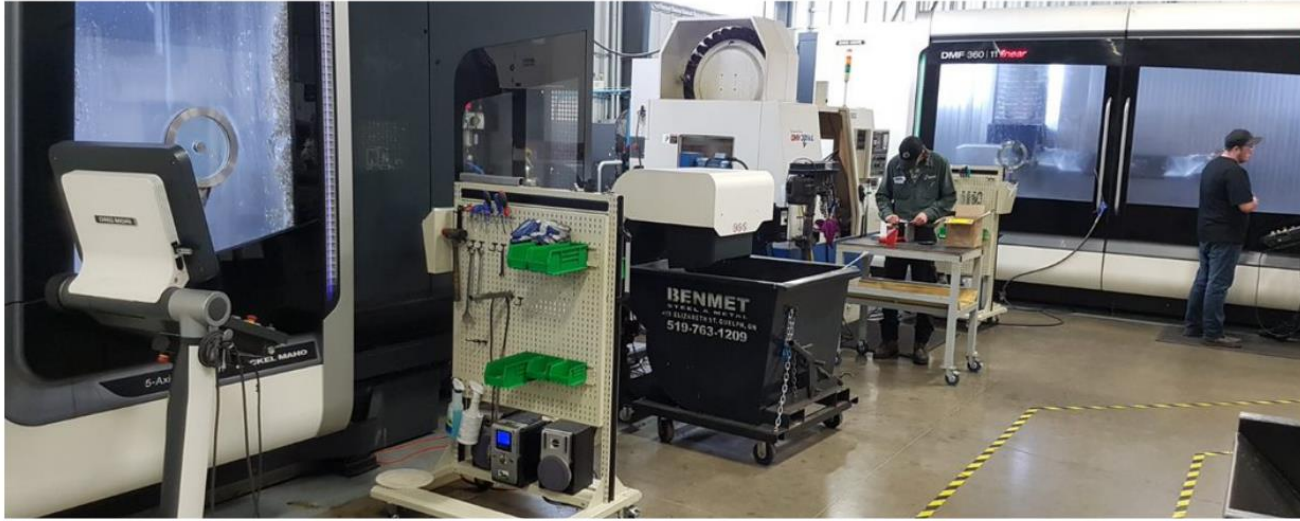


Town of Tillsonburg

Economic Development Strategy Update



February 2021 - Final





Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Purpose of the Strategy	1
1.2	Approach and Methodology	2
1.3	Policy and Planning Alignment.....	2
2.	Current Context	4
3.	Determining Future Priorities.....	7
3.1	The 2008 Strategy	7
3.2	Implementation Efforts	8
3.3	A Shifting Economy	11
3.4	Current Economic Development Needs.....	16
3.5	Strategic Priorities	20
4.	Economic Development Strategy Update	25
4.1	Goals, Objectives and Actions	25
4.2	Action Plan	26
	Appendices	34



1. Introduction

It should be noted at the onset of this report that it has been prepared during an unprecedented downturn in the global economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town of Tillsonburg has shown leadership in its response to the impact of COVID-19, undertaking a coordinated response with the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement Area to support local businesses and rebuild the local economy. In addition, economic development professionals across Oxford County as well as the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus have been working together to provide a holistic approach and learn from each other on how best to sustain the region's economy over the long term. While the short term measures contained in this Economic Development Strategy Update supports the immediate needs of Tillsonburg businesses, it also looks beyond the current economic climate and anticipates the opportunities for future economic growth and prosperity for the community. This includes building on the implementation efforts associated with the 2008 Economic Development Strategy, integrating current departmental business planning efforts and the aspirations of the community.

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

The Town of Tillsonburg approved its current Economic Development Strategy in 2008. The strategy was designed to support sustainable growth and align with the desire of stakeholders for achieving this goal. The goals and vision of the strategy also took into consideration the impact of the regional economy. It identified the opportunities that would support the growth of existing businesses and establish and attract new enterprises. It also identified the need to increase employment opportunities, and to maintain and improve the quality of life for all residents. Important among the priorities in the strategy was the need to streamline the town's development approvals process and procedures. Similar commentary was provided during the updating of the strategy.

The implementation outcomes of the 2008 strategy are viewed as having had a positive impact on the community, including support for key economic sectors, preparation of a tourism strategy, the attraction of new residential investment, a more streamlined development approvals process and a new downtown identity.

In recent years, however, the local economy has seen significant change due to the nature of domestic and foreign investment and as a result of regional and provincial economic trends. The 2008 Strategy is thus being reviewed and updated to ensure that the goals, objectives and action plan reflect the shifting nature of the economy in the region and the province, as well as the current needs and aspirations of both business and community stakeholders.

The Economic Development Strategy Update builds on the success of the 2008 Strategy and supports the town's efforts in moving the economy forward, particularly as it looks to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Strategy also seeks alignment with the new Community Strategic Plan that is underway by providing direction on the economic priorities that are of the greatest concern or opportunity for the town.



1.2 Approach and Methodology

The Economic Development Strategy Update was initiated in January 2020 but delayed in part by the pandemic shutdown of March to May 2020. The process was led by the Town's Development Commissioner with input provided by the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Subcommittee at key milestones in the process.

The initial phase involved a review of available background material and documents including the outcomes associated with the 2008 Tillsonburg Economic Development Strategy, the 2019 High-Tech Manufacturing Sub-Cluster Action Plan, the 2020 Phase One of Oxford County's Comprehensive Review, and the 2021 Economic Development & Marketing Business Plan. The review provided an understanding of the current policy and economic development landscape in Tillsonburg. An analysis of Tillsonburg's current economic and labour market indicators was also conducted using data collected from various sources.

The results of the background review and economic base analysis were used to inform the stakeholder consultation process. This included an online business survey conducted between July and August 2020 that attracted over 100 participants. The results from the survey helped to build an understanding of the attitudes towards the local economy and business environment, taking into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In September 2020, targeted workshops were conducted with key stakeholders from the manufacturing sector and retail, commercial, and business sectors. Members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee and elected officials also participated.

Input from the consultation process informed the creation of five strategic priorities that reflect the shared aspirations and goals of Tillsonburg's residents, businesses, and community stakeholders. These strategic priorities were reviewed with the EDAC Subcommittee in early October 2020. Based on the input provided, the Economic Development Strategy Update was developed.

1.3 Policy and Planning Alignment

In addition to the direction provided by the 2008 Economic Development Strategy, Tillsonburg's current economic development framework is guided by the 2014 Community Strategic Plan and the (1995, amended 2017) Oxford County Official Plan. The Community Strategic Plan, while being updated, establishes a vision for the future that reflects community ideas and aspirations. It guides priority setting, ensuring that programs and services address the changing needs of a community, through four broad themes or Strategic Objectives, namely:

- Excellence In Local Government
- Economic Sustainability
- Demographic Balance
- Culture & Community

The Oxford County Official Plan ensures conformity with Provincial land use policy and provides direction to guide and manage the extent, pattern and type of settlement that will occur in the town and the use of land and resources. The Tillsonburg Municipal Planning Strategy is a section of the Official Plan and provides general policy direction and a long-range planning framework for the town.



Key goals serve as general guidelines and include the need for expanding the existing broad industrial base by attracting modern industries, preserving the cultural and heritage features, promoting the town as one of the most attractive residential communities in Southern Ontario and maintaining and promoting the downtown.

The 2020 Oxford County Phase One Comprehensive Review builds on historical growth forecasting, land needs and growth management studies in the County and will be used to inform potential updates to the Oxford County Official Plan policies and to update the growth projections referenced in the Plan.

Other plans and regional strategies, including the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan (2015), Oxford County Action Plan & Strategy Alignment (2017), Strategic Plan for Oxford County (2015-2018) and the Future Oxford Community Sustainability Plan (2015), also focus on growing the local economy.



2. Current Context

Tillsonburg has witnessed a rapidly growing and changing local economy, as evidenced by strong population and industry growth that is projected into the future. Growth in the town can be in part attributed to its strategic location as part of the Oxford, Elgin and Haldimand-Norfolk Tri-county region with access to larger centres throughout Southern Ontario including Woodstock, London, Kitchener/Waterloo, Hamilton, Toronto as well as the U.S. Industrial heartland and cities like Detroit and Chicago.

Manufacturing remains a major economic driver for the town with major automotive parts companies including Adient Seating Canada Ltd (foam seating), Autoneum Canada Limited (noise insulation products), Fleetwood Metal Industries Inc (Stamped metal components), and THK Rhythm Automotive Canada Ltd (linkages/steering components – formerly TRW Canada). In recent years, Tillsonburg has attracted investment from Martinrea International Inc, Triton Innovation, Xcel Fabrication & Design Ltd, Systemair, Wise Line Metal Sales and Zelus Material handling, to name a few. Marwood International (a homegrown stamped metal components auto parts supplier) is the town's largest employer with 450 employees and four plants located in the community.

In tandem with the transformation occurring in the town's traditional sectors is the strong growth in the local service sectors, driven primarily by knowledge-based and creative sectors including the finance and insurance, professional, scientific and technical services, and educational services. Research conducted as part of the strategy update suggests that Tillsonburg is also a strong player in the region's cultural economy. The town's current residential marketing program and the *'Discover Tillsonburg'* initiative highlights some of the key local assets. Cultural, sporting and environmental assets such as the Annandale National Historic Site, Otter Valley Playhouse, Tillsonburg Community Centre and Lake Lisgar Waterpark are central to these marketing efforts. The town's 2017 Community Improvement Plan (CIP) also aims to address, promote and encourage downtown renewal that can be leveraged in the attraction of creative and cultural enterprises.

As per the 2020 Oxford County Phase One Comprehensive Review, Tillsonburg will account for roughly 25% of the County's housing and employment growth forecast to 2046. The County is expected to experience relatively high levels of net in-migration compared to past periods. This represents a significant opportunity for Tillsonburg, provided certain steps are taken including boosting its investment-ready brand within Southwestern Ontario and actions to ensure sufficient land is available to accommodate forecasted growth – both residential and non-residential uses. The current residential land need assessment suggests that growth will continue to be accommodated through intensification, both through development within built-up areas and through a forecasted shift to moderately higher density residential forms over the planning period. These higher density residential forms along with recreational and community amenities, will enable the town to target the required workforce more effectively, including young professionals and families.

The section that follows highlights the recent economic performance of Tillsonburg. A complete economic baseline analysis is provided as a background document titled *Town of Tillsonburg – Economic Baseline Analysis*. The baseline is presented in comparison to the Tri-County (which includes Oxford County, Elgin County and Haldimand-Norfolk Census Division) and the Province of Ontario. Tillsonburg's target sector concentrations are also analyzed in comparison to Ingersoll, Woodstock, St Thomas and Stratford.



Town of Tillsonburg - Community Snapshot

Population Growth



Tillsonburg represented 14% of Oxford County's population



Age

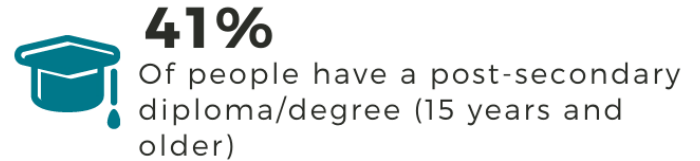
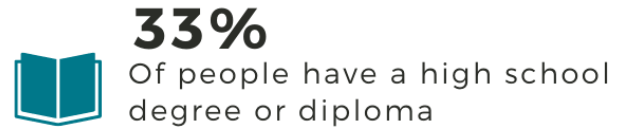


Immigration and Diversity

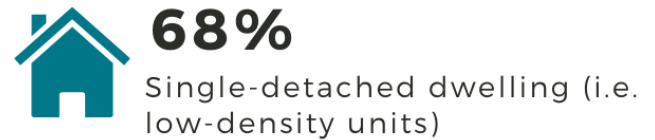


Cultural groups have a growing influence in terms of investment and community growth

Educational Attainment



Dwelling Trends



Average housing value in Tillsonburg increased by 23% across the 2011 to 2018 period, which is 13% less than that of the Province

Household Income





Town of Tillsonburg - Community Snapshot


Labour Force Trends


 **7,693**
Labour force by industry (2018)


Concentrated in manufacturing, retail trade, health care, and accommodation and food services

 **7%**
Labour force growth (2006-2018)

Occupations

 **23%** Sales and service

 **17%** Trades, transport and equipment operators

 Tillsonburg is a regional provider of employment for residents from surrounding communities

Impact of the Manufacturing Sector

Tillsonburg is home to several major automotive companies including Adient Seating Canada Ltd., Autoneum Canada Limited., Fleetwood Metal Industries Inc., Martinrea International Inc, Marwood International, THK Rhythm Automotive Canada Ltd., etc.

The concentration of the fabricated metal product manufacturing sector presents cluster development opportunities for the Town.

Machinery manufacturing is the second-largest sub-sector for Tillsonburg.



Business Trends

 **1,474**
Businesses in Tillsonburg (2019)

943 Sole proprietorships


17 Businesses employ at least 100 people


Real estate and rental and leasing, construction and retail trade accounted for the highest proportion of business establishments by industry.

The concentration of businesses in accommodation and food services, finance and insurance, construction and health care industries present growth opportunities for the Town.

Target Sectors

 Manufacturing


 Finance and insurance

 Prof., scientific and technical services

 Transportation and warehousing

Employment Growth Forecast

 **26%**
Employment base projection by 2046

 **20%**
Net increase in projected growth for manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, retail trade and administrative from 2016 to 2046



3. Determining Future Priorities

3.1 The 2008 Strategy

The 2008 Economic Development Strategy outlined a vision and four strategic themes around which the town would direct its economic development efforts. These strategic themes, determined through the consultation process, include:

- Industrial Development
- Tourism
- Downtown
- Education and Labour Force Development

A key objective of the strategy was that the town further streamlines’ organizational and institutional procedures to facilitate a timelier development approvals process. Thus, institutional conditions were identified as an overarching theme. Key actions included a review of the approvals process and establishing key performance indicators (KPIs). The ‘strategies’ under each strategic theme is listed below:

Figure 1: Strategic Themes of the 2008 Economic Development Strategy

Strategic Themes	Strategy
Industrial Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the Development of Key Economic Clusters ▪ Evaluation of the Potential for Development of a Regionally Significant Industrial Park at Tillsonburg Airport ▪ Use the hospital as leverage for opportunities for health care provision
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Tourism Strategy
Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create New Downtown Identity ▪ Review of Existing Improvement Plans ▪ Review Zoning By-Law and Official Plan regarding Residential Densities in the Downtown ▪ Explore Possibilities for Development of Town Hall
Education and Labour Force Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build Employer, Educational Institution and Town Partnership for Career Counselling ▪ Establishment of Apprenticeships ▪ Establish a Seniors Advisory Committee

Source: 2008 Economic Development Strategy, 2020.



The 2008 Strategy also identified several key strengths for the Tillsonburg including access to Highway 401 and major North American markets for industrial output, a location close to Lake Erie, a skilled manufacturing-based labour force, relatively inexpensive land, and superior quality of life. Opportunities for the Town of Tillsonburg include building on the strength on its downtown, the availability of land that could be serviced for industrial uses, excellent tourism assets and an airport that offers for several development possibilities. Several weaknesses were also identified including a relatively undiversified economy focused on the auto sector, the decline in the traditional agricultural base, (i.e. tobacco) and strong competition for labour due to investments being made in surrounding municipalities. Threats facing the town at that time included a rising Canadian dollar, global competition, and the transformation of the automotive sector with an increased focus on technology. Many of the same factors were highlighted during the process to update the strategy.

3.2 Implementation Efforts

The implementation efforts for the 2008 Economic Development Strategy are outlined in Figure 2 and described below.

A critical focus of the strategy was support for and investment in the town's manufacturing sector. Priority recommendations included supporting the development of manufacturing clusters in sectors such as auto-related production and value-added agricultural production, among others. Tillsonburg has supported its local manufacturing sector through the Manufacturing Acceleration Program (MAP) and the High Tech Manufacturing Subcluster Action Plan. The Manufacturing Accelerator Program (MAP) was launched in 2015 in partnership with Isah International B.V with the focus of introducing local firms to Industry 4.0 concepts. By 2017, the program evolved to include the development of a High-Tech Manufacturing Cluster Framework, a Capabilities Assessment with ten area manufacturers and an accelerated business growth framework to help local companies to explore European markets. Tillsonburg is currently reviewing and extending its MOU with Isah Software, in part because of the findings of the High Tech Manufacturing Subcluster Action Plan, which positioned the program as a platform for continued economic growth.

The creation of an industrial park at the Tillsonburg Airport site was another priority recommendation of the industrial development strategic theme. The strategy identified that an industrial park along with leveraging the hospital to generate economic activities and renewed business retention efforts would significantly diversify Tillsonburg's industrial base and position the town as a favourable place for business growth. As part of the airport industrial park/expansion, the town has completed a series of feasibility studies. An Airport Master Plan update (the first since 1989) is also underway, overseen by the Tillsonburg Airport Advisory Committee.

While the 2008 strategy identified the need to develop a tourism strategy, the responsibility for the same has been transferred to the Recreation, Culture & Parks (RCP) Department. The Economic Development Office has, however, worked with other Town departments to raise the profile of the tourism sector. Key efforts include the DiscoverTillsonburg website, maintained by the Town of Tillsonburg in partnership with local builders and other community partners. The town's signature event; Turtlefest is also a key success, attracting over 12,000 visitors in 2019 alone.

The 2008 strategy also highlighted the need to build on the strengths of the downtown and position it as a major destination for retail and commercial activities within the region. This included a call for the construction of a new Town Hall blending historical roots with urban design elements.



While Tillsonburg does benefit from a catchment trade area of approximately 60,000 residents¹, the downtown lacks specific attributes to capitalize on this opportunity². For example, retail is scattered throughout the town and are not clustered as effectively as it could be. As per the 2019 Downtown Tillsonburg Retail Gap Analysis, slightly too much ground-level retail is devoted to professional services and medical services rather than retail. Also, the town is not perceived as a tourism hub and has an underdeveloped night-time economy. Creating a vibrant downtown will mean that the town needs to enhance the visitor's experience and direct resources to improving the public realm. It also means targeting a more diverse mix of businesses including retail, personal and business services along with arts and cultural resources, restaurants, outdoor cafes, merchandise displays, food trucks, bars, entertainment and music venues.

Initiatives to support a new downtown identity included the 2012 Town of Tillsonburg Central Area Design Study and partnership with the Tillsonburg Business Improvement Association (BIA). The 2013 Downtown Façade Improvement Program, initiated by the town and the BIA, provides grants to promote the rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement of the front facades of commercial buildings within the downtown area of Tillsonburg.

An updated Community Improvement Plan was approved and implemented in 2017 to enhance support for investment in the downtown core and commercial and industrial zones. The program promotes the redevelopment of aging infrastructure and brownfield sites with the goal of encouraging businesses to improve the visual quality and function of buildings in the town. The CIP provides financial incentive programs, including tax increment, facade improvements, accessibility improvements, architectural design improvements, building permit grants and brownfield redevelopment incentive program.

The education and labour force development strategic theme articulated a desired future state for the town's workforce that is comprised of a strong mix of both highly developed technical skills in mathematics, health care and I.T. as well as skilled tradespeople to meet the needs of local employers. The strategy also recommended increasing partnerships with businesses to offer students apprenticeships and work-based learning terms, conducting an educational needs assessment, and establishing a satellite university campus to help train students within the area.

The town has made substantial progress in developing its talent pipeline. This includes partnerships with the Oxford Workforce Development Partnership and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board. The town also undertook two Education and Training Needs surveys to seek input from local businesses and manufacturers regarding the training and education needs of the local workforce and to help assist with developing a "Made in Tillsonburg" solution to address these needs.

¹ 2019 Downtown Tillsonburg Retail Gap Analysis.

² *ibid.*



Figure 2: Economic Development Strategy - Status of Recommendations (July 9, 2019)

Strategic Themes	Strategy	Completion
Industrial Development	Support development of key economic sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops ▪ iMiN Online ▪ Manufacturing Acceleration Program (MAP) ▪ High Tech Manufacturing Subcluster Action Plan
	Development of airport industrial park/expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feasibility study & expansion completed in 2010 and 2019 ▪ Master Plan consolidation being planned
Tourism	Develop a tourism strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signature event (Turtlefest) ▪ Responsibility has been moved to RCP Department ▪ Discover Tillsonburg partnership
Downtown	Increase residential densities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anchor investment with the 253 Broadway property ▪ Support for 83 Rolph St redevelopment, etc. ▪ Supporting County Initiatives
	Explore opportunity for stand-alone Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design/Build & Own and status quo options
	Create a new downtown identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2012 Design Study guiding the development ▪ Collaboration with BIA
	Review existing improvement plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Downtown Façade Programs ▪ 2017 Community Improvement Plan
Education and Labour Force Development	Build partnership for career counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oxford Workforce Development Partnership ▪ Careers 101 event at high school ▪ Youth robotics challenge



Strategic Themes	Strategy	Completion
	College/Post-Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 Education & Training Surveys completed ▪ Education Task Force – to develop a Made in Tillsonburg solution for both training and education
Institutional Conditions	Review approvals process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subdivision process and development manual review ▪ Streamlining of processes (intro of development bonds) ▪ Fast track expediting for key projects
	Establish performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quarterly tracking and reporting to CAO/EDAC/Council

Source: Town of Tillsonburg, 2020.

3.3 A Shifting Economy

Notwithstanding the economic growth experienced across the province in recent years, the domestic and international competition for workers, business development and investment is increasing in today’s “new economy”. On a global scale, Tillsonburg faces several challenges regarding its competitive position in which it has limited control. This includes the relative strength of the global economy, changes in international trade policy and the competitiveness of the Ontario economic base relative to other established and emerging global markets. At the more regional level, Tillsonburg faces competition from neighbouring municipalities for workforce attraction, business attraction and investment as several of them generally offer regional and local attributes that appeal to prospective international, national and local firms.

Despite these challenges, Tillsonburg can position itself positively. This requires the town to market itself as a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, business development and local investment retention. A major factor for the future competitiveness of the town, however, relates to the quantity and quality of its employment areas and other non-residential areas and the community’s ability to attract the workforce required to drive the economy forward.

This section builds on the economic drivers identified by the town and discusses how they are likely to shape the town’s competitiveness over the long term. The current response of the town to these trends has been highlighted, based on the economic development programming of the Economic Development Office, as evidenced in the 2021 Business Plan (Figure 3). These efforts will be integrated as part of the update to the strategy’s action plan.



Industry 4.0 and Industrial Production

Industry 4.0 signifies a shift in manufacturing from mass production to customized production. Employment and skills have also shifted as technology has decreased the need for routine jobs and created demand for skilled and tech-dependent jobs.

Industry 4.0 will continue to significantly impact the manufacturing sector, and the town should broaden its practical knowledge about technologies and develop strategies that respond to this shift. Tillsonburg is currently focussing on innovation-based investments, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The opportunities identified as part of the *2019 High-Tech Manufacturing Sub-Cluster Action Plan* is critical in this regard. In the past, the town's economic development initiatives with respect to Industry 4.0 adaptation included a partnership with Isah International B.V, to implement the Manufacturing Accelerator Program (MAP). The program is a key platform for growth as it can help raise the competitiveness, network and profitability of individual manufacturing companies through well-defined business strategies and by capitalizing on innovation in products, processes and markets. The program is being reviewed for a relaunch as part of the town's pandemic recovery efforts.

FDI Patterns

As per *2020 The fDi Report*, the number of FDI projects into Canada increased from 328 in 2018 to 345 in 2019. The province of Ontario accounted for 44% of total projects in 2019 and 7.9 billion in outbound capital investment. The majority of investments made in Ontario has located in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Historically, the United States has been the dominant force behind investment into Canada with traditional sectors, including manufacturing, energy and mining sectors fuelling growth. Investments in manufacturing have been growing, building on the Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) program, as well as Canada's competitive marginal effective tax rate. A current capital investment trend seen across North America is a push towards electric vehicle battery manufacturing plants. Ontario is already capitalizing on this trend; the 1.8 billion investment in retooling Ford of Canada's Oakville Assembly Complex into a global hub for battery electric vehicle production is one such example. Other than manufacturing, investments have been diversifying with technology-based sectors including Software and IT services leading the charge. Canada is attracting investment from global companies in Asian and European markets, a trend that Tillsonburg is focussing on through its investment attraction efforts. Tillsonburg's 2021 Business Plan (Figure 3) has identified the SOMA Asia Mission as a key item to promote the town and SOMA region as a competitive manufacturing and investment location and to strengthen trade relationships with China and Japan.

Canadian Trade Agreements

The trade war between the U.S. and China, which began in 2018, continues to add risk to global economic growth and further add to trade disruption and near-term market volatility³. The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)⁴ and the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) provide both opportunities and challenges for Canada to pursue trade and investment.

The CUSMA replaced the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to re-balance trade and

³ U.S. China Trade Tensions Area Back: Global Economy Week Ahead, Bloomberg, Nov 11, 2020.

⁴ In the United States, the Agreement is known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), while in Mexico the Agreement is known as Tratado México, Estados Unidos y Canadá (T-MEC).



increase industrial activity within North America. The new agreement provides benefits for the Canadian market, including tariff-free market access for exports, continued investments in the automotive and steel and aluminium sectors and provides new market access opportunities for the agricultural sector⁵. While these are positive outcomes, stringent rules of origin (RoO) requirements suggest declining motor vehicle exports to the United States⁶. Further, lower returns in the U.S. market and non-tariff measures limit Canadian dairy market exports⁷. Moving forward, communities should continue to monitor the uncertainty and implications associated with the access to the U.S. market and adapt strategies to focus on local strengths and inward investment and needs of a technology-based environment⁸.

The recent Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) has made it easier for businesses to explore European Markets. Local businesses can work with industry partners such as Export Development Canada (EDC), Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade (MEDJCT) and European 'middlemen' partners to understand European laws and regulations, tax systems, customer expectations and overcoming language barriers.

Expanding trade markets and exploring new export-related opportunities if of particular relevance. The European market is a key opportunity, given the push to technology-led FDI. Tillsonburg has recognized opportunities to increase the export readiness of local manufacturers by leveraging trade relations in Europe.

Placemaking and Economic Growth

Place-based economic development with a focus on active pedestrian-friendly downtowns and community nodes is considered key to long-term economic growth for many communities. Cities and towns are updating their planning policies to enable higher-density, mixed-use, multi-modal, vibrant and amenity-rich spaces, that cater to a younger entrepreneurial class with the ability to live, work and invest in the community. Place-making has also been a central theme to municipal cultural planning efforts.

As Tillsonburg grows, more attention will be required on how best to sustain or improve its quality of place, including the downtown and community nodes for both residents and visitors. Continued investment in and promotion of the CIP is essential, as it will enable streetscape development, beautification efforts, business retention and stimulate additional private sector investment.

The town's 2017 Community Improvement Plan (CIP) addresses downtown revitalization, through a mixture of 8 grants and financial incentive programs. A risk for the town is that if Community Improvement Plan funding is decreased, it may result in lost opportunities to ensure the vibrancy of the downtown and support investors and entrepreneurs in Tillsonburg.

Resident Attraction

While residential growth is projected for the Town, reduced investment or the lack of targeted initiatives in this area may jeopardize growth scenarios. A targeted resident attraction plan is key, particularly given the Oxford County projections expect growth to occur within the older demographic (50 years and over). Also, a place-based approach is needed to attract young families, skilled workers

⁵ Global Canada Affairs. (2020). The Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement: Economic Impact Assessment.

⁶ United States International Trade Commission. (2019). U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement: Likely Impact on the U.S. Economy and on Specific Industry Sectors.

⁷ Howe Institute. (202). Quantifying CUSMA: The Economic Consequences of the New North American Trade Regime.

⁸ *ibid.*



and professionals to the community. The town needs to support a mix of housing forms to satisfy the various demographics of the community.

Tillsonburg is already taking leadership in downtown residential development by securing an anchor investment with the 253 Broadway property and providing support for other downtown developments, including the 83 Rolph Street property redevelopment. A residential marketing campaign, whereby the town established partnerships with existing and new home builders to increase residential growth, was undertaken over the past few years.

Key future considerations for the Town could include addressing social housing and ensuring housing options for all household income categories. This is of particular relevance as the 2019 Oxford County's Housing Forum identified opportunities for increased rental options and incentives for private developers to build more housing suitable for those earning \$38,000 or less. As housing values continue to rise, partnerships between all levels of government and the private sector will be required to meet future housing needs.

A Talent Pipeline

The shift towards innovation in traditional sectors and the growth of technology focussed service sectors has resulted in significant competition for talent. Estimates show that Canada has been able to shift from a brain drain to a brain gain; for example, Toronto has recruited more technology workers than Seattle, the Bay Area and Washington D.C. combined⁹. In addition to producing top-tier talent, Canadian universities, colleges and vocational institutions also attract a high proportion of international students.

To ensure long term competitiveness talent attraction efforts needs to ensure the right balance of creative, technical and soft skills. In addition to offering a range of employment opportunities, successful talent attraction programs also need to consider housing affordability, access to amenities and recreation, art and cultural offerings and career prospects. Workforce development has been a key consideration for the town. Recent efforts include partnerships with Oxford Workforce Development, Careers 101 event at the high school, Youth robotics challenge and an Education Task Force.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has created economic and human costs across the world since its outbreak in December 2019. Economic sectors such as travel and tourism, accommodation and food, manufacturing, energy, and finance have been impacted while technology-based sectors have transitioned to a greater reliance on digital tools. Furthermore, physical distancing and increased work at home requirements have resulted in economic disruption largely related to changes in consumer demand and consumption patterns. These measures have affected global economic output, commodity prices, consumer spending and people's mental health.

While the pandemic is an ongoing challenge, it represents a series of opportunities in the short and longer-term. The Town of Tillsonburg has shown leadership in its response to the impact undertaking a coordinated response with the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement Area to support local businesses and rebuild the local economy. Economic Developers across the County as well as the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus are part of this holistic effort. Through the spring of 2020, the town administered surveys to understand the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses and advocated on behalf of local businesses. Local task forces were launched, and

⁹ Toronto adds more tech jobs than Seattle, the Bay Area and Washington D.C. combined. Invest in Ontario, Nov 11, 2020.



information regarding support programs from all levels of government have been shared through the local and regional business community.

The following table summarises the current economic development agenda identified in the 2021 business plan.

Figure 3: Town of Tillsonburg, 2021 Business Plan

Item	Owner	Target Date
Community Improvement Plan (Downtown Façade)	Business Improvement Association	Q4
Community Improvement Plan	Development Commissioner	Q4
Economic Development Strategy Implementation	Economic Development & Marketing	Q4
Enhanced Business Processes (Lead Gen Apps)	Development Commissioner	Q1
High Tech Manufacturing Action Plan	Development Commissioner	Q3
SOMA Asia Mission (Biannual)	Development Commissioner	Q4
Van Norman Innovation Park – Clearview Dr Extension & SWM Pond Construction	Operations Department/Development Commissioner	Q4
Van Norman Innovation Park (Certified Sites)	Development Commissioner	Q4
Engineering Design Services for Rokeby Road Property	Operations Department/Development Commissioner/Consultant	Q4
Chamber Awards - Grant	Development Commissioner	Q2
Chamber Awards -Sponsorship	Development Commissioner	Q2
Service Level Carryover – Marketing/External Communications	Development Commissioner	Q2
Community Video Production	Economic Development & Marketing	Q3
Bridges to Better Business	Development Commissioner	Q4
Youth Robotics Challenge	Development Commissioner	Q4
Residential Marketing	Economic Development & Marketing	Q4
Branding – Wayfinding Signage (carry-forward)	Economic Development & Marketing	Q3
Consultations for Mall Parking Lot Reconfiguration (carry-forward)	Economic Development & Marketing/Chief Building Official	Q1-Q2
1,101 Highway 3 Property – Explore development opportunities	Development Commissioner	Q4
Education Task Force	Development Commissioner	Q4



Item	Owner	Target Date
Pandemic Business Recovery	Development Commissioner, Mayor's Working Group, Chamber of Commerce, BIA	Q4
Town Hall Project Support	Town Hall Project Committee	Q4
Continue to facilitate discussions and networking with potential partners to review additional opportunities for Short Line Rail connectivity within the Town of Tillsonburg.	Development Commissioner	Q4
Continue to facilitate discussions, networking and planning to ensure adequate Industrial Zoned land is available for servicing and development.	Development Commissioner	Q4

Source: Town of Tillsonburg, 2020.

3.4 Current Economic Development Needs

A targeted consultation program was conducted with key community partners, stakeholders and the business community to inform an understanding of the community's current economic development programming needs. One on one interviews were conducted with Community Futures Oxford, the Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce and the County's Small Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC). An online business survey was also administered between July 2020 to August 2020. The majority of respondents were locally owned and operated businesses and included corporations and sole-proprietors. Of the 113 respondents, over 70% have been operating their business in Tillsonburg for over ten years. Respondents included local manufacturing, retail trade, real estate firms, professional services, construction, health care and accommodation and food services. Key survey results are presented in the infographic below.

Building on the results of the survey, two workshops were conducted with representatives from local manufacturing, retail, commercial and business service firms. Participants were asked to provide input to the following:

- What is the greatest opportunity for Tillsonburg to sustain the growth of the local economy over the next 5 years?
- What challenges are limiting economic growth in Tillsonburg?
- Where does the town need to focus its efforts on over the next 18-24 months?

The stakeholder consultations are summarised below:

Figure 4: Summary of Consultation Responses

Consultation Themes	Summary of responses
Opportunities for Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manufacturing first lens, as it drives much of the economic success in the town



Consultation Themes	Summary of responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a technology/innovation hub ▪ Provide shovel ready lands and pursue the development of airport lands ▪ Capitalize on the remote working trend resulting from COVID-19 ▪ Expand health care services ▪ Ensure broadband availability ▪ Build on existing cultural assets ▪ Showcase the local artists and artisans, promote the emerging arts community, cultural and social experiences ▪ Stronger online marketing presence that includes cultural experiences ▪ Build on existing partnerships with BIA, Oxford Tourism, Oxford Creative Connections and Tillsonburg Multi-Service Centre to improve awareness of existing initiatives and Tillsonburg’s priorities ▪ Work with Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce to build on the existing relationship with Council and EDO ▪ Promote the community as a space to live and raise a family – children’s programs ▪ Target sports tourism, agri-tourism (winery, microbreweries), capitalize on Norfolk/Elgin Winery cluster ▪ Pursue hotel development that allows people to stay in town ▪ Regional talent attraction, attract and retain younger professionals ▪ Flexible zoning, ease of development approvals ▪ Environmental health and safety
Challenges limiting economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boundaries adjustments with South-West Oxford Township, limited hydro and no agreement for shared assessment hinder the development of the airport site for an industrial park although town owns 600 acres. ▪ Competition for talent attraction & retention ▪ Lack of awareness of employment opportunities – trades are still viewed as not attractive careers ▪ Lack of apprenticeship positions for trades ▪ Lack of affordable housing opportunities for young professionals, entry-level workers



Consultation Themes	Summary of responses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gaps in cultural and recreational amenities that would encourage people to live and work here ▪ Volunteer burnout – cultural sector ▪ The municipality needs to advocate better for business priorities ▪ Some manufactures are witnessing a high-turnover in staff ▪ Highway 19/401 congested – need better access to the town
Economic Growth Focus in the next 18-24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuously engage businesses & employers to understand their evolving needs and support business programming ▪ Market Tillsonburg as a manufacturing hub, a regional centre and a remote working environment ▪ Need for entry-level housing ▪ Open for business message needs to resonate ▪ Increased training, job placement & internship opportunities ▪ Develop a secondary industrial area



Town of Tillsonburg - Survey Highlights



113 Respondents

Online survey ran from July 2020 to August 2020



Majority of respondents were **locally owned and operated** businesses



70%

have been operating in Tillsonburg for **over 10 years**

Respondents included local manufacturing, retail trade, real estate firms, professional services, construction, health care and accommodation and food services.



96%

Overall business **satisfaction**



24%

indicated that their attitude about doing business in Tillsonburg was **more positive**

COVID-19



64%

of businesses have reported a decline in revenues as a result of COVID-19

Before COVID-19, 63% (34 businesses) of the respondents projected higher revenue expectations for this fiscal year compared to the last year



37%

of businesses had plans to expand their operations before COVID-19

Respondents felt they needed the following supports:



24% Financial grants/cash flow



13% Information & leadership



12% Property tax assistance

Respondents were either 'very satisfied' or 'somewhat satisfied' with:



93% Water availability



86% Local road and streets



86% Provincial road and highways

Respondents were either 'very dissatisfied' or 'somewhat dissatisfied' with:



52% Availability of housing



48% Availability of unskilled labour



46% Availability of property for purchase or lease

Respondents felt 'very important' factors were



63% Support for small businesses



54% Downtown revitalization



54% Promotion and marketing of Tillsonburg

Respondents felt strongly about: having a positive relationship with the Town for business needs; the BIA effectiveness to improve downtown's core; and the Chamber of Commerce work as an advocate for local businesses



3.5 Strategic Priorities

Stakeholder input and related background research support the need to update the focus of the Economic Development Strategy. A number of strategic priorities emerged, which were reviewed with the Economic Development Advisory Committee and found to be relevant and in line with the town's emerging economic development agenda. The priorities are outlined below.

3.5.1 Enhance Investment Readiness

Investment readiness for Tillsonburg ranges from providing high-quality, shovel ready industrial lands, targeting technology-based manufacturing to collaborative partnerships that allow for growth and investment.

Tillsonburg is expected to account for 11% of the County's forecast employment growth¹⁰, adding 2,230 jobs over 2016 to 2046 period in sectors that include manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, retail trade and administration. Capitalizing on this opportunity requires a long-term supply of high-quality, shovel-ready employment land and available lease space opportunities. This is consistent with the 2008 Economic Development Strategy, and stakeholder input received during the updating of the strategy. While several stakeholders identified the Tillsonburg Municipal Airport site as offering opportunities for industrial development, the current lack of services such as water, sewage, and gas will limit industrial growth over the short to mid-term¹¹.

Tillsonburg is currently home to two main industrial areas, namely, the Forest Hill Industrial Park and the newer Van Norman Innovation Park, which is comprised of 37 acres of developable land with servicing currently underway. The Van Norman Innovation Park is anticipated to have three phases with additional lands recently secured by the town and additional lands to be secured. Also, the town owns properties at the Rokeby Rd site (54 acres with rail) along with a 35-acre outdoor industrial site on Highway 19 South along the railway corridor. The town has recently acquired another 70 acres of industrial land for future development. As identified in the 2020 Oxford County Phase One Comprehensive Review, Oxford County and Tillsonburg remain relatively well-positioned in terms of the suitability of the industrial land supply. As of 2019, Tillsonburg has a net developable industrial land supply of 77 ha; approximately 15% of total net developable industrial land supply in Oxford County. Tillsonburg is also home to 18 ha of net developable commercial and institutional land.

Given the existing supply, a critical consideration for the town is to explore opportunities to expand their inventory of high quality, shovel ready industrial land and take actions to ensure a long term supply of designated industrial land. Potential issues that may affect the availability of lands for development include fragmented supply; smaller spread out parcels; and industrial lands being mostly privately owned.

Tillsonburg's continued strength in manufacturing will require local businesses to invest in the digitization and automation of their operations. The town's efforts to enable a 'metal lab' or an innovation-hub would allow for collaboration between business, education and government in areas including 3D printing, training programs and skills development. The emerging broader trends of electric and autonomous vehicles (E.V.s and A.V.s), signifies supply chain business opportunities for the town, including batteries, electric motors and transmission modules, air-conditioning units, brakes, and

¹⁰ 2020 Oxford County Phase One Comprehensive Review.

¹¹ 2010 Airport Business Park and Airpark Market Analysis and Feasibility Study



steering systems.

In addition to the opportunities associated with industrial development, Tillsonburg's strategic location and proximity to Highway 401 provides opportunities for higher density uses, including office-commercial development and co-working/flexible office space for professional service firms. This is a short term priority, in light of the ongoing remote working trend associated with the impact of COVID-19 and longer-term resident attraction efforts to ensure a sustainable residential base.

Recent investments, including the \$1.2 million grant received from the Province of Ontario for infrastructure investments at the Van Norman Innovation Park positions the town as a strong player in the regional innovation ecosystem and provides an opportunity for higher-order industrial/office development. To ensure success, the town needs to eliminate potential barriers that often come up in the investment attraction process. This includes providing business-grade broadband services that go beyond the downtown and continuing to ease the 'red tape' and zoning challenges associated with some forms of development. Easing restrictions on multi-unit residential development should also be a consideration, particularly as the town looks to attract young families and creative professionals.

Improving business infrastructure requires that the Town work with local and regional partners to determine an appropriate response for delivering efficient and cost-effective services.

3.5.2 Improved Support for Entrepreneurship and the Small Business Economy

Tillsonburg is home to a significant number of small businesses and entrepreneurs in a wide range of industries, ranging from real estate, construction and retail trade to finance and insurance and professional, scientific and technical services.

The economic development department supports entrepreneurs and small businesses by providing market information, real estate advice and networking opportunities. Stakeholders consulted as part of the strategy update commented that the town plays an important role as a facilitator for business development. Support for start-up companies is also offered county-wide through Community Futures Oxford and the Small Business Centre. Opportunities exist to build on existing programming and support, as 63% of business survey respondents¹² indicated that support for small business is important to ensure future growth in the town.

The supportive business environment should be leveraged in the attraction of new investment in the creative, technology, and innovation sectors. This may require investment and resources beyond traditional support. As local programming with Fanshawe College is currently limited, the town could look to strengthen and market partnerships with the TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario (RIC, London), Advanced Manufacturing and Hardware Innovation Lab, the Fraunhofer Project Centre for Composites Research, Trillium Network for Advanced Manufacturing, etc. The creation of the Education Task Force and partnerships with the Oxford Workforce Development are strengths that should be continued and broadly profiled. Initiatives such as the Caledon Business Innovation Zone (CBIZ) and BusinessTO Support Centre serve as best practice, given its role in helping start-up and entrepreneurs with consultations, business planning and reviews, training, workshops and networking events and promotions particularly in the absence of a regional presence.

¹² n=28



An effective sector-based BR+E program could better inform economic development programming and support investment attraction activities and supply chain development opportunities that go beyond traditional manufacturing. Regular and ongoing communications with key sector/sub-sector representatives can help the town to gauge collaboration opportunities, programming needs and growth and expansion challenges.

3.5.3 Support for the Creative Cultural Economy

The creative and cultural industries are one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the economy, generating income, jobs, and exports. These businesses are involved in the creation, production and distribution of cultural goods and services and include the performing arts; film and video production; recording and broadcasting; architecture; design (graphic, industrial, interior, fashion, etc.) advertising; publishing; new and interactive digital media etc.

As per the 2020 Canadian Business Counts, Tillsonburg is home to approximately 77 (5% of total businesses) creative and cultural industries¹³. The majority of these (20 businesses) are full-service restaurants while five businesses are involved in computer systems design and related services (except video game design and development). The creative cultural industries NAICS is provided in Appendix I.

While the creative and cultural industries represent an untapped economic potential for the town, targeted investments are needed to ensure growth. Currently, the town has a lower proportion of creative and cultural industries compared to the province at 10%. In addition, the town lags with respect to digital media industries including video game companies, animation, mobile app developers, post-production studios and special effects tool makers. On the other hand, the Station Arts Centre, Annandale Museum and Theatre Tillsonburg are key pillars that promote the cultural economy. The Station Arts Centre is a key part of the Tillsonburg experience, showcasing local artists and artisans and providing family-oriented programming and year-round cultural events. Along with art galleries, art programming, an artisan gift shop, pottery studio and Saturday Farmer's Market, the Centre is home to several in-house groups, including Bridge St. Artists, Stationhouse Potters and Tillsonburg Photography Club.

Opportunities exist to build on the existing cultural and creative assets for mutual benefit. For example, full-service restaurants can serve as venues for live entertainment and promote local bands and artists. Tillsonburg's cultural identity and rural nature provide excellent opportunities for value-added businesses, including artisan food, craft brewery and wineries, organic produce, and other organic products. The proximity of the *Toast the Coast Trail* in Norfolk County and Elgin County position the town to investigate opportunities in craft-brewed breweries and cideries and promote farm-to-table and culinary tourism experiences. An innovative Community Improvement Plan (CIP) that supports the growth and diversification of agri-businesses and tourism product may be central to this effort.

Building on the guiding principle of the 2011 Community Parks, Recreation & Cultural Strategic Master Plan¹⁴, an updated cultural asset inventory and a Cultural Master Plan will showcase the diverse range of assets in the town and enhance opportunities for cultural production and consumption. The Cultural Improvement Alliance was an important initiative undertaken by the town to develop cultural sector governance and operational capacity. As of the writing of the report, the program is not operational as

¹³ Based on the Statistics Canada's Canadian Framework for Cultural Statistics. The framework is a collaborative effort of the Culture Statistics Program of Statistics Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

¹⁴ Town to work with and develop the arts, cultural and heritage sector.



the Culture Development Fund has ended.

Digital awareness is an important consideration to grow the creative and cultural industries, as it allows for easy content creation and distribution. Programs such as the Digital Main Street, currently administered by the SBEC, ShopHERE powered by Google and best practices such as Shop Toronto Design and Industry Advisory Committee can help businesses innovate, commercialize new products and be digital-savvy. As COVID-19 continues to impact on the economy, main street businesses and entrepreneurs increasingly require support to create and sustain an effective online presence. Ontario's Small Business Success Strategy and the *"Shop Local! Shop Safe! Shop with Confidence!"* campaign are key initiatives that support small businesses in the current economic climate.

3.5.4 Build Sustainable Community and Business Infrastructure

A key priority for the town is to invest in community infrastructure, workforce development and sustainability goals that ensure the well-being of residents and serve as resident and talent attraction enablers.

Stakeholders suggested that community priorities include investing in the healthcare sector and focusing on doctor recruitment. The town can work with local not-for-profit organizations to promote community and social goals. The Kawartha Lakes Health Care Initiative (KLHCI) is a best practice in this regard. The non-profit works closely with the local medical community, the Ross Memorial Hospital, and the Rural Ontario Medical Program (ROMP) to successfully recruit family doctors to the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Tillsonburg is primarily comprised of single-family, detached homes and limited care/retirement options for an ageing demographic. This impacts the ability of the community to attract immigrants and younger workers or allow for ageing in place. In addition, ensuring access to skilled labour is a growing challenge for the town. An ageing workforce, lower immigration levels and the need for tech-based talent place considerable pressures on labour market supply. These factors present growth challenges, particularly if local businesses must recruit workers from outside the area. Given these trends, more emphasis on workforce attraction and marketing the town to these workers is essential. This includes a focus on lifestyle, local amenities, and the vitality of the community. Continued engagement with the Oxford Workforce Development Partnership and partnerships with Fanshawe College and other stakeholders to retain high school students and youth for careers in the trades will be important. Stakeholders suggested partnering with local firms to create apprenticeship, training, and employment opportunities. This would allow for recent high school graduates to continue to stay and work in Tillsonburg as opposed to moving out of the community.

Tillsonburg should also consider how it can increase the amount of roofed accommodation that is available, which could allow the town to host larger conferences, trade shows and events. While stakeholders identified hotel development as a key opportunity area, the downturn of the hospitality sector in light of COVID-19 presents significant challenges in the short term. The town can investigate the feasibility of alternative accommodations including traditional B&B's, Airbnb's, boutique hotels, and increased billeting (often associated with competitive amateur sports). Opportunities also exist to work with private developers to combine a hotel with a medium density residential building with 'hotel-like' services and amenities.

3.5.5 Raise the Town's Profile

The coronavirus pandemic has dramatically altered the workplace, as many companies have shifted to



remote work. This shift is particularly prevalent in technology-based services and includes managers, professionals and financial workers who can carry out their jobs on computers virtually anywhere. Remote working has also raised conversations and trends that point towards an urban migration to small and rural towns. Research does suggest that urban migration was occurring before the pandemic¹⁵, and the pandemic has simply accelerated relocation decisions. While the future of telework is still largely unknown, particularly as the economy reopens, the ongoing urban migration has social, economic and political implications for both rural and urban communities alike. Rural and small-town communities are well-positioned to capitalize on this trend, provided it has the needed infrastructure (particularly broadband) and place-based amenities that support the lifestyle aspirations of an urban population. The forthcoming Community Strategic Plan should inform this discussion.

Stakeholders consulted as part of the strategy update suggested that Tillsonburg is perceived as a transient community (commuters) and that the town lags in attracting people to live and work in Tillsonburg for the long term. There was a desire among some stakeholders to see more connections with nature, better amenities, more festivals and cultural experiences and value-added agricultural products as a way to offset this perception. As noted previously, the town and its partners should take proactive and purposeful place-based investments that create a vibrant, inclusive, prosperous and unique community. This should include investment in fibre optic internet, housing options that are affordable and adaptable to teleworking situations and community assets, experiences and events can improve the overall quality of place. An emphasis on 'ideal small-town living', access to highways including the 401 and major centres including London, Kitchener/Waterloo and Toronto and a competitive residential market can ensure the town is well-positioned to attract the remote workers looking to move away from the large urban centres.

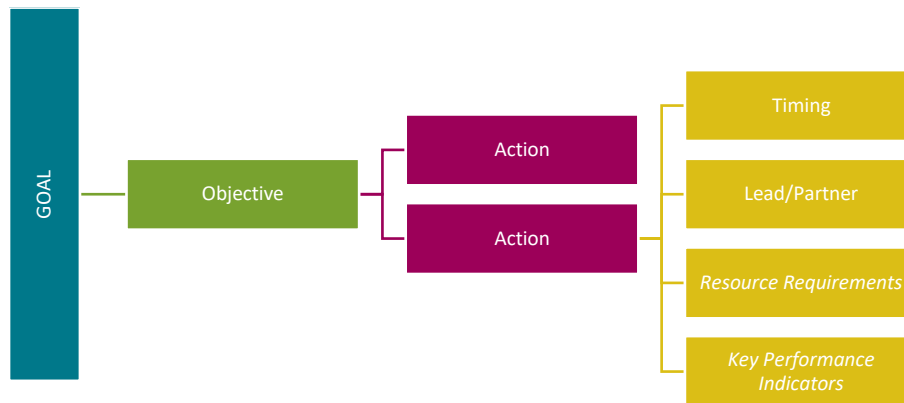
¹⁵ As per a 2017 Gallup Poll, 27% of urban residents prefer rural areas and included population aged 30-49 years of age.



4. Economic Development Strategy Update

The Strategic Priorities for Tillsonburg’s Economic Development Strategy Update are highly interrelated. If implemented effectively, the related goals, objectives and action planning will ensure a strong and sustainable local economy. The strategic priorities resulted in the development of three clear and well-defined goals, each with objectives and actions to achieve desired results over a specific period of time. The framework for the Economic Development Strategy Update is illustrated below.

Figure 5: Strategy Update Framework



4.1 Goals, Objectives and Actions

The Strategy Update is underpinned by three high-level goals, intended to anchor and qualify all ensuing actions. These goals reflect the priorities discussed in Section 3 and builds on the Economic Vision of the 2008 Economic Development Strategy as the strategic themes remained relevant in 2020.

The goals and objectives of the Economic Development Strategy Update are presented below:

Goal 1: Enable a Tech-based Business Environment

The objective is to:

- Foster a business environment that supports the expansion and sustainability of existing businesses and attracts new business investment and entrepreneurs through a commitment to innovation.

Goal 2: Create A Strong Local Brand

The objective is to:

- Develop a broad regional-based value proposition to attract business, investors and residents that incorporates the specific strengths found in the town.

Goal 3: Transform to the Creative Entrepreneurial Economy

The objective is to:

- Leverage the creative and cultural industries to drive innovation and economic growth of the town’s entrepreneurial economy.



4.2 Action Plan

4.2.1 Interpreting the Action Plans

Actions

The direction the town, its partners, and its stakeholders will undertake to address the essential issues or opportunities that should be addressed over the length of the Strategy.

The short term measures in this updated Strategy support the immediate needs of Tillsonburg businesses. It also looks beyond the current economic climate and anticipates the opportunities for future economic growth and prosperity for the community. This includes building on the implementation efforts associated with the 2008 Strategy, integrating current departmental business planning efforts and the aspirations of the community.

Timing

The timeframe for initiating and/or implementing the recommendations in the Action Plan is 5 years. Priority timings are either short term (S = 1-2 years), medium-term (M = 3-4 years) and long term (L = 5 years or longer). It is assumed that the town will revisit the progress of the Strategy after 5 years to assess the effectiveness of the recommendations, adjust the recommendations based on current conditions as necessary, and add new actions in response to changing market conditions and policy considerations.

Lead and Partners

The identification of select leads and internal/external partners that can support economic development objectives.

Acronyms

The following table lists the acronyms used in the Strategy and their respective descriptions.

Figure 6: List of Acronyms used in the Action Plan

Description	Acronym
Business Improvement Agency	BIA
Tillsonburg District Chamber of Commerce	CC
Community Futures Development Corporations Inc.	CFDC
Economic Development Office	EDO
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade	MEDJCT
Recreation and Culture Department	RCD
Small Business Enterprise Centre	SBEC



Key Employer Support Programs for Strategy Implementation

The following table lists the key employer support programs for strategy implementation. A full description of programs is provided in Appendix II.

Figure 7:

Program	Purpose



Goal 1: A Tech-Enabled Business Environment

#	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing		
			S	M	L
1.1	Create a business environment that supports the expansion and sustainability of existing businesses and attracts new business investment and entrepreneurs through a commitment to technology integration and innovation.				
1.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide online resources for local businesses in the form of webinars, links to various financial supports, website design/e-commerce tools and in-person consultation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local businesses as required to assist in the identification of available funding. 	EDO; CFDC			
1.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local businesses to build online/e-commerce capability and capacity. 	EDO; CFDC			
1.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote SBEC efforts to implement a Digital Main Street Program. 	SBEC; CC; BIA			
1.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the inventory of available serviced and un-serviced commercial and industrial land is updated and available online. 	EDO; Planning			
1.1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast track the Airport Site Master Plan to understand the benefits to the town and shared service agreement requirements with the neighbouring community. 	Town			
1.1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an Employment Lands Needs Study to determine the current and expected demand for higher-order employment lands, including office, commercial and industrial. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the preparation of shovel-ready employment/industrial lands to ensure long term competitiveness. 	Town			
1.1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor the ongoing impact of CUSMA and other trade agreements through regular engagement with provincial and federal trade representatives. 	MEDJCT; EDO			
1.1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support investment in the manufacturing sector by adopting the recommendations in the High-Tech Manufacturing Sub-Cluster Action Plan. 	EDO; Manufacturers			



#	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing		
			S	M	L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to focus on fabricated metal product manufacturing, transportation equipment manufacturing and machinery manufacturing. Continue to engage directly with key local industries and forge long-term relationships. Conduct a survey of local businesses to determine the level and type of support for a cluster initiative. 				
1.1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly engage with local partners in workforce development to ensure a stable supply of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Pursue opportunities to develop workforce training programs and tailored curriculum offerings that support on-the-job training that prepares local students for employment in the town’s high-priority industries. 	Workforce Planning and Development Board; EDO			
1.1.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a broadband strategy with recommendations for providing a fibre optic network throughout the town. Support businesses’ ability to operate online or remotely by advocating for improved access to high-speed internet and cell phone service. Work with local developers to ensure the integration of fibre in all new development. 	EDO; Developers			
1.1.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a leadership role in developing a Regional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) & Digital Media Sector Study. The study will take inventory of sector resources, assets and markets and enable an understanding of the local and regional technology sector profile and capacity. 	EDO; CFDC; SBEC			



Goal 2: An Inspiring Community Brand

#	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing		
			S	M	L
2.1	Enable a regional-based value proposition to attract business, investors and residents that incorporates the specific strengths found in the town.				
2.1.1	Launch a short-term destination marketing campaign that promotes the assets ¹⁶ of the town and positions it as a hub for remote working in South Western Ontario.	Town			
2.1.2	Promote the functionality of EngageOxford as an interactive directory, social media platform and events calendar for local businesses.	Town			
2.1.3	Support businesses participation in online ‘shop local’ efforts. This includes identifying resources that can help businesses understand tax regulations, technology implications etc.	EDO; CC; SBEC			
2.1.4	Advocate for tourism priorities, showcasing Tillsonburg’s authentic tourism experiences ¹⁷ and promoting these experiences to local and regional accommodation providers and tour operators.	EDO; RCD; Tourism Oxford			
2.1.5	Develop ‘Here we Grow’ business profiles and testimonials, interactive maps and other business information products that showcase the story of Tillsonburg’s business community and entrepreneurs.	EDO			
2.1.6	Adopt the recommendations of the 2019 Retail Gap Analysis, including the “Invest in Tillsonburg Downtown” digital and/or online marketing piece.	EDO; Planning			
2.1.7	Continue to improve online-access to and assistance of the town’s development approvals and permitting process.	Planning			
2.1.8	Continue to position and promote the Van Norman Innovation Park to secure investment in the advanced manufacturing, information technology and food processing sectors.	EDO			
2.1.9	Continue to implement a Physician Recruitment Program to attract and retain doctors and health care professionals in the town.	EDO			
2.1.10	Undertake a housing needs study to address perceived gaps in inventory, affordability, and demand, in the short-term (remote workers) and long term (permanent residents).	Planning; EDO			
2.1.11	Explore the expansion and resourcing of the Town’s CIP program to support residential development (particularly rental accommodation), the targeting of key sector investment	Planning; EDO			

¹⁶ small town living, quality of life, recreation, affordability, and geographic proximity.

¹⁷ agri-tourism, culinary events, culture-based tourism, and sport tourism



	including tourism and the continued revitalization of the downtown.				
2.1.12	Advocate for the provision of regional transit service and related infrastructure to support economic growth and workforce mobility.	Town; CC			



Goal 3: Transform to the Creative Entrepreneurial Economy

#	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing		
			S	M	L
3.1	Leverage the creative and cultural industries to drive innovation and economic growth of the town's entrepreneurial economy.				
3.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support networking opportunities with local and regional stakeholders (not for profit, for-profit, institutions, intermediaries, BIA's and chambers of Commerce) as a way to promote, connect and coordinate the creative and cultural industries and initiatives. 	RCD; EDO; Cultural Organizations			
3.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development and enhancement of cultural tourism products and enterprises that align with the marketing and promotional efforts of Tourism Oxford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the County to investigate opportunities for agri-based tourism and value-added agricultural products, e.g. farms festivals, artisan food, craft brewery and organic produce. 	EDO; Tourism Oxford; Cultural Organizations			
3.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a cultural asset mapping exercise to quantify the full range of arts, cultural, tourism and heritage assets in the town. The asset map can also serve to market, promote and showcase resources and attract new business investment. 	RCD			
3.1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a creative economy handbook that provides a listing of government programming and services to support the growth of a creative economy and provides profiles of business, entrepreneurs or organizations that contribute to the success of the creative economy. 	EDO; CFDC			
3.1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue the creation of co-working spaces geared to entrepreneurs and teleworkers (e.g. thecreativespace.ca) 	EDO; Developers			
3.1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate an innovation hub that offers on-one business in-person and virtual consultations, business plan reviews, networking events, access to online learning and seminars/workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and advocate for the use of existing vacant buildings and/or storefronts as temporary artist space. 	EDO; SBEC; CFDC; BIA			



#	Action	Lead/ Partner	Timing		
			S	M	L
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the feasibility of a Makerspace to allow for entrepreneurs to collaborate, network and share resources and tools. 				
3.1.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a service delivery audit to determine the opportunities to reduce operating costs for the town and the associated reduction in development approval/permitting costs. 	Town			
3.1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Festival and Events Strategy to ensure a long-term vision and support for the town's festivals and events. 	RCD			



Appendices



Appendix I – Creative and Cultural Industries NAICS

NAICS	Creative Cultural Industries	Tillsonburg	Ontario
	Total businesses	1,501	1,446,355
722511	Full-service restaurants	20	16,718
541514	Computer systems design & related services (except video game design & devt.)	5	49,568
713991	Sports clubs, teams and leagues performing before a non-paying audience	4	1,582
541490	Other specialized design services	4	1,303
541430	Graphic design services	4	4,402
713940	Fitness and recreational sports centres	3	3,554
713910	Golf courses and country clubs	3	859
611610	Fine arts schools	2	1,600
541920	Photographic services	2	3,951
519190	All other information services	2	1,314
519130	Internet broadcasting and web search portals	2	1,287
515110	Radio broadcasting	2	464
451140	Musical instrument and supplies stores	2	509
323119	Other printing	2	1,604
713992	Other sport facilities	1	370
713299	All other gambling industries	1	154
712115	History and science museums	1	69
711511	Independent visual artists and artisans	1	2,469
711190	Other performing arts companies	1	321
711120	Dance companies	1	455
541870	Advertising material distribution services	1	462
541850	Display advertising	1	730
541515	Video game design and development services	1	518
541420	Industrial design services	1	633
541410	Interior design services	1	3,569
541340	Drafting services	1	697
532210	Consumer electronics and appliance rental	1	195
519121	Libraries	1	358
517919	All other telecommunications	1	752
517310	Wired and wireless telecommunications carriers (except satellite)	1	1,027
512110	Motion picture and video production	1	7,634
511211	Software publishers (except video game publishers)	1	1,545
451310	Book stores and news dealers	1	566
312120	Breweries	1	389
812921	Photo finishing laboratories (except one-hour)	-	54
713999	All other amusement and recreation industries	-	936
713950	Bowling centres	-	183
713930	Marinas	-	443
713920	Skiing facilities	-	69
713291	Lotteries	-	160
713210	Casinos (except casino hotels)	-	23



NAICS	Creative Cultural Industries	Tillsonburg	Ontario
713120	Amusement arcades	-	196
713110	Amusement and theme parks	-	118
712190	Nature parks and other similar institutions	-	89
712130	Zoos and botanical gardens	-	38
712120	Historic and heritage sites	-	61
712119	Other museums	-	150
712111	Non-commercial art museums and galleries	-	145
711513	Independent writers and authors	-	2,323
711512	Independent actors, comedians and performers	-	3,913
711322	Festivals without facilities	-	453
711321	Performing arts promoters (presenters) without facilities	-	432
711311	Live theatres and other performing arts presenters with facilities	-	127
711130	Musical groups and artists	-	3,146
711112	Musical theatre and opera companies	-	145
711111	Theatre (except musical) companies	-	479
541930	Translation and interpretation services	-	1,244
541899	All other services related to advertising	-	2,184
541891	Specialty advertising distributors	-	523
541860	Direct mail advertising	-	112
541840	Media representatives	-	667
541830	Media buying agencies	-	180
541810	Advertising agencies	-	3,258
541320	Landscape architectural services	-	909
541310	Architectural services	-	2,828
526989	All other miscellaneous funds and financial vehicles	-	1,047
519122	Archives	-	36
515210	Pay and specialty television	-	126
515120	Television broadcasting	-	349
512290	Other sound recording industries	-	133
512250	Record production and distribution	-	200
512240	Sound recording studios	-	269
512230	Music publishers	-	275
512190	Post-production and other motion picture and video industries	-	704
512130	Motion picture and video exhibition	-	273
512120	Motion picture and video distribution	-	244
511212	Video game publishers	-	57
511190	Other publishers	-	307
511140	Directory and mailing list publishers	-	77
511130	Book publishers	-	622
511120	Periodical publishers	-	653
511110	Newspaper publishers	-	653
453920	Art dealers	-	587
442292	Print and picture frame stores	-	248
414440	Sound recording merchant wholesalers	-	34



NAICS	Creative Cultural Industries	Tillsonburg	Ontario
414420	Book, periodical and newspaper merchant wholesalers	-	198
323120	Support activities for printing	-	288
312130	Wineries	-	314
	% of total businesses	5.1%	10.0%



Appendix II – Employer Support Programs

Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
		CAPITALIZATION AND FINANCING
BDC (Business Development Canada)	Business Development Bank of Canada	BDC offers financing solutions for entrepreneurs, whether you're looking to expand production, purchase new equipment or access financing for a special project. Loans available to help with working capital, buying a business, investing in real estate, purchasing equipment, start-up financing, technology financing, transferring a business or business expansion. BDC also offers entrepreneurs help with venture capital as well as growth and transitional capital. www.bdc.ca
Federal – Canadian Crown Corporation	Export Development Canada	Crown corporation that supports and develops, directly or indirectly, Canada's export trade and Canadian capacity to engage in that trade and to respond international business opportunities. EDC provides insurance and financial services, bonding products, and small business solutions to Canadian exporters and investors; EDC also provides online credit risk management tools. Services include export financing to customers, receivable insurance and due diligence. Export Express and Export Express Credit assists with marketing. http://www.edc.ca
MEDJCT	South Western Ontario / Eastern Ontario Development Fund	Up to 15% grant (max \$500K) / loan (max \$5M) for job creation and investment. Supports: Investments in equipment, new technologies, talent and training to enhance business productivity and competitiveness, leading to growth; Investment in new operations in Eastern or Southwestern Ontario. Investment in existing operations that lead to business expansion and introduction of new products or services or new markets.



Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
		<p>Priority will be given to projects that generate regional economic impacts beyond the company.</p> <p>www.ontario.ca/southwesternfund www.ontario.ca/page/eastern-ontario-development-fund</p>
FedDev	Business Scale Up and Productivity	<p>Assists existing southern Ontario businesses to adopt new technologies that have the potential to improve productivity and expand their operations.</p> <p>Loans from \$500K to \$10M for new technologies, processes and related skills, business/market development and expansion, facilities improvement and expansion – up to 35% repayable contribution. 0% interest, flexible repayment terms.</p> <p>http://www.feddevontario.gc.ca/eic/site/723.nsf/eng/02466.html?OpenDocument</p>
Community Futures Development Corp.	Community Futures Development Corp.	<p>Community based, not-for-profit organizations encouraging entrepreneurship and economic opportunities. Provides loans to small businesses in rural communities up to \$250,000 for equipment, inventory, working capital, etc.</p> <p>https://www.cfontario.ca/index.php/public-information</p>
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)	Canada Small Business Financing Program	<p>Loan available from any chartered bank for companies with less than \$10 M in revenues for capital acquisition. Up to \$350 K (\$1M for real estate) at prime + 3% +2% registration fee.</p> <p>www.ic.gc.ca/csbfp</p>
FedDev Ontario	Southern Ontario Fund for Investment in Innovation	<p>Loans of \$150,000 to \$500,000 are available to support such growth activities as late stage commercialization, new product or service development new applications or market, or development or implementation of new processes or technologies.</p> <p>http://www.sofii.ca/</p>



Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
	(SOFII)	
Futurpreneur Canada	Futurpreneur	<p>Loan of \$20,000 to start business for individuals age 18 to 39. Those who qualify can also apply for an additional \$40,000 through the Futurpreneur-BDC Start-Up Financing Program. http://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/resources/</p> <p>Mentors provide business advice, as well as support and encouragement, to help young entrepreneurs remain focused on what is important for the success of their business. Find out more about being hand-matched with a Futurpreneur Canada mentor or about volunteering as a Futurpreneur Canada mentor. http://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/mentoring/</p>
MEDJCT	Summer Company	<p>Provides full-time students ages 15-29 an opportunity to start and run a summer business. Awards of up to \$3,000. https://www.ontario.ca/page/start-summer-company-students</p>
MEDJCT	Starter Company	<p>Provides young people, ages 18-29, with the resources and knowledge they need to start and grow their business. Candidates may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 to put towards their business. https://www.ontario.ca/page/small-business-advice-support-services-regulations</p>
Fed Dev	Community Economic Development and Diversification	<p>No interest, repayable contributions from \$250,000 up to \$5 million per project for incorporated businesses, including Indigenous businesses. Non-repayable contributions from \$250,000 up to \$5 million per project for not-for-profit organizations.</p> <p>Funding is available to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance business attraction, investment, retention and employment opportunities in southern Ontario communities. Develop and expand collaborative efforts that strengthen regional competitiveness. Support regional businesses, hubs and communities with the goal of economic diversification, integration and transformation.



Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
		<p>Examples of projects include:</p> <p>Creating financing opportunities to reduce risk and enable businesses to make investments in innovative technologies.</p> <p>Integrating local businesses into national or global supply chains.</p> <p>https://www.feddevontario.gc.ca/eic/site/723.nsf/eng/02475.html?OpenDocument</p>
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)	Strategic Innovation Fund	<p>Five Streams - Stream 2 involves business expansion. Stream 3 is for attraction of large investment. Focus is on larger projects (over \$10 million in requested contribution)</p> <p>http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/125.nsf/eng/home</p>
Global Affairs Canada	CanExport	<p>Up to \$75,000 in funding to cover up to 75% of your international market development activities. Canadian small and medium may choose up to (5) export markets to target, where your company has no or minimal business.</p> <p>https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/funding-financement/canexport/sme-pme/index.aspx?lang=eng</p>
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	AgrilInnovate Program	<p>A repayable contribution of 50 percent of total eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10 million for projects that aim to accelerate the commercialization, adoption and/or demonstration of innovative products, technologies, processes or services that increase agri-sector competitiveness and sustainability. In order to be eligible for funding, applicants must clearly illustrate how proposed projects will commercialize/adopt/demonstrate an innovation new to the sector or country. Expenses can include:</p> <p>Expansion or modernization of a facility or site to demonstrate, commercialize or adopt an innovative agricultural, agri-food or agri-based product, technology, process or service;</p> <p>Purchase and installation of equipment;</p> <p>Training and development of staff necessary for the successful completion of the project; and/or,</p> <p>Marketing activities provided they form a minor component of a project. Projects solely involving the</p>



Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
		<p>development or implementation of marketing plans are not eligible.</p> <p>https://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/agricultural-programs-and-services/agriinnovate-program/?id=1515682916298</p>
<p>Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry</p>	<p>Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program (FSIIP)</p>	<p>Support is available for projects with at least \$3 million in eligible costs undertaken by for-profit manufacturers and processors of wood and forest biomass across Ontario, including saw mills, pulp and paper mills, secondary wood manufacturers and bio-economy projects. Funding support of up to 30% of eligible costs in the form of a performance-based loan (of which, up to 50% may be forgivable). Grants of up to 15% of eligible costs may be considered in exceptional situations at the discretion of the province.</p> <p>https://www.ontario.ca/page/forestry-sector-investment-innovation-program?_ga=2.177276007.354775256.1575041769-1215655203.1533664409</p>
<p>IESO</p>	<p>Save on Energy Program</p>	<p>Get up to \$2,000 in incentives towards eligible energy-efficient lighting upgrades with the Small Business Lighting program.</p> <p>Energy efficient retrofit incentives are available through the Retrofit Program.</p> <p>https://saveonenergy.ca/</p>
<p>Natural Resources Canada</p>	<p>NRCan</p>	<p>Financial assistance is available to help fund your industrial facility's energy management project. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) will provide financial assistance of up to 50% of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$40,000.</p> <p>The following types of projects may be eligible for assistance:</p> <p>ISO 50001 Energy Management Systems Standard projects</p> <p>Energy Management Information Systems (EMIS) projects</p> <p>Process Integration (PI) and Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) studies</p> <p>https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/industry/financial-assistance/5387</p>
<p>Angel Investors</p>	<p>Angel Investors</p>	<p>A community of professionals and industry leaders investing in innovative start-ups and providing</p>



Min./Agency	Program	Purpose
Ontario	Ontario	mentorship to promising entrepreneurs. A number of localized chapters exist. https://www.angelinvestorsontario.ca/