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1.0 Morris-Turnberry BR+E Project Team

Leadership Committee:
- Municipal Rep: Paul Gowing, Mayor
- Municipal Rep: Jason Breckenridge, Deputy Mayor
- Municipal Rep: Nancy Michie, Administrator Clerk-Treasurer
- Community Rep: Jeff McGavin
- Community Rep: Henry VanHeesch
- County Rep: Douglas Barill, Business Development Coordinator
- County Rep: Carol Leeming, Planner

Project Consultants:
- Gayl Creutzberg
- Kerri Schuettel

OMAFRA Representative: Jane Muegge, Rural Development Coordinator

In partnership with:
2.0 Summary of the BR+E Process

The Morris-Turnberry Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Project was completed, in partnership with the Huron County Economic Development Partnership, to assess the local environment for doing business.

Surveys were conducted on thirty businesses in the municipality, representing a cross-section of the following business sectors: Manufacturing, Tourism, Agriculture, Retail and Service.

The information collected from the surveys was compiled and offers useful information regarding opportunities and issues in the community. It also provides understanding for the municipality to support business.

The Business Retention and Expansion Project has opened dialogue between the municipality and the businesses. Preliminary priorities have been identified.

Disclaimer

Morris-Turnberry is a unique municipality in that it does not have a core commercial area or “downtown.” Morris-Turnberry borders with communities including Belgrave, Belmore, Blyth, Brussels, Walton and Wingham, but none are wholly situated within the municipality. Bluevale, the only hamlet completely within the municipal boundaries, does not have a concentration of business that represents a core commercial area. As a result, some of the responses to the survey - those relative to the community and not the municipality - are identified, where possible, to ensure accuracy of information and prevent misleading information.

This report reflects the main results from the questions asked in the survey. Data is reported as the percentage of businesses surveyed, out of 30 businesses total. Data used to compile this summary report is available for review at the Municipal Office.
3.0 Survey Results

3.1 BUSINESS DEMOGRAPHICS
A wide range of businesses exist in Morris-Turnberry. Of the businesses surveyed:

- 70% were corporations;
- 10% were sole proprietorships;
- 10% were partnerships;
- 3% were non-profit corporations;
- 3% were limited liability corporations; and
- 3% were co-operatives.

A small percentage of the businesses surveyed are relatively new to the municipality. The majority of businesses have been in operation for more than 10 years.

Figure 1: Years of operation in the community

The businesses surveyed employ a total of 550 employees, 65% are permanent full-time positions and 23% are seasonal positions.

- 57% have more than 10 employees
- Two of the businesses surveyed are considered major industries in the municipality, employing between 100-299 employees each
3.2 BUSINESS CLIMATE

63% of respondents rated the business climate in Morris-Turnberry as a good to excellent place to do business while 23% rated the business climate as fair.

76% of respondents have maintained a positive attitude about doing business in the community in the past three years. The expansion and growth through new development (i.e. Pioneer and the Moorsom property) and a healthy farm economy were contributing factors identified.

Level of Satisfaction for Services Provided by Community Organizations and Local Government

Highest level of satisfaction

- Snow removal
- Street repairs
- Public utilities
- Medical and health facilities*
- Recreational facilities*
- Garbage removal

*Referring to facilities in surrounding communities in Belgrave, Blyth, Brussels and Wingham.

Lowest level of satisfaction

- Schools
  - Displeased with school closures
- Business Improvement Area or Business Tourist Area
  - No existing business network in the municipality
  - Only able to tap into surrounding BIAs via associate memberships (with no voting privileges)
- Fire prevention and services
  - A source of discontent due to current unresolved issues between Morris-Turnberry and North Huron
**Barriers to Businesses**

The following were identified as the **top barriers** to existing and new businesses in Morris-Turnberry (in order of highest to lowest):

- Availability of skilled labour
- Cost of utilities*
- Lack of proactive new business recruitment
- Approval processes (government – all levels)
- Availability of unskilled labour
- Business insurance

*Due to high costs of utilities, alternative energy sources including solar, ground source, hot water heating, water power, natural gas and alternative energy lighting sources, are of interest and being explored by half of the businesses.

96% of the business’ surveyed responded that access to financial planning expertise or lending sources is not a barrier to business’ growth in Morris-Turnberry. Barriers identified as affecting growth included customer service, access to government funding, and computer/technology.

**Figure 2: Specific barriers relating to information technology and internet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
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<td>Access</td>
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<td>Cost</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Market development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to learn and stay current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble shooting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Specify)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Companies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 (20 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (17 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (8 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (11 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (5 %)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (9 %)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (9 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (11 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (6 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 FUTURE PLANS

Figure 3: Plans for the business over the next three years

Which would best describe your plans for your business over the next 3 years?

- Expanding: 14 (47%)
- Downsizing: 1 (3%)
- Closing: 1 (3%)
- Remaining the same: 14 (47%)

Number of Companies

Changing marketplace (increase or decrease) and business profits are the leading factors affecting business’ future plans over the next three years.

One business owner is nearing retirement and the business may close in the next three years if a buyer is not found.

Of the 14 businesses that will expand:

- 79% will require an increase in workforce
- 71% will increase their product line(s)
- 93% will require an investment in equipment/technology
- 79% will require process improvements
- 86% have a demand for skills training

Only 20% of businesses knew of complimentary business development opportunities that would impact their own business in a positive way. Types of business identified included small manufacturers, service providers and suppliers, food processor and distributors. A popular response indicated that any new business to the area would benefit other businesses in Morris-Turnberry.
The following products and services (currently being purchased outside of the area) would be purchased locally if they were available:

- Paper and plastic products for food packaging
- Manufactured goods such as oils, petroleum and after market products
- Internet services
- Local food (encourage more producers)
- Freight
- Linens
- Event management supplies
- Restaurant small wares and supplies

**Business Collaboration**

There is not a local Chamber of Commerce or business association in Morris-Turnberry; however, many of the businesses surveyed recognize value in working together with other businesses in cases where it would be equally beneficial.

Figure 4: Opportunities for business collaboration

Are you interested in working co-operatively with other businesses in your community to pursue any of the following?

- Joint product purchasing
- Joint marketing
- Joint training
- Collaboration/networking/information sharing
- Service buyer-supplier network
- None
- Other (Specify)

![Bar chart showing interest levels for different types of collaboration among businesses.](chart.png)
3.4 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Figure 5: Annual sales

If you choose to keep your specific sales figure private, would you be willing to provide an approximate figure from the ranges below?

- No: 5 (17%)
- $100,000 - $250,000: 5 (17%)
- $250,000 - $500,000: 4 (14%)
- $500,000 - $1,000,000: 1 (3%)
- $1,000,000 - $5,000,000: 5 (17%)
- Over $5,000,000: 9 (31%)

Number of Companies

Figure 6: Projected sales growth

What is the projected sales growth in the next year at this company?

- 0%: 3 (10%)
- 1-9%: 19 (63%)
- 10-24%: 5 (17%)
- 25-49%: 1 (3%)
- Declining: 1 (3%)
The majority of businesses expect growth to occur in the next year as a result of increasing sales (23%), introducing new products and services (18%) and increase in market share (14%). In turn, 93% of the businesses surveyed anticipate the number of employees to remain the same or increase. Twelve businesses expect to increase for a combined total of 50 new employees in the next three years. Businesses who responded with no project growth cited seasonal business, low staff turnover, pending succession and pending retirement as factors.

3.5 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

80% of the business owners ranked jobs within their company as highly skilled (requiring specialized training and credentials) and almost half of the businesses surveyed have had difficulties with hiring. Hiring difficulties are managed in a variety of ways including hiring someone who is not qualified (18%) or improving salary and benefits to make positions more attractive (18%). Additional use of overtime or extending shifts for existing staff (15%) or continuing on work as usual with fewer employees (12%) are measures also taken to respond to hiring challenges.

Figure 7: Factors in hiring challenges

- 77% would be interested in participating in co-op student opportunities
- 40% would be interested in participating in an internship program
- 30% would be interested in paid job placement initiatives
With the vast majority of jobs requiring specialized training and credentials, training is important.

Figure 8: Sources of training that meet the needs of employers in the community

Where do your employees receive training, and does this training meet your needs? - (Received training)

- Community College: 9 (14%)
- Distance education: 3 (5%)
- In-house: 29 (45%)
- Customized training: 8 (12%)
- University: 4 (6%)
- Outside of the area (Specify): 2 (3%)
- Other (Specify): 10 (15%)

Figure 9: Barriers to training

- Cost: 11 (16%)
- Awareness of existing training programs: 5 (7%)
- Awareness of training support programs: 2 (3%)
- Relevant training is not offered at local institutions: 9 (13%)
- Distance to training facility: 9 (13%)
- Availability of training locally: 7 (10%)
- Unable to release employees: 3 (4%)
- Losing trained employees to other businesses: 10 (14%)
- Loss of productivity during training period: 13 (19%)
- Other (Specify):
3.6 COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The following businesses were identified as desirable to have in the community (number of responses indicated in bracket):

- Canadian Tire (14)
- Walmart (4)
- TSC (4)
- More retail and specialty items (2)
- Mainstream restaurants like Swiss Chalet or McDonalds (2)
- More fine dining restaurants
- Target
- Giant Tiger
- An additional abattoir
- Independent grocer or Food Basics (2)
- Tim Hortons – to the south end of Morris-Turnberry
- Theatre and bowling alley, entertainment of any kind (2)
- Computer training services, IT services
- Tourism related (2)
- Business that develops or utilizes the river/trail system
- Home Depot (anywhere closer)
- Bulk food store (to draw Mennonites)
- Another Inn or Motel or Hotel

Figure 10: Desired assistance for businesses from local government

What assistance, if any, could the community, local government or economic development organizations give to support your business?
100% of businesses responded that the area would benefit from marketing and promotion. Other general suggestions included: supporting local businesses, providing access to funding, improving the facades and exteriors of businesses, maintaining a business directory, and hosting training workshops on management, hospitality and customer service.

Figure 11: Community’s position to attract employees under thirty

On a scale of 1-5, where 1 means poorly and 5 means ideally, how well positioned is your community to retain and attract employees under the age of thirty?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Companies</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16 (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were mixed responses on how well positioned Morris-Turnberry is to retain and attract employees under the age of thirty. Negative characteristics included lack of professional or high paying jobs, distance to city centres (too far), lack of post-secondary education available locally, and shortage of entertainment. Positive characteristics included good health services, recreation and Churches, organizations that value their employees and treat them well, and cheaper labour costs to run a business.

The general consensus of the businesses surveyed indicates that Morris-Turnberry is currently not well positioned to attract new immigrant employees to the community. 73% rated the municipality as fair to poor while 13% did not respond to the question. Factors included not having enough businesses or available work, few visible minorities, difficult transitioning into small rural communities, occurrences of racism and stereotyping, and no proactive recruitment.
3.7 COMMUNITY ADVANTAGES

The following comments are perceived as advantages of doing business in Morris-Turnberry:

Good place to raise a family
Transportation infrastructure is in place
Fair tax rates
Supportive local government
Quality of life
Sense of community
Healthy agriculture
Strong work ethic
Workforce, access to labour market
Location – proximity to natural resources, Lake Huron and communities such as Wingham & Blyth
Economic health
Services such as hospital and schools
Not too much competition
Affordable cost of living
Customer service and loyalty
Room to expand
Great environment for business

3.8 COMMUNITY DISADVANTAGES

The following comments are perceived as disadvantages of doing business in Morris-Turnberry:

Escalating taxes
Location – too far from products and services and Hwy 400 corridors
Unseasoned Councillors
Low population density
Lack of communication and poor relationship between Morris-Turnberry and North Huron
Difficulty understanding local bylaws
Ease of getting appropriate permits such as septic and building
Limited utilities and services in some areas
Lack of serviced industrial land
Migration of unemployed people coming to small towns and not wanting to work
Loss of manufacturing jobs and industry
Freight costs
Not many people to draw from (workforce)
Lack of other businesses to draw people, especially big box stores
Insurance costs
Winter/climate
No public transit
Lack of entertainment options
Closing of schools
Need more paved roads
Competition from nearby centres – Listowel, Walkerton, Hanover, Goderich & from online shopping
Lack of opportunity for youth or young families to stay in the area
Poor marketing of the area - no one knows what Morris-Turnberry has to offer
4.0 Preliminary Recommendations

4.1 MARKET MORRIS-TURNBERRY

Morris-Turnberry is a unique municipality that provides a desirable business climate for a wide variety of businesses, especially agriculture and service sector businesses. The need for promotion and marketing was a common theme identified by the business surveyed. A significant number of businesses surveyed felt strongly about the need to create more awareness of the businesses that exist in Morris-Turnberry and the need to promote the areas attractions to the local community.

Actions:

1. Develop marketing and branding strategies to encourage ongoing promotion of the municipality. Ensure promotional materials used for marketing, such as brochures, maps, and websites, contain accurate and current information. Refresh marketing materials that are not effective in showcasing the Municipality’s best assets. Target audiences are residents, prospective businesses and tourists.

2. Use the Municipality’s existing website – [www.morristurnberry.ca](http://www.morristurnberry.ca) - as a vehicle to market Morris-Turnberry. Ensure up-to-date and relevant information is easily accessible for prospective residents, entrepreneurs and visitors. Identify opportunities to link to existing websites that support business development in the area, including but not limited to the County of Huron’s [www.investinhuron.ca](http://www.investinhuron.ca) and [www.shopinhuron.ca](http://www.shopinhuron.ca).
4.2 SUPPORT BUSINESS IN MORRIS-TURNBERRY

The Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Project is the first of any kind to take place in Morris-Turnberry. Businesses that were surveyed responded well to the outreach, signifying that additional ways to engage and support businesses in the municipality should be explored and would be mutually beneficial to the Municipality and businesses.

Actions:

1. Update and maintain the business directory of all businesses within the municipality. A business directory, which should be available in hard copy and online, identifies the businesses serving the community and will aid as a marketing tool to promote the area (supporting 4.1 Market Morris-Turnberry also). Set up a communication process to filter information to the County of Huron’s database of business information.

2. Create opportunities for business networking. Networking allows businesses to promote their products and services and will expand the knowledge of the types of businesses that operate in Morris-Turnberry. A forum for business networking will also provide a means for open and ongoing communication between the municipality and businesses.

3. Identify and promote local resources that aid in business development and provide education and training opportunities. Partner with organizations such as County of Huron, Huron Small Business Enterprise Centre, Huron Business Development Corporation, Centres for Employment and Learning, Four County Labour Market Planning Board, etc. to gain an understanding of existing resources. More information and resources pertaining to the follow areas was requested by the businesses surveyed: municipal bylaws, policies and procedures (pertaining to building), customer service and hospitality, business financing (start up) and e-marketing/web/computer training.

4. Establish a committee to implement the actions identified in the Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Project Report. The committee will encourage ongoing business retention and expansion and economic development activities in the Municipality.
4.3 FOSTER COLLABORATION WITH NEIGHBOURING MUNICIPALITIES

Business retention and attraction is crucial to support a healthy economy and future growth. Business development in the area benefits all local businesses and residents, providing jobs and making the area more attractive. Businesses that were surveyed responded that unresolved issues and lack of communication between municipalities is harmful to their business and draws negative attention to the entire area, making it less attractive for potential businesses and residents. Communication and collaboration with all municipalities surrounding Morris-Turnberry will ensure that any and all business and economic development opportunities can be capitalized on.

Actions:

1. Encourage two-way communication regarding business and economic development with Central Huron, Huron East, Howick, and North Huron (Huron County) and South Bruce and Huron Kinloss (Bruce County). Supplying neighbouring municipalities with information on the Morris-Turnberry Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Project and a copy of the report will proactively encourage dialogue about business and economic development.

2. Coordinate a meeting or roundtable with appropriate municipal staff and/or Council members of all surrounding municipalities to discuss business development opportunities and challenges. Meeting on a regular basis will help develop and nurture relationships amongst key economic development leaders in each municipality and encourage ongoing communication.
5.0 Map of Morris-Turnberry

The Municipality of Morris-Turnberry