



Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie
Commission de planification de la main-d'œuvre de Grand Erie

News Release

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NEW STUDIES HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

Brantford (July 15, 2011) – Today's farmers face many tough challenges to run their businesses: red tape, finding workers, limited profits and finding new markets.

Those are some of the key findings in five new studies that take an in-depth look at the state of farming in Brant, Norfolk, Elgin, Oxford and Middlesex counties.

A separate Agriculture and Labour Force Analysis Study has been published for each county by the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie and the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board, with funding from the Sand Plains Community Development Fund.

"Agriculture is a backbone of each of our counties," Jill Halyk, executive director of the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie, said. Yet, the industry's issues and labour force challenges are often overlooked, she said. The studies are meant to fill that information gap.

Norfolk Mayor Dennis Travale said the reports "bring to life the importance of agriculture in Canada and Southern Ontario." Travale added the reports contain data that can be used to help build the economy of the Sand Plains region.

Recommendations in the reports include:

- Develop strategies to make it easier for more people to enter farming;
- Promote farming as a career choice for young people and newcomers;
- Provide training opportunities so farmers can learn new skills to run their business;
- Build on opportunities for new commodities, such as growing Asian vegetables, medicinal plants, spices and ingredients for natural health products;
- And help farmers produce energy on their farms to reduce costs.

Another key area identified by farmers was that government red tape was restricting them from growing their business. "Red tape was the No. 1 issue that we heard from everyone we talked to," said Halyk.

The studies are based on surveys with area farmers, agriculture-related companies and others, along with detailed research.

The two workforce planning boards are among 25 non-profit organizations in Ontario that play a leadership role in labour force planning.

Copies of the reports from each county are available from the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie's website www.workforceplanningboard.org or the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board's website www.workforcedevelopment.ca .

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