

# North Dundas plans economic road map

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North Dundas has hired an economic development officer. His name is Rob Hunter.

The position was created after voters during the last municipal election clearly expressed their concern over where the township was headed.

Planning economic development is a team effort and a full-time team member makes all the difference, said North Dundas mayor Eric Duncan.

The township and the North Dundas Chamber of Commerce came together on Wednesday evening, July 6, to host the first annual Wine and Cheese Networking Event at Winchelsea. The gathering was the perfect time and place to introduce Hunter as the township's new economic development officer.

"One of the reason I accepted the job was because there is so much opportunity here," said Hunter after he was informally introduced to the hundred or so people at Winchelsea by councillor Allan Armstrong.

Hunter explained he hopes to hit the ground running. Just a few days into his new job, he has already started to ask questions and listen to what business has to say.

"The people here are very friendly," said Hunter. He said the township is in a very good position with strong transportation ties. "There are the main rail lines as well as Hwy 416 and 401," he explained.

The population of North Dundas has increased over the past 25 years an annual average of 0.74 per cent. In 2011, the population stands at 11,683.

New housing starts are expected to increase over the next ten years. A total of 33 new commercial businesses and additions to existing businesses have been built in North Dundas since 2001. The value of that growth has been put at around \$8.8 million.

Currently there is enough commercial land available to generate more growth in North Dundas. Low interest rates and a healthy economy all contribute to a bright future.

"This is a very exciting time for the township,"



J. Morin Photo/Advance Staff

Rob Hunter, left, is the new economic development officer in North Dundas. In this photo he is chatting with Bill Smirle, vice chair of the South Nation Conservation and Jackie Pemberton, president of the Dundas Federation of Agriculture.



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Rob Hunter chats with provincial NDP candidate Elaine MacDonald.

Duncan said. "The council and I are looking forward to working with Rob."

Owen Shortt, president of the North Dundas Chamber of Commerce, is happy with the new economic development officer position.

"We complained that we needed development," he said. "Needless to say we are thrilled."

We have not been able to look at our weaknesses or

explored our strengths and our opportunities.

With Rob here, that can happen."

There was praise for the township and the Chamber for hosting the event. Among the many people on hand that evening were several from Cornwall representing the United Counties of SD&G as well as groups representing tourism and agriculture.

Elaine MacDonald, the provincial NDP candidate, felt the event was a good one. "The prosperity of all depends on the prosperity of individual groups," she commented. "We all need the mutual support."

Hunter was born and raised in Brockville, and married his wife Joyce who was raised in Lancaster. They have four children: Tabitha 22, Cindy 19, Amanda 13 and Kevin 11.

Prior to his employment with the Township of North Dundas, Rob was employed as the Executive Director of the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), which represented over 200 Business Improvement Areas & Downtowns across the province from Cornwall to Thunder Bay. He also served as the executive director of the Downtown Brockville BIA from 2003 to 2009. Working for OBIAA gave Hunter insight into current municipal trends, best practices and creative economic development projects from across the province.

In 2004, Hunter received his Certified Municipal Manager (CMM) accreditation designation from the Ontario Municipal Management Institute. He is an avid sports lover, and is a carded Baseball Canada umpire as well as a certified Advanced Open Water scuba diver.