

NHEDC focused on targeted attraction



Almost everyone in North Hastings has a common interest- lowering or holding the line with taxes. There are only really two ways of lowering or holding taxes ? cut services or grow the tax base. In North Hastings we are in competition with every other small town within easy access to Toronto that has beautiful woods, lakes, rivers, and lower housing prices to attract new business or new residents.

During the past few years the North Hastings Economic Development Committee (NHEDC) has made progress in developing an excellent on-line economic development tool, the www.northhastings.com website, including a full North Hastings Profile that can be used as a resource for new entrepreneurs and families wishing to re-locate to the region. Efforts in the past have been passive. We made information available on-line and through print materials with the hope that interested business owners, new residents and investors would find them.

The current project, with Paul D'Aoust as project facilitator, is taking on a more targeted approach to economic development. Instead of more generic promotion, NHEDC is focusing on attracting seniors , some who may already have a connection to North Hastings as seasonal residents, remote workers or ?lone eagles? as they are called, individuals who can work anywhere using broadband, and young families, especially those who left the community for post secondary education but still have connections here.

At a recent meeting, NHEDC representative from Hastings Highlands, Councillor Tracy Hagar, said ? my sons want to be able to come back to North Hastings, have meaningful work here and be able to continue to call this place, home.?

In recent years numerous reports identify potential growth opportunities for the area. This next step is to take action by tailoring targeted packages to those we want to attract. It means researching what those businesses, individuals or investors need in order to start a business, relocate their family here or invest here, and then demonstrating why North Hastings should be their place of choice. Other communities have used a targeted approach with success. Elliot Lake has targeted seniors.

Many years ago, Guelph re-invented itself by growing its university to attract young people to the community. Our neighbours to the west have successfully targeted artists and artisans to its Haliburton School of the Arts. Colborne is poised to grow its local economy through its new Agri-food Venture Centre, an incubator for local food processing that targets the agricultural sector.

As a next step, Paul D'Aoust is currently arranging appointments to meet with representative organizations from NHEDC, the municipalities, sector organizations such as forestry, real estate, Loyalist College, Algonquin Arts Council etc. and business organizations. Regular updates will be provided as the project unfolds.

For more information or to share ideas, please contact Chris Drost at 613-332-6246 or naturally@northhastings.com.

Submitted by Chris Drost