

The Boundary: Workshop 2 Summary Report

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Lessons From Another Region: Ontario's Grey/Bruce Counties

Grey-Bruce: Overall Economy Features

- Features a diversified economy with large employers.
 - Tourism, Energy, health care, agriculture, some manufacturing.
 - Bruce Power is a major employer and attractant of investment.
- Workforce training is an issue.
- Natural geography and environment is an advantage.
 - Water, trails, skiing, and other assets attract tourism, investment, and remote workers.
 - Environmental sustainability is an issue: how do they retain their environmental advantage.
- Owen Sound (main city) has a lot of high-quality infrastructure (city and cultural) left from its industrial days.

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Grey-Bruce: Regional Self-Sufficiency and Support

- A community that looks to help itself – private initiatives, both formal and informal.
- County initiatives are key to many of the economic development projects.
 - But some believe that county efforts need to be mindful not to choke out private initiatives.
- Developing critical mass to make initiatives stick is an issue.
- It is a very large region, so there are formal networks, and some that have developed organically (private and public), but there are also some silos between public agencies.
- County, municipal, and provincial levels – some coordination across jurisdictions but also come competition and differing incentives.
- As an area with many second homes, large network of business people available to support, and wanting to support, communities they have been spending more time in since COVID.

Grey-Bruce: Housing and Other Issues

- Housing is an issue, especially as urban flight (from the Greater Toronto Area) becomes stronger.
 - Affordability is an issue, and land use a question (see environment issue).
 - Contributes to lack of workers, mostly in the service industries, but is found in most sectors.
- Transportation is an issue, and also contributes to lack of workers.
- Need to balance new ideas and developments with the values and community sense of the region – a tension, but a healthy one that could hopefully feed into new spaces.

Grey-Bruce: New Knowledge

- New knowledge or knowledge gaps are addressed by: county gov't bodies, or personal networks, Bruce Power R&D and related entities.
 - Some initiatives come from other areas and adapted to region.
 - Out-migration from GTA also bringing in new entrepreneurship that is locally focused (i.e. restaurants and food services), bring new experience, and creates own networks.

Comparable Topics: Grey/Bruce Counties and The Boundary

- Housing issues, and growing demand.
- Land use issues, and slow change to regulation and zoning.
 - This impacts housing and possible solutions.
- Need for infrastructure improvement and expansion.
- Need for more nimble decision-making and execution in local and provincial government.
 - Local government under-staffed and stretched thin.
 - Coordination within and between bodies not always happening.
- Similar tension as Central Ontario: innovation and development vs. keeping the community's existing qualities.

Three Horizons Activity

Overview: Three Horizons

Three Horizons is a strategy to help you think about the future and how to get there. The main parts are described below.

Horizon 1: What's the **current state** of the issue?

- Established patterns?
- Current assumptions?
- What's taken for granted?

Horizon 3: What is the **desired state**?

- What are the exciting possibilities?
- What are some new paradigms?
- What do you want to see in the future?

Horizon 2: What will **need to change** between H1 and H3?

- Which assumptions in H1 will be most challenged by the change represented in H3?
- What are the incremental adjustments that need to happen?
- What are some transformational experiments that might help bridge the gap?

Pockets of the Future in the Present: What do you see now that looks like the future described in H3?

Essential Features to Maintain: What should we make sure to keep from the past and present?

What's holding us back?

- What are the structures, assumptions, behaviours, values, etc, that are out of alignment with H3 but continue to exist?

Horizon 1: The Now

The Challenges

We see/hear issues with:

- Housing and other infrastructure (e.g., broadband) as current features;
- Agricultural Land Commission policies;
- Communication between communities;
- Need for greater climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- Changes in the forest sector and need for greater value-add in local production.

The Strengths

BUT we also see current strengths:

- Strong sense of community;
- Good lifestyle, outdoor amenities, work-life balance;
- Attractive places, beautiful heritage buildings; and
- Innovative initiatives such as food hub and the school district's 4-day school week.

Horizon 3: The Desired Future

We imagine:

- A full system of housing choices available to people in the Boundary;
- A fully connected region;
 - Better public transit options between regions;
- Advanced ag-tech, land use techniques, and structures to take local food production to the future;
- Locally controlled natural resources that benefit the region;
- Local and globally competitive businesses operating in the Boundary;
 - Using advanced technology and approaches in local businesses;
- Enhanced infrastructure for community activities and leisure;
 - Community food hubs, public farms, self sustaining community.

Horizon 2: The Transition

We hear calls to:

- Increase training and skills for both greater local entrepreneurship and locally-based trades; access to more and better education options;
- Create incentives and benefits to attract workers; living wages;
- Change culture around municipal and regional financing;
- Change natural resource policy;
- Improve transportation inside the region and to outside the region for work and health travel;
- Study current farming practices to understand the needs that exist; and
- Enable a greater diversity of people to participate in local government/politics.

Essential Regional Features

We discussed what the essential features of the region were:

- Sense of community;
- Strength of the natural environment;
- Lifestyle in the region; and
- Community Spaces.

What Might Be Holding the Region Back?

We discussed what might be holding the region back:

- Inconsistency in planning;
- Commitment to change by leadership and capacity to carry it out by staff; and
- Fear that the community fabric will be lost through change.

Closing Discussion Session & Next Steps

Discussion

- In the third part of the workshop, we tried to share challenges and knowledge with each other, but the focus of the conversation returned to broader community needs.
- Some insights that arose:
 - Short-term funding availability and long-term planning needs are a challenge faced by people at the table; access to more government grants/programs
 - Getting community leaders to discuss issues and implement solutions is a challenge – i.e. agenda setting is an area that needs improvement.
 - How to look at risk and risk mitigation in order to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities through new ideas.

Next Steps

We asked workshop participants how we should proceed:

- **Option 1:** The research team develop a high-level strategy for the region. This would be imperfect and incomplete as many of the private sector stakeholders and other regional members were not fully represented to give their views. However, it could start a conversation.
- **Option 2:** The research team develops a collection of forward-looking ideas that any person/organization can take forward. This too would be incomplete and would also not tap into any community synergies.
- **Option 3:** Set-up a 3rd workshop to work out a collective strategy. This would be ideal but would require community participation to help us attract as many participants as possible. The research team can facilitate, support and report it.
- We sent out a one question [survey](#) asking workshop participants for their input on next Steps. To date we've had 4 responses, all requesting a third workshop.