COMMUNICATION 130193

Received from   Amanda Charania, Communications Coordinator
Addressed to   Committee of the Whole
Date   October 22nd, 2019
Topic   Business Retention + Expansion Update

SUMMARY:

In early 2019, Carleton Place participated in a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Program led by the County and Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation with support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. 134 businesses in Lanark County were interviewed, 19 of those interviewed were from Carleton Place. The program was intended to provide municipalities with data that would give an overview of the current business climate in relation to business needs and priorities. Businesses interviewed were connected with relevant resources and support programs to address any immediate concerns.

Valley Heartland Staff has completed the exercise and presented their final report to the County's Economic Development Committee. Municipalities were provided with an individual report which summarized the results from businesses surveyed within their respective community. While the individual report provides an interesting insight into the Carleton Place business climate, to get an accurate perspective on trends, issues and opportunities, the statistically significant sampling provided by the County report should be used.

Some highlights from the County survey include:
- 88% of the businesses surveyed said their general impression of this community as a place of doing business was Good or Excellent
- 65% of businesses surveyed have been operating 11+ years
- The top five (5) sectors ranked are healthcare, construction, real estate, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing

Some interesting highlights from the Carleton Place survey include:
- 45% of respondents identified their market as local, 53% regional
- 37% said Carleton Place was an excellent place to do business, 42% said good
- Factors of doing business in the community that rated well were availability of space for rent or lease, regional/provincial roads and highways, local roads and streets, quality of life, availability of healthy and medical services, support from other businesses and residents, cell and internet service
- When asked to rate their level of satisfaction with police and fire services, parks and open spaces, garbage and recycling collection, all were rated well
- Twelve (12) businesses indicated they intended to expand within the next 18 months which would require an increase in workforce and floor space
- 79% of businesses interviewed said they project their sales to increase in the next year

- When asked if they would be interested in working cooperatively with other local businesses, the opportunities most desired were in relation to joint marketing, joint training and networking and information sharing
- During the past three (3) years, 53% of businesses indicated the number of people they employ increased.

Common themes in the BR+E surveys include:

1) Business Engagement
   o Networking & relationship building
   o Business to business opportunities
   o Business to service providers
2) Workforce Development
   o Availability of qualified workers
   o Training needs
   o Recruitment and hiring assistance
3) Business Friendly Climate
   o Centralized site for business needs
   o Positive local environment for business attraction, retention and expansion

From this, five (5) actions at the County level are in development to move the process forward as follows:
1) Develop a Lanark County Information Portal
2) Form a regional business service provider alliance
3) Within the alliance, create working groups for workforce development and training strategies
4) Host County-wide business networking events
5) Develop a municipal tool kit and workshops for municipalities and partners

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
THAT Council receive the Business Retention + Expansion report from the Communications Coordinator dated October 22, 2019 as information; and

THAT Staff continue working with the County to develop and implement priority items resulting from the program.