

A UNITED VOICE FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Economic Development Corporation of North Simcoe



The EDCNS board of directors includes representatives from Midland, Penetanguishene, Tay and Tiny. Board members include Chris McLaughlin (left), general manager of the North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corporation; Roy Ellis, board vice-chair; EDCNS economic development director Sharon Vegh; Tay Township Mayor Scott Warnock; and Midland councillor Glen Canning.
Ian Burns/Metroland

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JENNIFER HARKER
Special

Focusing on economic prosperity with one united voice to give north Simcoe municipalities a competitive advantage when potential businesses come calling.

That is the mission of the Economic Development Corporation of North Simcoe (EDCNS).

Incorporated in 2014, the organization’s 11-member board of directors includes representatives from Midland, Penetanguishene, Tay and Tiny. Its mission is to promote and foster balanced, sustainable economic growth in north Simcoe, with a focus on the four economic pillars of agriculture, health care, advanced manufacturing and tourism.

While there are other contributing sectors, including retail and information technology, the four mayors who initiated EDCNS selected these as the primary focus to develop and grow the local economy.

“Manufacturing is the largest employer in the area with 66 employers and a total of 105 manufacturers with over 3,600 jobs,” said economic development officer Sharon Vegh.

Although EDCNS rents space from the North Simcoe Community Futures Development Corporation on Fourth Street in Midland, it is a separate, not-for-profit organization funded by the municipalities and the County of Simcoe to drive investment in the area and to support, attract, develop and grow new businesses.

“Our focus is to create economic prosperity, sustainably, in north Simcoe’s four municipalities,” Vegh said. “Our main activity is working on developing a funnel of prospects, with the objective to encourage business investment in north Simcoe.”

She works with real estate brokers to ensure an up-to-date inventory of properties suitable for industrial, commercial and institutional use. Zoning bylaw changes need to be

handled by individual businesses, but Vegh said all four planning departments are very co-operative.

“The Town of Midland has recently adopted business-friendly regulations for home-based businesses,” she noted.

Although the move doesn’t advance business investment directly, it is just one example of creating a climate that explores and embraces every opportunity.

EDCNS has produced marketing tools including a website, videos and a brochure highlighting the high-tech manufacturing sector. It has also organized two prosperity summits and manufacturing roundtables to encourage co-operation moving forward.

Where others see roadblocks, Vegh sees opportunities.

“You have to hit bumps to be able to make change and work to your goals,” she said. “A challenge is an opportunity



The Economic Development Corporation of North Simcoe (EDCNS) gathers representatives to promote and foster economic growth across the region. Here, EDCNS vice-chair Roy Ellis (left) addresses the 2015 prosperity summit, joined on the stage by the mayors of the four local municipalities. Submitted photo

to me. There are no roadblocks here. Everyone's goal is to advance the local economy."

She said it is an unusual situation to work with multiple municipalities, but it is an effective relationship.

"It is amazing that they are so receptive, so dynamic. If there is a new business in one area, it benefits all four. We all reap the rewards when we work together. Every resident has a role to play. Really, there are 50,000 people in economic development here, and support from everyone is what makes us successful."

EDCNS is also helping ensure the existence of a skilled labour force. Vegh said they strive to support the County of Simcoe's work with manufacturers and educators like Georgian College, Lakehead University and the Simcoe County District School Board on skilled-trades development.

EDCNS welcomed more than 100 attendees at its second prosperity summit in June, which featured Magna's John O'Hara. Before the summit, Vegh contacted more than 700 manufacturers.

"I invite them to attend, make them

aware of us, aware of who is in the area, and encourage them to speak with us about opportunities here," said Vegh.

Some of the organization's other successes include creating North Simcoe Tourism, supporting the upcoming agricultural expo with funding and funding applications, and continuing to showcase north Simcoe to potential companies.