 10	46.0%
11 to 20	19.5%
21 to 30	3.4%
31 +	12.6%

In the past two years businesses experienced an increase of employees due to technology changes, change in competition, increase in sales and new products. Businesses that experienced a decrease in employees was primarily due to a change in competition and sales.

Approximately 40% of businesses have difficulty recruiting qualified employees and 17% of businesses have difficulty retaining employees. This labour gap may relate to the aging population resulting in a decreasing labour force⁴. The low turn-over rate may be due to the high unemployment rates in the area at 9.5%⁵.

Businesses require employees with a diversity of skills and professional qualifications. The majority of businesses require literacy, basic computer skills, sales skills and management skills. Less than a quarter of the businesses consider a college diploma important for the position, followed by technical trades at under 20% and a university degree at 13%.

Overall the businesses generally require skilled and unskilled labour which is found primarily in the region. Employees typically receive some training, however there is room for increased training opportunities which may lower the employee turnover rate.

³ Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, 2007. Snapshot of Small and Medium Enterprises in Ontario. May 2010. www.sbe.gov.on.ca

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2006

⁵ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011 www.hrsdc.gc.ca

4.7 FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Financial support and assistance is important for many of the businesses. The majority of businesses are satisfied with their financial institutions and are able to access capital when necessary. However, over 50% of businesses have investigated alternative sources of funding such as private investors, the Business Development Corporation and/or venture capitalists. Of the businesses that investigated alternative funding, 69% accessed funding through those sources.

There has been significant investment in the business sector reflected by capital investment by over 50% of the businesses in the past 3 years and 50% of businesses planning capital investment in the next 3 years. The investments will be financed equally with cash and line of credit. In the past 5 years there has been a significant investment in the businesses with 45% of businesses having invested \$100 000 or more in upgrading facilities (Figure 18).

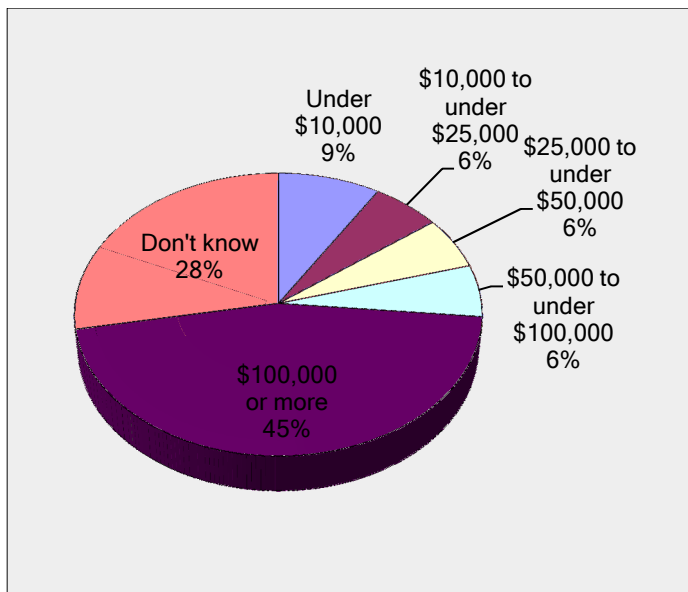


Figure 18: Amount invested in upgrade facilities over the past 5 years

4.8 STORE FRONT RETAIL BUSINESSES

The appearance of the town and store fronts is vital for a thriving, robust business community. Business opinion was summarized to determine the current state of the store front retail businesses (Figure 19).

Good to Excellent:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Special events and promotions held in the community
- Mix of businesses to attract a variety of customers
- Quality of merchandise available
- Customer service
- Public safety report

Fair to Poor:

- Competitive advertising
- Competitive prices
- Display/presentation of products and services
- Strategic plan that addresses promotion/marketing
- Uniform hours of operation
- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Roadside signage for advertising
- Traffic flow, parking facilities and parking signage

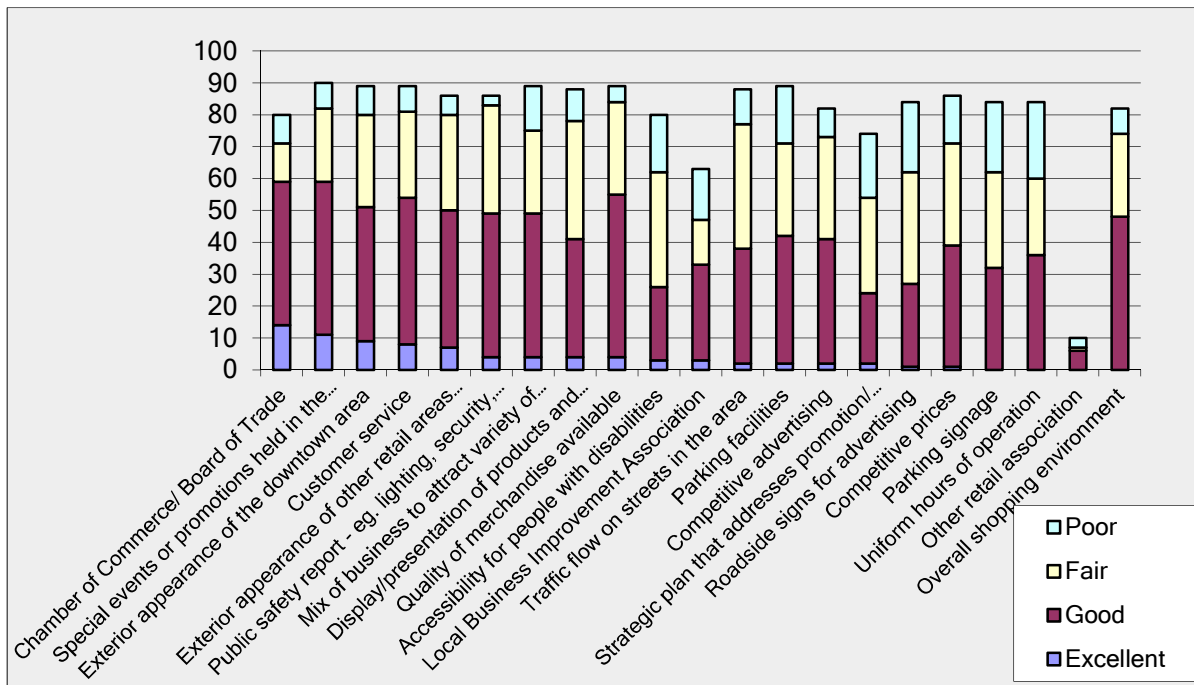


Figure 19: Business opinions on the local shopping area

4.9 TOURISM

Tourism is the primary industry in Haliburton County. Although tourism exists year around, it is highly dependent on weather and is primarily summer traffic (Figure 20). Approximately 36% of businesses consider the seasonality the most significant barrier to expansion of this business. However the seasonality of tourism provides the opportunity to promote local support and year around tourism. The increasing gas prices are expected to encourage local tourism throughout the year. The proximity of Toronto and Southern Ontario provides a market of 12 million people to explore the natural year around playground in Haliburton County⁶.

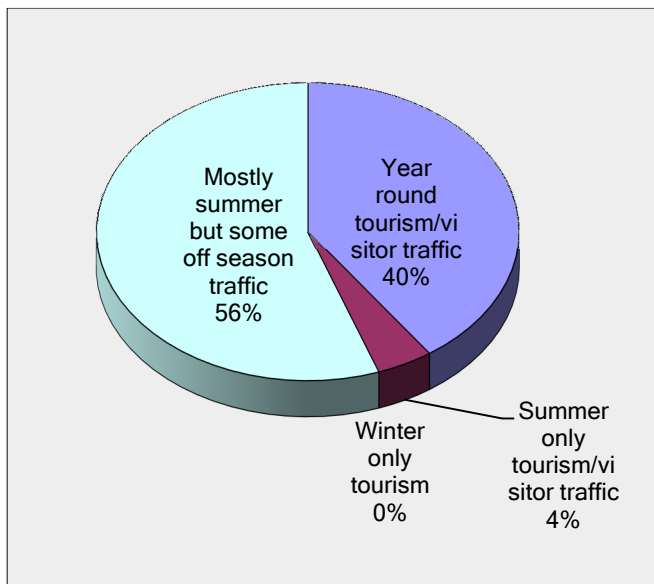


Figure 20: Tourism industry in Haliburton County

The tourism based economy allows for targeted marketing. Approximately 50% of businesses have worked collaboratively to develop packages and would like information regarding the creating of effective packages.

Currently the most significant form of marketing is word of mouth followed by print ads, radio, direct mail/database marketing, travel/sports/trade shows and coop local marketing (Table 3). The significant reliance on word of mouth marketing demonstrates an opportunity for increased targeted marketing.

⁶ Statistics Canada, 2006

Table 3: Percentage of marketing activities businesses are currently engaged

Marketing Activities	Response Percent
Word of mouth	91.4%
Print ads	78.5%
Radio	51.6%
Direct mail/database marketing	37.6%
Travel, sports, and trade shows	36.6%
Newsletters	35.5%
Co-op marketing locally	31.2%
Other (please specify)	14.0%
Co-op with provincial marketing initiatives	9.7%
Co-op with marketing regionally (such as OTAPs (Ontario Tourism Agreement Program))	5.4%
Travel links (1-800-ONTARIO)	4.3%
Television	3.2%

Tourism association create partnerships and leverage resources to promote an area as a whole. Approximately 65% of businesses belong to tourism associations of which 21% are provincial, national or international organizations. Businesses recognize the importance of marketing and over 50% plan re-focus, expand and refine market efforts to attract new clients.

4.10 LOCAL COMMUNITY

The local community has a significant impact on the business climate and helps support and attract new businesses to the region. Currently, 11% of the businesses were aware of customers, suppliers or related industries from outside the area looking to relocate their business (Table 4). These potential businesses and suppliers should be contacted regarding the benefits of locating in the region.

Table 4: Businesses looking to relocate

Brampton Welding
Okee Dokee Kids - Miss Green (Newmarket) clothing manufacturer
A Home Builder Welder
Tim Horton's-Haliburton
Canadian Tire- Minden

In order to attract investment and development it is essential to understand the current situation. The businesses identified many community strengths and weaknesses.

Community Strengths

- Quality of life
- Natural Beauty
- Tourism Destination
- Business Support
- Sense of Community
- Low Cost of Doing Business

Community Weaknesses

- Seasonality
- Lack of Skilled Labour
- No Economic Development Plan/No Vision
- Lack of Partnerships
- Transportation
- Small Local Market
- Telecommunications Infrastructure

The interviewees suggested businesses and services that would be beneficial additions to the region. There was a definite need for small niche manufacturing and industry to provide year around employment. Additionally the businesses identified the need for more retail, restaurants and small franchises. A diverse business sector will attract more shoppers and tourists. The corporations and small franchises identified include Canadian Tire, Walmart, Tim Hortons, Burger King and McDonalds.

There is an exceptional knowledge base that exists in the region. Mentoring programs provide valuable opportunities to share local business knowledge and a total of 37% see value in a mentoring program. Mentoring would be most valuable in business planning, marketing, financial, human resources and technical knowledge.

There is uncertainty regarding what is currently being done in the region and the role of economic development. Approximately 50% of the businesses don't know if there is a strategic economic development plan while 20% say no and 30% say yes. Additionally, only 21% of the businesses believe that the local municipalities take an adequate roll in business and economic development. The lack of awareness is exemplified with 69% of the businesses that identified they don't know if the municipality is taking an adequate role are not aware of what is being done while 31% don't know if it is enough. This indicates a need for an Economic Development Strategic Plan.

In the past 2 years, 30% of businesses have changed their attitude about doing business in the community. Of the changed attitudes, they are evenly distributed between positive, negative and mixed attitudes.

There are many barriers to new businesses locating in the region (Figure 21). This information can be used to create a strategy to reduce the barriers and attract new businesses.

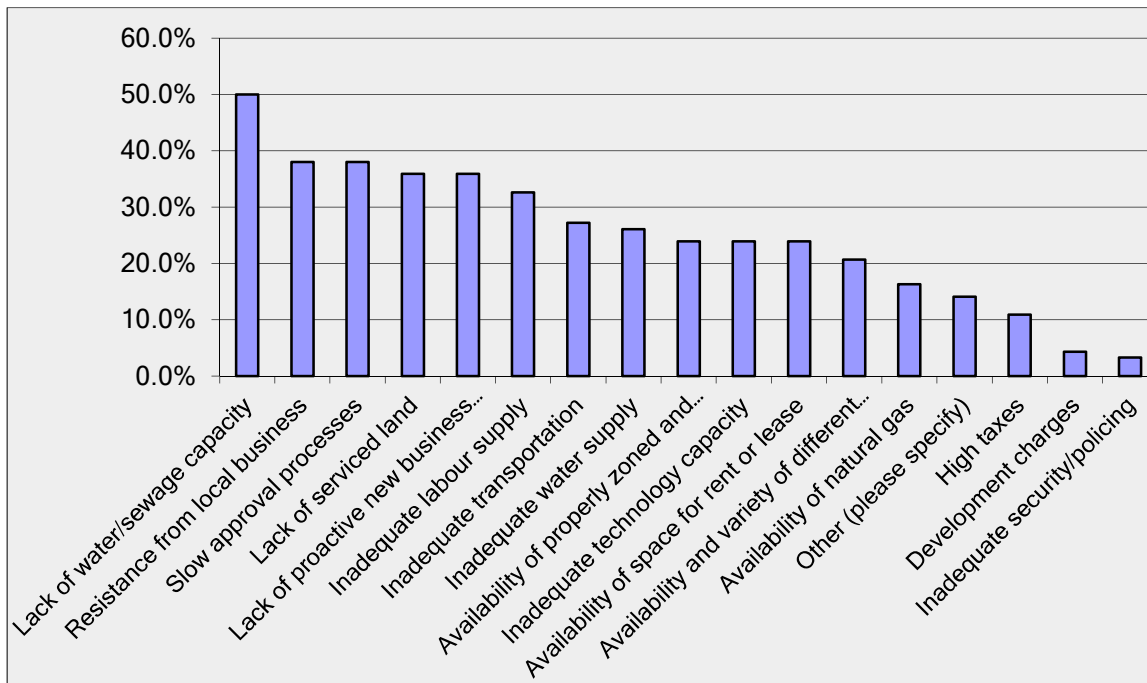


Figure 21: Barriers to new businesses locating in the region

The county offers many essential services such as excellent policing, fire prevention and services, medical health services, cultural facilities (Figure 22). However there is room for improvement regarding for child care services, public utilities, zoning, street repair and industrial training. There are mixed feelings regarding recreational facilities.

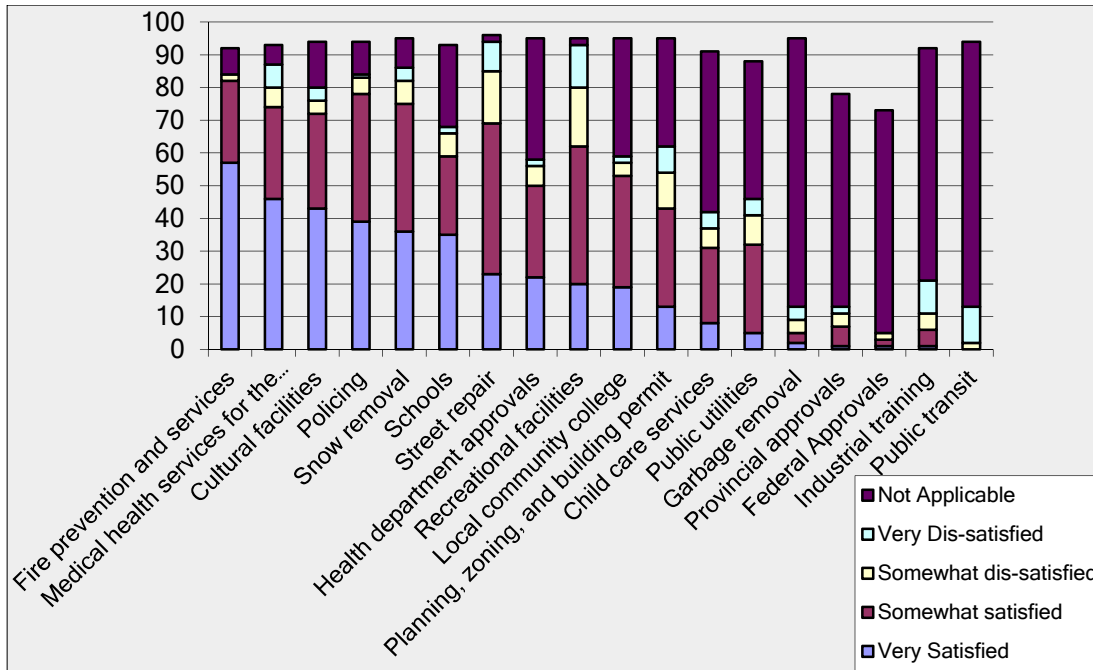


Figure 22: Satisfaction of community services

The success of businesses is based on an economic, social and environmental balance throughout the communities and regions. The businesses surveyed felt that parking, affordable housing, elder care options, youth activities, police presence and downtown streetscapes play a very important role in the business community (Figure 23). There were mixed impressions regarding the swimming pool, handicapped staff hiring and facility accessibility.

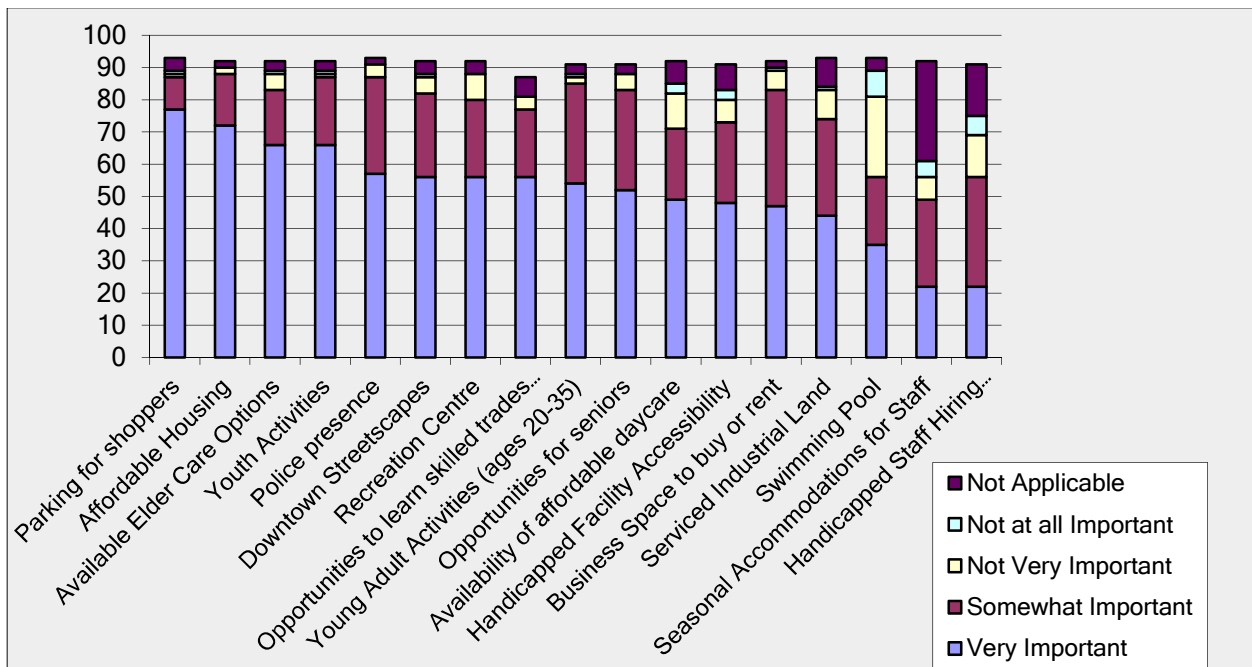


Figure 23: Importance of various community factors that relate to the business community

5.0 Barriers to Growth

The following factors are considered the most significant barriers to growth and are addressed in the action plan. These items are not listed in any order of importance.

- Seasonal Market
- Knowledge Capacity and Assistance
- Labour Retention, Availability, Training
- Accessibility/Infrastructure
- Marketing/Communication
- Municipal Issues
- Transportation
- Community Support and Services

6.0 Action Plan

Action Item: Seasonal Market

Tourism is a major employer and vital industry in Haliburton County. Although tourism opportunities exist year around, the market tends to be seasonal primarily through the summer months. This provides an opportunity to capitalize on the year around tourism opportunities.

Lead Contact

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase awareness of year around tourism opportunities through targeted marketing campaigns -Increase local business support through a shop local campaign -Assist businesses with competitive prices, market research and advertising -Foster partnerships with local, provincial and national tourism departments - Build closer relationships with resource partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Haliburton Chamber of Commerce -Tourism Associations -Local media organizations and businesses -BIA -Economic Development Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Short term -Ongoing
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase in year around visitors -Increase in residents shopping locally -Number of partnerships established and maintained 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of year around marketing campaign -Creation of a shop local campaign -Assistance provided to employer -Creation of a more proactive business community to capitalize on tourism 	

Action Item: Business Support

Information is essential for businesses to make educated decisions and effectively plan for growth. Businesses identified there is a significant need for information and assistance regarding financial assistance, marketing and business management. Although the information may exist, businesses are not aware of what is available and how to access it. Topics requested include markets, financing, utilities, infrastructure, succession planning, labour development, strategic partnerships and networks, marketing, local bylaws, availability of land and buildings, business plans, business management, environmental regulations and energy efficiency.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a database of land, buildings and space available for lease or sale -Ensure information is accessible to all businesses through the internet and as a library in a central location -Provide assistance for existing and new businesses -Information sessions regarding key topics -Education and awareness regarding growth and the positive impact on the existing business community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Haliburton Chamber of Commerce -U-links -Economic Development Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Short Term -Ongoing
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of businesses assisted -Attendance at information sessions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of database for land, buildings and space available for lease or sale -Information made accessible through the internet and library -Assistance provided to employers 	

Action Item: Business Development

It is imperative that the community be proactive to attract investment and assist with future expansion of existing businesses. Businesses identified factors that need to be addressed include succession planning, seasonal markets, market size, management, marketing and communications.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of a Business Investment Package to provide necessary information for a businesses interested in developing in the community -Identify and approach applicable niche manufacturing and industries that can provide year around employment - Follow up leads provided from the BRE survey - Create a marketing strategy - Provide assistance to business expansions -Foster entrepreneurial spirit in the youth with involvement in local secondary and post-secondary institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Haliburton Chamber of Commerce -Economic Development Director -Sir Sandford Fleming College -Haliburton Highlands Secondary School -U Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long term -Ongoing Improvements
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of new businesses locating in the community -Number of new business inquiries -Number of businesses started by local youth 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completion of a Business Investment Package - Marketing created in cooperation with partners 	

Action Item: Workforce Development

Workforce Development addresses the need for training, attraction and retention of skilled labour and skill development. It is important to have skilled and efficient employees that enable the business to flourish and remain competitive.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop partnerships between businesses to determine training needs and leverage resources -Coordinate training opportunities -Explore training opportunities and subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Service Ontario -Economic Development Director 	-Short to long term
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of businesses partnered to provide training -Number of employees trained 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of training schedule -Training targeted to employers needs -Assistance provided to employers 	

Action Item: Infrastructure Improvements

Infrastructure needs include telecommunication, water, sewer, energy and wheel chair accessibility. Infrastructure needs seems to vary throughout the County with some areas identifying it as an asset while other areas identify it as a barrier to growth. Telecommunication services are vital for growth of all business types and sizes and must to be addressed.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
Medium - High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify and map the areas with poor telecommunications -Lobby for increased telecommunication services -List areas with water, sewer and energy needs and approach municipal governments -Compile information regarding energy efficiency and financial assistance programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Telecommunication Businesses -Economic Development Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long term -Ongoing Improvements
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of businesses that make their facility energy efficient -Number of businesses that access financial assistance for energy efficiency -Number of communities that address infrastructure needs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Map of telecommunication service areas -Increase in infrastructure needs 	

Action Item: Marketing/Communication

Marketing is essential to attract customers from the local, provincial and national market. Currently the markets are seasonal providing opportunity to increase year around tourism, local and technology based marketing. Customer needs are primarily identified through informal customer complaints identifying the need to take a proactive role in marketing.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify current and potential markets -Identify current and potential market trends -Foster partnerships and relationships between businesses -Ensure market research is accessible to businesses -Create a marketing strategy -Create packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tourism Associations -Municipal Government -Local media organizations and businesses -Economic Development Director 	-Short to long term
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of businesses accessing market research -Number of partnerships created to leverage resources and create effective target marketing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of a marketing strategy -Implementation of the marketing strategy -Increased business support from local residents and visitors -Creation of packages 	

Action Item: Municipal Improvements

Support from the community and municipal governments is necessary to address barriers to growth. These barriers can be addressed through bylaws, support, information, zoning, streamlined processes and investment in infrastructure and social services. Businesses identified municipal barriers including water and sewage capacity, slow approval process, resistance from local businesses, lack of serviced land, availability of properly zoned land, availability of space for rent or lease, essential services, social services and the role of role of municipalities and economic development.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
Medium - High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clearly identify role of the municipal government and economic development -Provide easy access to municipal information such as an economic development strategic plan -Create a database of land and space available -Education and awareness regarding growth and the implication on the current business community -Create proactive changes to encourage business growth and attraction such as zoning, bylaws and streamlined processes -Improve availability of roadside signage for advertising -Complete a housing needs and demands assessment to create a comprehensive plan that addresses affordable housing and social housing in the short and long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Economic Development Director 	-Short to long term
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Amount invested in municipal changes -Number of municipal changes 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information is accessible for current and potential businesses -Identify and implement beneficial zoning and bylaw changes -Completion of a housing needs and demands assessment 	

Action Item: Transportation

The increasing costs of transportation impacts the access to supplies. Those businesses that cannot access necessary supplies must ship them in paying a premium which increases the cost to consumers. Additionally, there is no public transportation between the communities.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identify products and supplies purchased outside the community -Foster partnerships with local businesses to share transportation costs, purchase in bulk and create innovative solutions -Encourage the use of the internet to expand the market base -Complete a feasibility study regarding public transportation between communities and/or tourism destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Telecommunication Businesses -U-Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long term -Ongoing Improvements
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
-Number of businesses that partner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -List of products and services purchased outside the community -Creation of a public transportation feasibility study 	

Action Item: Community Support and Services

The community identified many strengths such as the quality of life, natural beauty, sense of community and low cost of doing businesses. However, many responses indicated a negative attitude, lack of local support and lack of strategic partnerships and networking. The uncertainty regarding an economic development plan suggests that one should be created and if one exists, it needs to be accessible.

Lead Contact:

Priority	Strategy Objectives	Potential Partners	Time Line
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Foster partnerships with local businesses to leverage resources to improve transportation, marketing, lobby for infrastructure needs and other business related needs. -Utilize social networking media to foster partnerships -Shop Local Campaign -Economic Development Strategic Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipal Governments -Haliburton Chamber of Commerce -Economic Development Director -U-Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Long term -Ongoing Improvements
Measures of Success			
Quantitative		Qualitative	
-Number of businesses that partner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -List of products and services purchased outside the community -Creation of a Shop Local Campaign -Creation of an Economic Development Strategic Plan -Creation of social networking sites 	

7.0 Next Steps

- Host a meeting with lead partners, organization and businesses
- Create detailed timetables identifying lead contacts, volunteers, priorities and outcomes
- Apply for funding for applicable projects
- Ensure there is follow through and evaluation

8.0 Conclusion

Haliburton County is an exceptional place to do business while enjoying a high quality of life, the natural beauty and sense of community. The region is full of opportunity which can be captured by addressing the strategies detailed in the action plan. The community based approach creates local commitment while developing a knowledge base of what drives their local economy and how they can become proactive in setting the direction for long term community sustainability and growth.