

# Corporation of the County of Huron

**To: Chair and Members of the Economic Development Board**

**From: Vicki Lass, Director**

**Date: 01/11/2024**

**Subject: Economic Development Departmental Update, December 2023**

---

## Recommendation

### **Recommended motion**

**That:**

The Chair and Members of the Economic Development Board receives the report by Vicki Lass, Economic Development Director, dated January 11, 2024, titled Economic Development Department December 2023 Update, as presented for information.

---

## Background

### **Huron County Economic Development December 2023 Departmental Update**

The following is an update of major projects and initiatives led by the Huron County Economic Development department over the past month.

In 2024, we will also be using this report to celebrate excellence in Huron County. Good news stories will include businesses and individuals in the County and will not be limited to Economic Development Department's clients.

# Huron County Economic Development Department



## Upcoming Dates

*Council Priorities: Youth Engagement/Economic Readiness/Agriculture*

### **Learn to Curl Event for Newcomers to Canada**

Exeter Curling Club – February 24, 1:00-4:00pm

All skill levels are welcome to attend, there will be volunteers available to help.  
More details will be available soon.

### **February 29, 2024 – “Webinar: Entitlement vs. Fairness in Farm Transition”**

[Click here](#) to learn more or to register!

**For community events check the County Event Calendars | [Huron County Community Events](#) and [Ontario’s West Coast Events Calendar](#).**

Thank you to local partners who provide us with the list of activities in their municipalities.

We encourage you to share with your municipalities and ratepayers that the community events calendar is live and a great resource for sharing and finding information.

# Celebrating Excellence in the County of Huron

*Council Priorities: Agriculture, Economic Readiness and Youth*



Congratulations to former Economic Development Board member James Eddington on **Eddington's of Exeter** being named on the Open Table List Of 100 Top Restaurants in Canada.

**Eat Local Huron** was recognized at the Royal Winter Fair by Minister Lisa Thompson for Agri-Food Promotional Excellence, in the Excellence in Agriculture Program. Congratulations to Eat Local Huron and their continued efforts to promote and provide access to the bounty of Huron County.



**Justin Hoffman** is the Recipient of the Huron County Scholarship Award 2023

Justin is a Specialist High School Major attending South Huron District Secondary School - who is pursuing a career as a small engine mechanic. Pictured with Larry Livingston, Chair of HMA Board of Directors. Meet all 10 scholarship recipients at this [link](#)

# Sector Support: Workforce Development

*Council Priorities: Workforce Attraction*

## Employer Information Session:

*Council Priorities: Workforce Attraction*

It's never been more important to be an Employer of Choice; it improves worker quality of life and productivity.

On January 18th, Huron County Economic Development and the United Way Perth-Huron co-organized an event for employers, entrepreneurs, senior management, and HR representatives from industry-leading organizations and small businesses across Huron-Perth. This panel and roundtable discussion was all about 'decent work', and what it means to be an Employer of Choice. Panelists discussed what 'decent work' means to them, and how they're implementing it in their organizations.

Topics explored included:

- how technology has enabled decent work practices
- how COVID-19 has impacted decent work
- how organizations are adjusting to a changing labour force
- supporting diverse workplaces and overcoming related barriers
- how pathways for advancement are promoted
- how decent work practices have beneficially impacted recruitment and retention efforts, and
- what aspirations these organizations have for the future of decent work.

Panelists included:

- Carolynne Champagne, Human Resources Manager at Compass Minerals
- Iqbal and Tahseen Shaukat, Owners of the Maple Leaf Motel and winners of the Spirit of Success Employer of Choice Award
- Kimberly Richardson, Human Resources Manager at Woodcock Brothers Transportation Group
- Representative from GRIT Engineering

This event was co-organized to share successful work practices, highlight perspectives and challenges, and equip participants with strategies to become Employers of Choice.

Approximately 35 people participated in the event at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 156 in Seaforth.

# Become an Employer of Choice

UPCOMING EMPLOYER ROUNDTABLE  
ON IMPLEMENTING DECENT WORK



United Way  
Perth-Huron



Social Research &  
Planning Council



## Business Services

### Huron Business Centre

The Huron Business Centre received confirmation of our continued partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) with a one-year extension of our current contract from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 at the current budgeted Provincial allocation of \$136,900 per year.

The 54 Small Business Enterprise Centres (SBECS) are an important partnership for MEDJCT as these centres are the champions and key supports for entrepreneurs and small businesses across Ontario.

The Huron Business Centre team focuses on continuous improvement of our services to the local business community. We have made modifications to our intake process to better support individuals exploring entrepreneurship.

We are seeing increased demand to support entrepreneurs looking to exit their business. We have developed a high-level toolkit to as a resource for local entrepreneurs as we guide them through the process.



## Starter Company Plus

*Council Priorities: Economic Readiness | Youth Engagement*

The County of Huron congratulates successful Starter Company Plus program grant recipients! Administered by [Huron County Economic Development](#). The most recent intake of the Starter Company Plus program saw 17 local businesses successfully complete the program and 8 local businesses obtained grant funding, totaling \$24,500.

[Click here](#) to learn more!



Pictured left to right:

- Joleen Krebs – Old Railway Popcorn Company, Clinton (Central Huron)
- Jamie and Mark Scrimgeour – Mister Pristine, Londesborough (Central Huron)
- Edda Boettcher – Capella Meadows, Brussels (Huron East)
- Huron County Warden Glen McNeil
- Jess Bickell – Gifts to Britain, Exeter (South Huron)
- Elevations By Lindsay – Lindsay Skinn, Goderich (Goderich)
- Justin Brunner – Decisolve, Brucefield (Bluewater)

Missing from picture:

- MacDonald Laplante – Great Lakes Property Management, Goderich (ACW)
- Craig Wark – Suncoast Canvas, Goderich (ACW)

### **Starter Company Plus & the Economic Development Board Networking Event**

Starter Company Plus (SCP) Grads presented their business elevator pitch at the Huron County Economic Development Board meeting on December 7. This was followed by a networking session with the Board where grant recipients expressed their appreciation for the SCP program.

Many noted the value of the great business coaching staff, the business training, and the opportunity to network with other local entrepreneurs. The event featured locally grown popcorn and locally produced cheese provided by grant recipients.



**Council Report Topic:** Departmental Update

**Department:** Economic Development

**Date:** January 2024

Page **6** of 11

## Business Coaching

*Council Priorities: Economic Readiness / Youth Engagement*

During December, there has been a continued priority on supporting the wrap-up of the Starter Company Plus (SCP) program.

There were had 15 one-on-one consultations with business clients, including:

- 5 Starter Company Plus client consultations.
- 5 existing business consultations.
- 5 exploring entrepreneurship / new start-up consultations.

The Huron Business Centre received 58 new inquiries in December.

## Digital Main Street

*Council Priorities: Economic Readiness / Youth Engagement*

### Digital Transformation Grant

The Digital Transformation Grant 4.0 has reopened for a limited time!

The Digital Main Street Digital Transformation Grant (DTG) provides brick-and-mortar small business owners with a \$2,500 grant to help businesses strategically adopt technology and meet their digital goals.

The grant can be utilized for various services like hiring a consultant/agency/person for digital marketing, creating a new website (or enhancing an existing one), buying new software, enrolling in digital training courses, and even purchasing hardware up to \$1,000.

The NEW deadline to apply is January 31, 2024! With limited funds available, be sure to apply early.

To apply, small businesses must:

1. Register online and take a digital assessment at:  
<https://digitalmainstreet.ca/ontariogrants/>
2. If already registered, log into their account at:  
<https://digitalmainstreet.ca/account/login/>
3. Complete the eligibility form, take the online training (approximately 2.5 hours in length), and develop a Digital Transformation Plan.
4. Apply for the \$2,500 grant.

Any business that previously received the Digital Transformation Grant prior to June 21, 2022, is eligible to receive another \$2,500 grant to enhance their use of digital technologies.

Please Note: All applicants approved will have until March 31, 2024, to spend their grant funds and file their final report/receipts.

Should a business need assistance, they can reach out to the Huron County Digital Service Squad at [smallbusiness@huroncounty.ca](mailto:smallbusiness@huroncounty.ca).

### **"How to Efficiently Plan Your Content for Social Media" Workshop:**

A free in-person workshop, "How to Efficiently Plan Your Content for Social Media," was held on January 11 from 9-12pm at the Holmesville Community Centre in partnership with Digital Main Street. There were over 55 people registered for the session.

In this session, attendees learned how to create and repurpose content in a way that is efficient and effective, and how to share it across different social media channels in a way that will help them reach their target audience. This workshop is designed to help small business owners make the most of their social media efforts and increase their online presence and engagement.

## **Farm Succession/Transition Planning**

*Council Priorities: Economic Readiness / Agriculture / Youth Engagement*

### ***Webinar: Entitlement vs. Fairness in Farm Transition***

On February 29 from 1:30 – 2:30 pm, Huron County Economic Development is hosting a follow up webinar with Elaine Froese, Canada's Farm Whisperer, called "Entitlement vs. Fairness in Farm Transition."

Entitlement is defined as a person's belief they are inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment. Dr. Moira Somers, a financial psychologist says "money is personal." Few dynamics are harder to manage on the family farm than an entitled sibling who sees increasing land values and misinterprets land value as cash in the bank.



This 1-hour webinar with Elaine Froese creates mindset shifts to learn how to respectfully, yet assertively, attack the issue and not the people. Conflict communication tools to navigate harmful and hurtful assumptions, and develop a path forward to create more trust, empathy and understanding. Develop a buyout business plan that works to communicate the long-term vision of the farm and expose inequity of siblings who do not contribute to the success of the farm business.

This webinar helps folks to re-write money scripts and shift unsupported entitlement to a willingness to navigate reasonable and unreasonable transition expectations. One of the key questions is "What does money mean to you?" and "What is enough?" Learning "wish fulfillment language" such as "I wish I could...but the reality is..." is helpful.



Throughout the webinar, Elaine will answer questions sent in anonymously via text or in the Zoom group chat. Following the presentation there will also be a Q&A period with Elaine.

Tickets to this Zoom event are \$25 each and can be purchased at <https://farmtransitionwebinar.eventbrite.ca>.

For more information about the Farm Succession Planning Project, please [click here](#).



### **Huron County's Life on the Coast Podcast:**

We have recently launched a podcast called "Huron County's Life on the Coast." The first series on the podcast will focus on the topic of farm succession planning and will touch on why it's a critical priority, what happens if farms don't have succession plans in place, and we get the perspective from the founders, in-laws, and the next generation.

Visit [huroncounty.ca/life-on-the-coast/](https://huroncounty.ca/life-on-the-coast/) to learn more! Episodes 1-3 are available now; stay tuned for the next 4 episodes!

# Immigration Partnership

*Council Priorities: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities*

## Newcomer holiday celebration

*Council Priorities: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities*

Thirty-one newcomers to Canada who have settled in Huron County gathered in December to celebrate the holidays to share a potluck meal and play games. The event was supported by Knox Presbyterian Church, facilitated by the Huron County Immigration Partnership, with local volunteers organizing activities for both adults and children.



## Volunteer transition

*Council Priorities: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities*

The Huron County Immigration Partnership is working with the Huron Newcomer Support Association to transition volunteers to support transportation and short-term housing arrangements for newcomers to Canada who settle in Huron County. As the Huron Newcomer Support Association sets up its structures and processes, the Immigration Partnership will assist the organization with recruiting and screening volunteers.

The Immigration Partnership will continue to seek and manage volunteer to support activities that build welcoming communities, such as the Conversation Circle volunteers or Multicultural Festival event volunteers.

## Conversation Circles

*Council Priorities: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities*

The Huron County Immigration Partnership and the Huron County Library have partnered together to host English Conversation Circles at the Exeter and Goderich branches. The Conversation Circles are a great opportunity to practice speaking and listening to English. Volunteers will be available to help people learning English to build confidence, assist in expanding your vocabulary, and guide you in creating new connections.

In Goderich, the Conversation Circles started on January 8, 2024 at the Goderich library branch. They take place every Monday from 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm. In Exeter, the Conversation Circles started on January 17, 2024 and will take place every Wednesday from 6:30 pm - 7:45 pm.

## Responding to the IRCC Call for Proposals

*Council Priorities: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities*

The Immigration Partnership is responding to a five-year funding opportunity from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to continue their work from 2025-2030. The funding would continue to support two staff positions, along with coordination activities, community engagement, research and capacity building work.

**Stay current on all departmental activities by following us online!**

Huron County Economic Development [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

Huron County Immigration Partnership [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

Ontario's West Coast [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)