

Table of Contents

Program Background	1
What was the Process?	
What were the Survey Objectives?	
Consultation Process	2
Who was Involved?	
What were the Red Flags?	
Survey Participant Information	3
Survey Results and Action Items	
Communication of Accurate Business Information	4
Human Resource Recruitment, Retention, Education, and Training	5
Business Expansion Support (Municipal Infrastructure)	6
Business Alliance Development	7
Improving the Business Community Environment	8
Business Development	9
South Simcoe Business Retention & Expansion Team	10

Program Background

What was the Process?

- Elected and appointed officials from the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio, Township of Essa, Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, Town of Innisfil and Town of New Tecumseth in partnership with International Trade Canada, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs and Nottawasaga Futures were invited to join a Business Retention & Expansion Task Force to conduct a survey of South Simcoe businesses. Upon completion of the survey, the Program Consultant reviewed the data and responded to the immediate concerns expressed by business. Over 95% of the one hundred and twenty businesses surveyed were provided with additional information.
- The survey data was entered into specifically designed software, ensuring the business information remained confidential. A statistical analysis was conducted, and a report was prepared for the Task Force.
- The survey results were shared with the Task Force and priority actions were identified that would significantly enhance the business climate of the South Simcoe business community. The goals and action plans identified by the Task Force are included in this report.

What were the Objectives?

The objectives of this program were to:

- actively demonstrate our community's pro-business attitude;
- help existing businesses solve problems;
- assist businesses in using existing programs aimed at helping them become more competitive;
- create a forum in which sensitive information on the needs and issues of businesses can be addressed effectively, yet confidentially; and
- collect data on our community's strengths and weaknesses as a place to do business.

Consultation Procedure

Who Was Involved?

Nottawasaga Futures, in partnership with International Trade Canada funded this initiative.

The contracted consultant, Colleen Gouldson, along with elected and appointed representatives from the five South Simcoe municipalities and Nottawasaga Futures interviewed business owners from May 2005 to March 2006, using the standardized Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs Business Retention and Expansion survey. Valerie Ryan, Nottawasaga Futures acted as the Master Consultant on this initiative.

What Were the “Red Flags”?

One of the key aspects that significantly contributed to the success of this program was the quick response by the Coordinator to what has been termed “Red Flag Issues.” The BR&E Co-ordinator reviewed the surveys within two days after the survey was completed and responded immediately to the needs and concerns that were expressed by businesses.

The criterion used for “Red Flags” were:

- a) Business closing or downsizing;
- b) Business relocating;
- c) Business expanding; and
- d) Request for information.

Survey Information

Who Replied to the Survey?

- One hundred and twenty businesses were selected as a representative sample of the business community throughout South Simcoe.
- Businesses were from the following sectors: retail and services (51%); manufacturing (39%); construction (3%); agriculture (3%) and other (4%). As determined by the Task Force committee, emphasis was placed on the manufacturing sector with random sampling in effect.
- The sample included a range of different size businesses: 42% employed <5 employees, 20% had 5 to 9 employees, 22% had 10 to 29 employees and 16% had 30 or more employees. The majority of businesses were classified as corporations (68%), 25% were sole proprietorships, and 11 were franchises.
- Approximately 60% of the businesses have been in operation more than ten years in South Simcoe. In fact, 21% of the businesses had been in the community for more than twenty-five years. Most of the respondents (86%) were involved in the business on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, South Simcoe was the sole location for most of the businesses (80%).
- The businesses served local, Canadian domestic, and international markets. Thirty-three companies export their products to the U.S.A. and eleven internationally.



Communication of Accurate Business Information

Objective:

Develop education/information products to ensure businesses better understand the scope of the restrictions facing various levels of government and the resulting financial constraints (e.g., legal, regulatory responsibilities).

Goals:

1. Develop and deliver comprehensive, coordinated community and government information to provide up-to-date information on the support, tools, and resources available to businesses.
2. Establish public guides to assist in managing expectations of the constituency throughout the region.
3. Encourage more open dialogue between all levels of government (municipal, regional, provincial and federal), business organizations, school boards, business community, and residents to ensure accurate exchange of information regarding areas of responsibility, regulations, business support tools and resources.

Actions:

- Create a business newsletter.
- Establish a day of recognition for municipal staff by elected officials.
- The creation of an innovative customer service pro-business strategy resulting in an internal customers service training program. Recommended 6-month refresher be adopted.
- Create and distribute an annual report.
- Establish a “Town Page” in local newspapers.

Potential Partners:

- The five municipalities South Simcoe
- County of Simcoe
- Local/municipal Economic Development Committees
- Private Sector
- All South Simcoe Chambers of Commerce
- Local Business Associations
- Nottawasaga Futures

Human Resource Recruitment, Retention, Education and Training

Objective:

Increase local business awareness of business/human resource education and training opportunities. Provide information on cost effective recruitment and retention strategies.

Goals:

1. Disseminate up-to-date research on current and future local area labour force requirements, trends, and availability.
2. Provide South Simcoe businesses with effective, low-cost business education and training opportunities within the County of Simcoe. Areas of specific interest include apprenticeship programs for skilled trades and health and safety.
3. Increase business' awareness of effective, low-cost human resource recruitment and retention strategies for unskilled and skilled labour as well as sales professionals.

Action Item:

- The establishment of a community council that will develop and implement a communication strategy which will focus on business education/training and human resource recruitment and retention within the local area.

Potential Partners:

- The five municipalities of South Simcoe
- County of Simcoe
- Simcoe County Training Board
- Local community Colleges - Georgian College of Applied Arts & Technology, Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
- The South Simcoe Chambers of Commerce
- Nottawasaga Futures
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Local Business Associations
- Educational Institutions and Boards of Education
- Private Sector

Business Expansion Support (Municipal Infrastructure)

Objective:

Provide an adequate supply of zoned, serviced land to ensure South Simcoe businesses have every opportunity to expand within the region.

Goals:

1. Provide the business community, both present and future, with an adequate supply of expansion lands.
2. Provide the business community with an inventory of available lease/rental space.

Action Items:

- Work collectively to resolve infrastructure issues.

Potential Partners:

- The five municipalities of South Simcoe
- County of Simcoe
- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing



Business Alliance Development

Objective:

Increase the opportunities for South Simcoe businesses to develop partnerships for business alliances such as local supply chain management, employee training and joint marketing activities.

Goals:

1. To assist local businesses with the development of networking opportunities through regularly scheduled programs to promote the transfer of knowledge and the development of partnerships to promote cost efficiency.
2. To encourage the full participation of businesses in the South Simcoe Business Directory to ensure availability of current, accurate information with respect to local established businesses.

Actions:

- Establish regular networking sessions for each sector within the region.
- Promote the value of the South Simcoe Business Directory and invite full participation of the business community in the directory.
- Assess gaps in local supply chain and actively recruit businesses to fill the gaps.
- Facilitate the development of a buyer-supplier network.

Potential Partners:

- The five municipalities of South Simcoe
- Private Sector Partners
- Nottawasaga Futures
- Local Newspapers
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Local Business Associations

Improving the Business Community Environment

Objective

To enhance the external environment to address safety concerns, promote customer traffic and reduce the vacancy rate in commercial cores.

Goals:

1. Create a safe, inviting commercial core that fosters dedicated, local patronage and promotes community pride by increasing parking signage, accessibility, timely street repair, eliminating graffiti and excessive roadside signs. Promote the addition of street furniture, waste receptacles, parks, fountains and public washrooms.
2. Support the retail sector and its role in anchoring downtown cores.
3. Strengthen municipal emphasis on tourism and related businesses.



Action Items:

- Review existing signage for redundancy and safety with a view to developing a sign by-law.
- Continue to collaborate with municipal accessibility committees to ensure universal access.
- Review and develop priority service levels for commercial cores (e.g., timely street repair, public amenities, signage).
- Work with community partners to develop strategies for reducing graffiti.

Potential Partners:

- South Simcoe municipalities
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Local Business Associations
- Local law enforcement
- Local educational institutions
- Local Business Improvement Associations
- Local municipal accessibility committees
- Local Business Owners



Business Development

Objective:

Ensure South Simcoe businesses have the necessary tools, resources, and supports required to maintain or expand their enterprise.

Goals:

1. Increase awareness of existing supports to local businesses.
2. Develop on-going communication strategies between service providers and businesses to ensure resources, tools, and supports are available to meet business needs in a timely manner.

Action Items

- Review and disseminate information to local businesses on existing programs and unique opportunities to increase awareness in related areas (e.g., financial sourcing, business and marketing plans).
- Develop on-going communication strategies between local businesses and service providers to ensure future needs are met.

Potential Partners:

- Nottawasaga Futures
- Local Business Associations
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- The five municipalities of South Simcoe
- Local Business Owners
- Government Representatives



South Simcoe Business Retention & Expansion Team

This successful program is the result of the hard work of the elected and appointed municipal representatives and their dedication to the continued development of the South Simcoe business community.

A Very Special Thanks to:

- Mayor Walsh
- Deputy Mayor Little
- Councillor Boston
- Councillor Wallace
- Councillor Brett
- Councillor Greer
- Councillor Cook
- Mayor Jonkman
- Deputy Mayor Roughly
- Councillor Nanowski
- Councillor Peter Dykie, Jr.
- Councillor Crake
- Councillor White
- Councillor Natalie Dykie
- Councillor Page
- Councillor Simpson

And to:

- Mayor Guergis
- Deputy Mayor Dowdall
- Councillor Henderson
- Councillor Newlove
- Councillor Macdonald
- Mayor Jackson
- Deputy Mayor Baguley
- Councillor Van Berkel
- Councillor Pring
- Councillor Beleskey
- Councillor Bridge
- Councillor Wauchope
- Councillor Dollin
- Mayor MacEachern
- Deputy Mayor Milne
- Councillor Marrs

And to:

- Councillor Smith
- Councillor Egan
- Councillor Huson
- Councillor Norcross
- Councillor Aldridge
- Councillor Prothero
- Valerie Ryan
- Colleen Gouldson
- Lynn Chamilliard
- Margo Cooney
- Ron Lyons
- Peter Paz
- Karen Fischer, OMAFRA
- Lisa Pogue, International Trade Canada
- . . . **And all 120 local businesses!**