

Seaforth's Three R's – Recover, Recapture and Regain

Over one million small businesses operate in Canada, comprising 98% of all enterprise in the country, and these ventures, with 1 to 99 staff members, employ 70% of workers nationally. To say they are the backbone of the economies of cities, towns and villages is an understatement.

The Town of Seaforth, located in the Municipality of Huron East in Ontario, has been selected for a pilot project designed as a revitalization initiative, which will involve the community's small businesses, its citizens, as well as municipal and federal support.

A creative proposal, submitted by Fight Unemployment will soon be under way, with backing from Huron East's Economic Development Department and Community Futures Huron.

Given its goals of shoring up local businesses, stimulating the economy, and creating effective partnerships, the initiative represents *Seaforth's Three R's* — **R**ecover, **R**ecapture and **R**egain: Recover from the pandemic downturn, Recapture community drive and enthusiasm, and Regain all that's special about Seaforth.

“I was extremely interested in this progressive and very timely project when colleagues Janette MacDonald and Greg Plante, of Fight Unemployment, approached me a few months ago,” says Jan Hawley, Huron East's Economic Development Officer. “The programme is not only forward-thinking and do-able, it involves business owners and residents alike in its

objective to stimulate and strengthen a community at several levels. To add to this, its principles align themselves nicely with the work presently underway in Huron East. I have every confidence that the partnerships fostered during this undertaking will pay dividends, not only for our community, but others throughout Huron County.”

Paul Nichol, Manager of Community Futures Huron, had the same reaction. “The submission included market analysis and business management as well as community engagement,” he says. “The addition of these facets of support to main street small businesses, many of which are receiving Community Futures emergency loans just now, could very well impact their future viability. The revitalization spin-offs will be considerable.”

“Triaging an economy with a multi-pronged approach has proven effective,” reports Janette MacDonald. “Assisting entrepreneurs with marketing strategy, business analysis and publicity, while also encouraging citizens to shift their spending to target home-grown businesses, just a bit more, will result in growth, retention and a singular pride of place that is vital to a vibrant recovery. In addition, when businesses support each other, together with the local population, the rising tide will float all boats.”

The soon-to-be rolled out programme presents an opportunity for Seaforth's citizens to participate in the future of their community as well as its present ventures. Investing in current businesses ensures they'll be retained down the line, with the added bonus of maintaining employment.

Businesses and their customers or clients create an effective and powerful partnership. Patrons support businesses. Businesses contribute to the community via taxes, through their spending, and by attracting non-resident visitors, as well as through their employees, who generally live and shop locally.

The circle is self-perpetuating—and it is not small. Each cog in the wheel contributes to community propulsion.

Watch for upcoming details on “The 10% Challenge” and “Shift Your Spend”, together with particulars of the support to be extended to Seaforth businesses.

The 2020 pandemic has created difficulties, and in some cases, possibilities, never experienced before. Rising to these challenges will require a collective effort. The tools to help with this will soon be at hand, not only for Seaforth and Huron East, but also throughout Huron County.