



**Discovery Workshop Report**  
**Haliburton County**  
*February 4, 2009*

**INTRODUCTION**

This report is part of The Monieson Centre's Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) Project, a three-year endeavour to connect academic knowledge with economic development needs in Eastern Ontario. The report is a summary of information collected at a 3-hour workshop at the Dominion Hotel in Minden, ON. Eighteen community leaders and business people from Haliburton County gave feedback on their community's economic development needs and research questions. This information, along with similar information gathered in 14 other communities in Eastern Ontario, will guide the research pursued over the course of the KIS project.

The workshop was hosted by the U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research ([www.haliburtoncooperative.on.ca/ulinks/index.php](http://www.haliburtoncooperative.on.ca/ulinks/index.php)) in partnership with Haliburton County and the Haliburton County Development Corporation ([www.haliburtoncdc.ca](http://www.haliburtoncdc.ca)). Dr. Yolande Chan, Director, The Monieson Centre, introduced the KIS project and Jeff Dixon, Project Coordinator, The Monieson Centre, facilitated the workshop. Special thanks belong to Heather Reid, Jenny Perrot, for their coordination of the workshop, and Sharon Luke for transcription services. The KIS project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For more information, visit [www.easternontarioknowledge.ca](http://www.easternontarioknowledge.ca).

## QUESTION 1

*What are the pressing issues, challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making Haliburton a vital community (economic, social, health)?<sup>1</sup>*

Top Issues:

1. **Lack of a Long-Term Environmentally Sustainable Vision (34 points):** We need economic development planning that is clear and strategic. Long-term planning needs to incorporate the natural and built environments, as well as our cultural resources.
2. **Year-round Employment (23 points):** Skilled labour tends to migrate out of the community because they can't find year-round employment in our region. Seasonal tourism leads to seasonal employment and many people living on social assistance in the off-season. There is a lack of career development opportunities, which leads to many youth leaving the area.
3. **Investment Readiness (20 points):** Creating industrial zones and land availability. Having adequate and affordable housing. Attracting lean, light and green industry. Developing commitment from and cooperation between municipalities. Having businesses cooperate to meet municipal guidelines.
4. **Youth Retention (19 points):** We need more training courses at Fleming College, especially trades. We need programs that help youth return to the County after they finish outside university or college programs.
5. **Tourism (16 points):** Create year-round tourism opportunities. Handle increased tourism competition. Link tourism to year round employment because governments don't want to support the infrastructure for tourism because of the lower wage base.
6. **Broadband Connectivity (14 points):** Provide affordable, reliable high-speed internet access across the County.
7. **Educated Workforce (13 points):** We need to attract and keep skilled labour, particularly youth. We need more local training programs.
8. **Poverty (12 points):** The County has a range of incomes, but lacks a "middle." There is a lack of good jobs. Affordable services such as recreation, housing and transportation are scarce. Our geography creates physical and social isolation.
9. **County Identity (11 points):** Making Haliburton a place to do business. Highlighting the community as a place for tourism *and* business.
10. **Economic Diversification (10 points):** Branch beyond tourism and forestry and attract new, year-round industries.
11. **Transportation Infrastructure (9 points):** We need improved public transportation both within the community and with outside urban centres. Lack of public transportation between communities creates unhealthy competition, increases the have/have-not tensions between different economic groups, and limits employment opportunities to those who can't afford a car.
12. **Mentoring (7 points):** We need to build connections between experienced, successful local business people and potential future leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> Methodology: Participants were asked to each identify three issues in their community. They then formed groups of four and each group nominated five issues. Similar ideas from different groups were merged together. Once the top ideas were gathered from all of the groups, each person was given 12 points to allocate in any combination to the issues they felt were most important.

13. **Housing (4 points):** It is very difficult to find rental housing as landlords make more money renting to tourists in the summer than renting year-round to local residents. We lack affordable housing. Proper housing for the growing numbers of seniors is lacking.
14. **Health Care (1 point):** We need doctors and improved facilities. What is the potential for electronic medical records?
15. **Waste Disposal (0 points):** We lack adequate landfill resources and need to address waste costs for businesses.

## QUESTION 2

*If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?<sup>2</sup>*

1. **Creative Economy (29 points):** How can a community develop a plan for attracting and retaining a creative economy? How do we create a long-term strategic plan to attract and maximize our “creative economy” to our county? How do we promote creative economy to attract and retain youth and non-retirees? How can we create an environment that will encourage and attract small creative, knowledge-based businesses?
2. **Downtown Business (27 points):** How do we ensure a long-term sustainable downtown community? What services do we need to develop to support new business clusters? Are there clusters of businesses that we could attract that, combined, keep people shopping locally?
3. **Small/Medium Business Attraction (26 points):** How can we attract those who want to open a new medium or small business in the County?
4. **Development Funding (25 points):** Where do we access the funding in order to develop any one of our issues, specifically the long-term vision? What resources are available for business development?
5. **Long-Term Planning (24 points):** What are best practices for rural regions that have developed comprehensive integrated visions and plans for cultural planning, environment, built environment, economic development, etc.? How do we build a 25-year vision? How can this county *integrate* its industries (tourism, outdoors, business, arts, etc.) to work towards its strategic plan?
6. **Business Incubators (23 points):** Are business incubators effective in rural communities? What models exist?
7. **Transportation (21 points):** Best practices for developing long-range transportation plan. What are the models of affordable sustainable public transportation in rural areas?
8. **Infrastructure Barriers (20 points):** What would the cost be to overcome the barriers to establish the infrastructure renewal to create long-term business in Haliburton?
9. **Airports (20 points):** What is the value of a community airport to a county? Establishing local funding sources (non-mainstream) to assist business development. What types of businesses have developed around rural airports in other communities? Should we focus more closely on ground transportation needs before focusing on an airport?
10. **Land Use (19 points):** What land use policies should be put in place, i.e., development agreements?

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<sup>2</sup> Methodology: Participants wrote down their first research question on a sheet of paper. They then passed their sheets to the right and added a question to the new sheet they had just received. This process was repeated six times. Subsequent questions could be related to another question already on the sheet or could pertain to an entirely new topic. Following this, each participant passed the sheets on once more so that they had a question sheet to which they had not contributed. Each person then teamed up with a partner and nominated the two best questions from their sheets. The group then ranked the questions by scoring each question with a “green card”, meaning they thought the question was an urgent and feasible research issue for their community, a “yellow card”, meaning they thought the question was interesting but not urgent for their community, or a “red card”, meaning they thought the question was neither urgent for their community nor feasible. Green cards were worth 2 points, yellow cards were worth 1 point, and red cards were worth 0 points.

11. **Business Engagement & Cooperation (18 points):** How do we engage local businesses in all communities to cooperate and establish local market and services?
12. **Business Attraction Targets (16 points):** Identification of targets for business attraction (type, location).

Other Questions:

- What are models of affordable sustainable public housing in rural areas?
- Can we develop manufacturing industries that are as environmentally sustainable as they are necessary to the work force (and green too)?

### QUESTION 3

*What local resources (organizations, reports, past work etc.) might contribute to addressing the issues identified above? What in-kind support can you contribute (office space, personnel, etc.) for research?<sup>3</sup>*

**Creative Economy:** How can a community develop a plan for attracting and retaining a creative economy? How do we create a long-term strategic plan to attract and maximize our “creative economy” to our county? How do we promote creative economy to attract and retain youth and non-retirees? How can we create an environment that will encourage and attract small creative, knowledge-based businesses?

- Dan Taylor
- Fleming College (Sandra Dupret)
- Arts Council (Lisa or Jim)
- Artscape Report (Bob Smith)
- Dysart incubator study (HCDC)
- Chamber of Commerce (Maria)

**Downtown Business:** How do we ensure a long-term sustainable downtown community? What services do we need to develop to support new business clusters? Are there clusters of businesses that we could attract that, combined, keep people shopping locally?

- Downtown report (Heather Reid)
- Judy Coward (OMAFRA)
- Minden Hills (Laura Cunliffe, Gerry Morrison)
- Cause Report 1982 (Heather Reid)
- Municipality of Dysart (Tammy McKelvey)
- First Impressions Exchange Program (Judy Coward, OMAFRA) (Minden – Rick Cox) (Dysart, Highlands East contact Bob Smith)
- Active Transportation Plans (Minden, Haliburton contact Heather Reid)

**Development Funding:** Where do we access the funding in order to develop any one of our issues, specifically the long-term vision? What resources are available for business development?

- Angel Funding, BDC
- HCDC (Haliburton County Development Corp) Andy Campbell
- Judy Coward @ OMAFRA
- Lou O’Hara, Beverly Quirt (Ontario Gov.)

**Transportation:** Best practices for developing long-range transportation plan. What are the models of affordable sustainable public transportation in rural areas?

- U-links may have HUB report
- Communities in Action Group (Kate Hall, Sue Shikaze)

<sup>3</sup> Methodology: Participants provided resources to key research questions in an open discussion format.

## QUESTION 4

*If this project is to be successful, what are the things that you would see in place in the next two years? What must happen in order to ensure that the KIS project makes a positive impact on your community?<sup>4</sup>*

- Initiate a dialogue on long range planning
- Queen's students come into community; will provide information specific to our towns
- Recommendations that are achievable and not just theoretical
- Research will lead to a motivated group, either community or municipality, to help it move forward and not get left on a shelf
- Celebration of Research Event; it would be nice to be able to present findings

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<sup>4</sup> Methodology: Participants shared their project expectations verbally in a discussion format.

## Appendix A – Rough Ideas for Question 1

*What are the pressing issues, challenges and needs with respect to rural economic development and making Haliburton a vital community (economic, social, health)?*

- Poverty
  - Diverse spread in income
  - Low income
  - Unemployment
- Housing
  - Low-cost housing
  - Affordable quality housing
- Coordinated Planning
  - Economic development environment
  - Cultural Planning
  - Lack of long-range vision
- Economic Development
  - New business
  - Services to support existing businesses
  - Business infrastructure to support businesses
  - Economic diversification
- Transportation
  - Affordable transportation within the county and between the county and urban centres
  - Lack of public transportation between communities creates unhealthy competition, increases the have/have-not tensions between different economic groups, and limits employment opportunities to those who can't afford a car.
- Low-cost recreation
- Retaining youth population
  - Develop programs to help youth leave for university and return to call County home
  - Missing generation: 18-25 years old
- Skilled Labour
  - Access to skilled workforce
- Seasonal economy
  - Maintaining & growing economy year round
  - Attracting diverse manufacturing to the area to offer year-round employment to youth
  - Create year-round employment to increase year-round residents
  - Dependence on seasonal residents and seasonal employment
- Lack of environmental sustainable initiatives
- Lack of medium- to high-paying jobs
- Lack of high-speed internet
- Support for local businesses
- Value of an airport
- Location
  - Where are we?
  - Identity with site selectors as a place for business as well as play
- Investment readiness

- Designated industrial areas with zoning, etc., in place
- Labour pool
- High-speed internet
- Housing
- Managing expectations of new businesses
- Land availability
- Commitment needed from municipalities
- Cooperation on behalf of businesses to meet municipal guidelines
- Aging population

## Appendix B – Rough Ideas for Question 2

Question 2: *If you had access to our researchers for a year, what would you ask them to study? Given the immensity of the research “wish list” and scarcity of available resources, what are your research priorities?*<sup>5</sup>

Card 1:

1. **What are best practices for rural regions that have developed comprehensive integrated visions and plans for cultural planning, environment, built environment, economic development, etc.?**
2. **What would the cost be to overcome the barriers to establish the infrastructure renewal to create long-term business in Haliburton?**
3. How can we develop a business mentoring program? Helping businesses to become strong and prosperous?
4. Examples of social entrepreneurship to contribute to employment and economic development?
5. What is the role of the County Economic Development Department in a mentoring program?
6. How do we create local “angel” investment funds to support new businesses?
7. What are some creative methods for shaping our community identity?

Card 2:

1. What are some best practices on the provision of rural public transportation?
2. **Establishing local funding sources (non-mainstream) to assist business development.**
3. What has been the impact of access to high-speed infrastructure for businesses in rural areas?
4. Why do the youth of Haliburton leave the County and where do they go over the following ten years?
5. How can we *ensure* that all businesses have high-speed internet?
6. Models of rural communities that have dealt with root causes of poverty.

Card 3:

1. **How can a community develop a plan for attracting and retaining a creative economy?**
2. Who ultimately will support and drive the project?
3. Who will be the partners? Business association and three levels of government?
4. How do you tap into the creative people who are not at these tables?
5. How do we establish dialogue to create long-term growth?
6. How do we involve others in the affairs and concerns of a cooperative rather than a competitive community?

Card 4:

1. What can small businesses do to prepare for the arrival of larger franchises? (i.e. Canadian Tire)
2. How do we showcase Haliburton to attract industry, etc.?
3. **What land use policies should be put in place, i.e., development agreements?**
4. Creation of industrial areas that appeal to investors – how do we do this?
5. How can we market our tourism and the Haliburton County to new Canadians in the Toronto area?

<sup>5</sup> Items in **bold** represent questions chosen as best ideas to be referred to the entire group for prioritizing.

6. **Are business incubators effective in rural communities? What models exist?**
7. How do we tap into the local funding to support growth industries?

Card 5:

1. Cottagers versus locals, both have very different ideas with regards to the future of Haliburton. Is there research to tie the ideas together to have one strategic plan?
2. What are other communities doing to solve their unemployment problem?
3. **What are the models of affordable sustainable public transportation in rural areas?**
4. **What are the models of affordable sustainable public housing in rural areas?**
5. What kind of government help is available to stimulate growth in Haliburton?
6. What are models for rural housing rental and affordable ownership?
7. How do we balance between seasonal and permanent residents?
8. What role can municipal government plan in providing affordable housing to the area?

Card 6:

1. **How do we create a long-term strategic plan to attract and maximize our “creative economy” to our county?**
2. **How do we build a 25-year vision?**
3. Does primary resource production sustain rural communities in the long-term?
4. Can a 25-year vision be created by those who will embrace change?
5. Is there the political will to follow-through on a long-term plan?
6. Look at best practices of communities that have been successful in developing rural economies.
7. Time and money???

Card 7:

1. **How do we ensure a long-term sustainable downtown community?**
2. Does tourism create an economically vibrant downtown for the long term?
3. What are ways to encourage local permanent residents to support local businesses?
4. How do we *broaden* the scope of what Haliburton offers?
5. We need a group/association with government subsidies to advise our community.
6. Is it feasible to develop a Haliburton County Community Foundation?

Card 8:

1. Does a focus on tourism industry create economically vibrant communities in the long run?
2. If a community is so focused on one industry, such as tourism, how will it affect it in the long run?
3. **How can this county *integrate* its industries (tourism, outdoors, business, arts, etc.) to work towards its strategic plan?**
4. What will tourism look like in 2025?
5. What plan can be developed to retain youth? (Industry, education, training programs)
6. Is “tourism” essentially changing from the traditional idea? (In Haliburton County, I think tourism will always be our main industry.)

Card 9:

1. Impact/value of a local air park? (i.e., airport and industrial area)
2. **What types of businesses have developed around rural airports in other communities?**
3. What is the benefit of an airport?

4. **What is the value of a community airport to a county?**
5. Does air traffic make sense if there is no ground transportation strategy?
6. How does manufacturing in rural areas affect the economic viability of rural areas?
7. **Should we focus more closely on ground transportation needs before focusing on an airport?**

Card 10:

1. How do you know if a new small or medium size business is feasible?
2. **What resources are available for business development?**
3. Who will do the business plan to determine feasibility?
4. **How can we attract those who want to open a new medium or small business in the County?**
5. How do we create a viable environment for year-round new businesses?
6. **What services do we need to develop to support new business clusters?**

Card 11:

1. Complete survey of housing needs of Haliburton County.
2. Seniors housing with care?
3. Look at developing long-term housing strategy for next 20 years, increase in seniors, rental opportunities, etc.
4. How will we sustain what has been developed?
5. How do we move into *new* practices for sustainability?
6. Does a focus on tourism industry create economically viable communities in the long run?
7. **Can we develop manufacturing industries that are as environmentally sustainable as they are necessary to the work force (and green too)?**

Card 12:

1. How do we get community buy-in for long-range planning exercises?
2. **Where do we access the funding in order to develop any one of our issues, specifically the long-term vision?**
3. Long-term care with necessary health care services locally.
4. **Best practices for developing long-range transportation plan.**
5. How do we unite the various industries in our community to come up with and implement a workable plan?
6. Does a focus on tourism industry create economically vibrant communities in the long run?

Card 13:

1. What are creative and effective ways to attract and retain youth in our community?
2. **How do we promote creative economy to attract and retain youth and non-retirees?**
3. How do we build and market “creative capital”?
4. How does manufacturing in rural economies affect the economic viability of rural areas?
5. Need support of community leaders, business, and other groups.
6. What role can the colleges and universities play in attracting and retaining youth in the area?
7. **How do we engage local businesses in all communities to cooperate and establish local market and services?**

Card 14:

1. How can we build a cooperative instead of a competitive business community?

2. **How can we create an environment that will encourage and attract small creative, knowledge-based businesses?**
3. What are the demographic trends that will spark dialogue on future planning?
4. How can we market on tourism to communities of new Canadians?
5. How do we develop appealing business parks?
6. How can we capitalize on our growing senior population – provision of quality service/tap into their wealth?

## Card 15:

1. How to attract industry (jobs)?
2. What are proven best practices to attract new jobs?
3. **Identification of targets for business attraction (type, location).**
4. **Are there clusters of businesses that we could attract that, combined, keep people shopping locally?**
5. Research possibilities for tourism investment looking at Ontario East Tourism Investment Workbook, best practices, and more.
6. How do we draw new business and preserve the businesses that already exist?
7. How to work with cottagers to develop an investment club?