



GEORGIAN TRIANGLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

March 24, 2014

Mayor Ellen Anderson and members of Council

Town Of The Blue Mountains

Dear Sirs/Madame's,

Thank you for accepting our request for delegation to Council on March 31. In reference to the attached South Georgian Bay Regional Economic Development Terms of Reference to Initiate a New Regional Strategy, the GTDI is requesting your consideration and support. We would be pleased to answer any related questions you may have as well. We are hoping that your positive support would be provided to us by return correspondence as soon as possible.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Hill', is written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

Andrew Hill

Chair, GTDI Economic Development Committee

GTDI Economic  
Development Forum  
October 3, 2013

Key Takeaway Issues and  
Next Steps

# Key Take Away's

1. We are not effectively selling the power of the South Georgian Bay Region
2. We are missing opportunities to attract great labour, support small business and source funding
3. Support formation of South Georgian Bay regional economic development corporation or council.

# 1. We are not effectively selling the power of the South Georgian Bay Region

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The South Georgian Bay region is Ontario's only four season destination recreational area, we have the best lifestyle, we have great communities, we have the services and attractions, we have available land and housing, we have the population. But we're not effectively selling the power of the South Georgian Bay region as a place for business.

We need to promote the South Georgian Bay region first. We have an opportunity to pool resources and also to attract major funding with the collective power of our four regional municipalities and the private sector.

The focus should be on building a future economy in our region based upon our shared values and recognizing our regions diversity.

## 2. We are missing opportunities to attract great labour, support small business and source funding

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During the forum session ‘The Importance of Being Small’ we heard from four successful small business leaders located in our region. Support initiatives for small business in our region are missing or are inadequate in meeting the need to attract qualified labour to our region. Our region needs to change it’s attitude, to support existing “gazelle” businesses, open up to new opportunities and to adopt a “how can I help you” approach.

We can develop business sector marketing teams in tourism, agri-foods, creative economy, logistics, and manufacturing to develop compelling reasons to invest in our region. The power of our region can attract funding from higher tiers of government.

### 3. Support formation of South Georgian Bay regional economic development corporation or council

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“An alliance is needed” said Serge Lavois Exec. Dir. of SWEA. During the forum session, ‘No Man is an Island’ three regional ED leaders spoke of the importance of a collaborative regional ED organization and of the opportunity South Georgian Bay has to adopt this structure. Forum panelists and attendees spoke about the opportunity in South Georgian Bay for the ED organization to be a partnership of the public and private sectors.

The GTDI supports the formation of a new regional economic development organization for South Georgian Bay. The GTDI can help the public and private sector in our region in the planning for this new organization. The GTDI can continue to get the right people at the table having the right conversation.

# Next Steps

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1. Issue press release about ED forum to local papers.  
\*Complete, articles have been published in several publications. GTDI will continue to leverage press coverage on ED
2. Schedule delegation presentations to council meetings for each regional municipality to inform them of the ED Forum outcome.
3. Develop a Regional ED organization outline; structure, who, how, funding. We have provided a Terms of Reference for the formation of a new regional economic development council for your consideration. This presentation and next steps are being proposed to each of the municipalities in the South Georgian Bay region. We look forward to working with all on this exciting initiative!



## **SOUTH GEORGIAN BAY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE TO INITIATE A NEW REGIONAL STRATEGY**

#### **SITUATION:**

The geographic area of reference includes the Municipalities of The Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach and Clearview and for the purpose of this document, will be referred to as the South Georgian Bay region.

Currently the state of economic development organization in the region differs within each municipality. During the past two years in Collingwood, the economic development manager position was reassigned to others who don't have time to handle the responsibilities. In the news recently it was reported that Collingwood is putting increased attention on economic development but still no person or entity is leading economic development for Collingwood. The Blue Mountains only recently hired a Communication and Economic Development Coordinator. Wasaga Beach has had an Economic Development Officer in place for several years. In Clearview there is an Economic Development Committee that consists primarily of community volunteers supplemented by members of Clearview Council and Senior Staff. It is understood that there is some level of communication amongst ED representatives in the region but, the efforts of each organization are primarily local in nature. No regional economic development strategy is being implemented by way of a collaborative regional initiative.

The region enjoys more than one strong economic sector. Our economic strength sectors include but are not limited to: tourism, agriculture and food production, real estate development and construction, manufacturing, health, and small business. Without doubt the tourism sector is the economic leader in our region. The South Georgian Bay region is **the only** four season destination recreational area in Ontario, for those who have discovered the many lifestyle advantages this offers, many have chosen to live, work and play here, for those that don't know the word needs to get out!

The Towns of Collingwood, Blue Mountains, and Wasaga Beach and Township of Clearview collaborated to create a **South Georgian Bay Regional Economic Development Plan**. These communities share many similarities and draw a considerable amount of tourism and travel to the area. Their tourism assets include ski hills and resorts, accommodations, trails, retail, culture, beaches and provincial parks. The Regional Plan includes six themes and strategic objectives that will help these communities prosper:

- Creating jobs – stimulate small business and entrepreneurship
- Workforce development – establish a skilled workforce to meet existing and future businesses needs
- Tourism – increase visitor expenditures in the region
- Agriculture – support farmers in the region
- Investment readiness – make the region more attractive to prospective investors
- Regional communications – communicate the region's many advantages.

Our review of the preceding results in a perception that the plan falls short in setting out necessary priorities for over 90 recommendations included in the plan and strategy on how to implement the six themes outlined above.



### **GTDI ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUM HELD ON OCTOBER 3, 2013**

A Regional Economic Development Forum was held at the Toronto Ski Club on Thursday, October 3, 2013. The forum attracted approximately 100 attendees including members of municipal councils and staff from The Town of The Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, The Township of Clearview, Grey and Simcoe Counties, regional business leaders, small business owners, members from the GTDI and GTAR, and economic development leaders representing three other major regions in Ontario.

The ED forum was organized as a direct result of the GTDI's successful Real Estate Development Forum held in April of this year. The outcome of this forum along with other work the GTDI has conducted recently in the interests of ED identified the objective of the forum *to have the right people at the table having the right conversation*. The bottom line and critical issue in the South Georgian Bay region is *missed opportunities*. In June of 2011, an economic development strategy for South Georgian Bay was completed and received by all four municipalities in the region. However, to date the strategy is not being implemented. Key outcomes from the forum on Oct 3 included;

- The South Georgian Bay region is Ontario's only four season destination recreational area, we have the best lifestyle, we have great communities, we have the services and attractions, we have available land and housing, we have the population. But we're not effectively selling the power of the South Georgian Bay region as a place for business.
- By not doing so, we are missing opportunities to attract new residents, new labour force talent, new small businesses, support for existing small business growth and attract sources of funding to accomplish this.
- Our region needs an ED leader to bring all stakeholders together and effectively manage a collaboration of funding, talent and initiatives into a leading regional ED strategy that can compete provincially, nationally and globally – because South Georgian Bay is capable of successfully seizing this opportunity, but we need to work together as a region.

The GTDI will support the implementation of a regional ED strategy for South Georgian Bay. This critically important initiative requires involvement and cooperation from all levels of government and business.

### **PROPOSED STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE SOUTH GEORGIAN BAY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN:**

1. The municipalities within the region with leadership by Collingwood, collaborated to produce a Regional Economic Development Strategy in 2011. This strategy contained over 90 recommendations in terms of prioritizing the recommendations contained in the strategy, we would recommend that the ***first priority*** would be to initiate a regional economic development committee or council to act as an advisory group focusing on regional ED initiatives. ***PROVIDE LEADERSHIP***
2. Assemble the right stakeholders to provide leadership. Local business leaders who have had experiences and success in building their businesses in our region. Stakeholders who can develop a vision for our region and sell it. ***HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE AT THE TABLE***
3. Improve our region's profile, craft a compelling story, a narrative that reflects the tremendous lifestyle attributes of our region. Work to attract the labour force required to support our economic development vision. ***DEVELOP OUR REGION'S PROFILE, TELL OUR STORY***

4. Build upon and leverage the existing strengths and advantages of successful business sectors in our region including tourism, real estate and construction, agriculture and food production, health care, manufacturing, knowledge based and small business. ***MOVE FORWARD IN DEVELOPING WHAT'S WORKING, DON'T GO BACK TO WHAT WAS ONCE WORKING***

#### **REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS:**

Currently the state of economic development organization in the region is arguably lacking resources, knowledge and leadership. Our review of the South Georgian Bay Economic Development Strategy document results in a perception that the plan falls short in setting out necessary priorities for over 90 recommendations included in the document. We would recommend that the first priority would be to initiate a regional economic development committee or council to act as an advisory group focusing on regional ED strategy and initiatives.

The South Georgian Bay Region Economic Development Council's objective is to initiate a regional economic development strategy for our region.

Step One – January – December 2014; organize the regional ED council. Proposed structure is to recruit/appoint a total of 4 municipal representatives from staff or council (one representative from each municipality) and recruit/appoint a total of four private sector business representatives (one representative from each municipality) selected by the GTDI. The regional ED council will provide leadership and guidance for the four regional municipalities in developing a regional ED strategy including a financial strategy in 2014. The ED council will report and provide recommendations to municipal councils for their review and approval. During Step One in 2014, no budget is required provided participation is volunteered and meeting venues are provided by the municipalities.

Step Two – by June 2015 and onward; formation of a South Georgian Bay Region Economic Development Corporation. The objective of the ED Corporation is to implement the Regional ED Strategy developed by the Advisory Council and approved by the municipalities in 2014. The structure of the ED Corporation is for a full time president to lead the corporation with a small supporting staff with a Board of Directors continuing from the Regional ED Council put in place in 2014.

#### **OTHER RESOURCES**

##### Simcoe County Economic Development Plan

In June of 2011 the County of Simcoe issued an Economic Development Plan. Here are some highlights of the plan that are relevant to the South Georgian Bay Region:

1. The Simcoe County ED Plans says; "Several key themes emerged around which to frame the economic development strategic plan. These themes are:
  - Create a value proposition for regional economic development cooperation;
  - Provide compelling and coordinated marketing and promotion efforts for the County;
  - Advocate on behalf of regional priorities;
  - Capitalize on post-secondary institutions to support regional innovation, education and workforce development;

- Provide strategic support to small and medium sized enterprises;
- Foster a health services and medical technologies cluster in the County;
- Foster a green and environmental technologies cluster in the County, and;
- Support growth in regional tourism, agri-tourism and cultural development. “

The preceding themes present a better foundation of principals and opportunities for partnerships and alignment of efforts between our region and the county.

2. Further the Simcoe County Plan talks about; “A literature review of best practice approaches to regional economic development suggests that, while there are many models, successful partnerships are emerging that demonstrate the following key elements:

- An inclusive, organic, home grown process that brings together key stakeholders from across the region to plan together;
  - **Requires cutting across existing jurisdictional boundaries and ‘old boy’ networks and bringing together advocates for economic growth together with those that advocate for economic opportunity**
- The provision of both objective and timely information about what’s happening in the region to use as a basis for planning;
  - **Provides a common platform to work with and a reality check on outmoded assumptions that people may be relying on in their decision making**
- An analysis of the region’s unique competitive assets and challenges, and where the least amount of effort could make the biggest difference;
  - **Recognizes the need for more effort to identify strategic leverage points in a region as a way to capitalize on limited resources**
- An operational plan that resembles a political campaign and identifies who is accountable for carrying out which pieces of the plan;
  - **Requires a focused implementation effort that capitalizes on the unique contributions of a wide range of partners while maintaining accountability”**

#### South Georgian Bay Labour Market Study – Jan. 2012 Recommendations:

The recommendations divide into two categories: firstly, over-arching themes, and secondly, specific initiatives. The two over-arching themes are:

- 1) To focus on middle category jobs, those jobs that require a skill typically acquired through a college degree and/or through extended on-the-job training and experience; and
- 2) To promote networks to tackle various labour market challenges.

The specific initiatives include:

- More efforts to support local manufacturing, by: formalizing a local manufacturers’ network; applying a regional scope to the network and including other relevant stakeholders, such as Georgian College; having the manufacturers’ network focus on common recruitment, hiring and

training challenges; and undertaking more outreach to high school students to familiarize them with career opportunities in manufacturing;

- To support the local tourism sector through: promoting employee engagement strategies among employers; publicizing career opportunities among prospective and current employees; and working with employers to establish clear career ladder opportunities for employees;
- To explore with the area's local health integration network the feasibility of establishing a career ladder program in the health care field;
- To explore alternative programs to enhance transportation options for local residents who need to commute to employment;
- To develop a formal trailing spouse/partner program, to enhance the ability of local employers to recruit senior level staff by more effectively tackling the employment challenges faced by their significant other;
- To engage further with Georgian College as a key partner in local workforce development;
- To engage with Simcoe County Ontario Works and their employment services to develop labour market projects that respond to employer needs and that can offer training and employment opportunities to marginalized residents seeking jobs;
- To explore options for a shared incubator space for knowledge sector start-ups;
- To create a small, local venture capital fund for knowledge sector start-ups;
- To find a way for the various resources that currently are available for entrepreneurial support to collaborate and offer a one-window approach for accessing their array of services and resources.