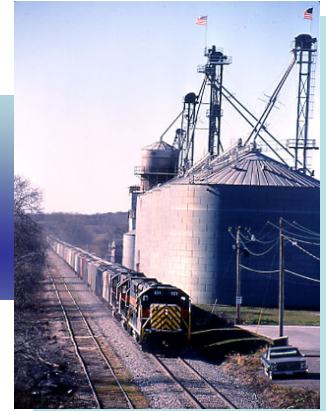


Huron and Perth Community Mapping Report

An Assessment of Future Training Demands



Canada

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A Community Futures Development Corporation



PERTH
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Corporation of the
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Executive Summary

In 2004, the Huron Business Development Corporation in partnership with numerous local community organizations including the Avon Maitland District School Board, Fanshawe College, the Bruce Grey Huron Perth Georgian Triangle Training Board and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada prepared a request for proposal for a community mapping exercise. The project was made possible with funding support from the Office of Learning Technologies, the Community Learning Networks divisions of Human Resources Skills Development Canada. The study area was limited to the Southwestern Ontario counties of Huron and Perth where there is a population of 133 400 people mostly dispersed in non-urban areas.

The main goal of the research was to assess the labour market in Huron and Perth County, to map the community assets related to training and to assess the demand for distance learning courses as a tool for labour market development. One main objective was to assess whether the establishment of an on-line learning network for employment training would be viable. Another objective was to outline the overall employment skills present and needed in the area. To do this, the project was divided into 4 main sections, which were to be conducted over the course of 2 phases. In Phase I, high school students and post-secondary training organizations were surveyed. In Phase II, focus groups were conducted with local employers and employees were surveyed over the phone.

The high school survey was designed to assist in assessing the work and computer skills of students, which represent the future labour force in the area. The training organization survey gathered information on the available training opportunities, both on-line and otherwise, as well as the organizations' interest in participating in an on-line learning network. In Phase II, the employees in the area were surveyed regarding their skills, and the employers were asked to indicate the types of skills they desire in their employees.

Training Organization Survey

The chief undertaking of the training organization survey in Phase I of this project was to assess the current trends, attitudes, and services of local training and education organizations in Huron and Perth counties as well as their attitudes towards on-line learning.

This survey was administered to the training organizations in Huron and Perth counties over the phone. The survey included questions pertaining to the sector and length of service of the training organization, as well as their financial providers and other partners involved with their organization. Information on the different promotional methods that are used by the training organizations was also collected. The survey also included the methods used by the training organizations to conduct program evaluations and client need assessments as well as the reasons why clients are enrolling in their services. The on-line learning initiatives and experiences of the organizations surveyed were also

included in the survey. In order to create an on-line learning network, understanding the need and the potential interest in helping develop and deliver such an initiative is key.

Of the 25 training organizations called, 18 participated in the survey. Of the organizations surveyed, 78% were not-for-profit and 22% were for-profit. According to the survey results, the not-for-profit organizations have been established longer and have provided the largest contribution to training opportunities in Huron and Perth counties. The majority (64%) of the not-for-profit organizations have been serving Huron and Perth counties for over 10 years. All the for-profit organizations surveyed have been in service for 5 years or less. Given that all the for-profit organizations are relatively young in terms of their presence in the counties, it is suggested that the private sector is beginning to realize that Huron and Perth counties are in need of training opportunities and are taking advantage of such demand.

On average, the not-for-profit organizations listed more partners than the for-profit based ones, which can be explained by the longer length of time the not-for-profit organizations have been serving the two counties. Of the not-for-profit organizations surveyed, 71% reported that the Ontario Provincial Government is one of their major sources of funding through such ministries as the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Federal Government, through departments such as Human Resource Skills Development Canada and Industry Canada was also considered to be a major source of funding by 43% of the not-for-profit organizations surveyed.

Various methods of promotion were reported by the training organizations consisting of word of mouth at 28%, website 33%, and television, radio, newspapers, and posters were used by 78% of respondents.

Of the organizations surveyed 83% conduct program evaluations and 72% have conducted client needs assessments. Some of the reported reasons for client enrolment included post secondary education or skill training and upgrading (67%), job search assistance (33%), and business start up assistance (17%).

Of the organizations surveyed, 39% reported that they offer some on-line learning programs. The most frequently mentioned perceived barrier to transferring classroom based courses to an on-line learning format was that the nature of the training they provide would be difficult to offer in an on-line learning format; this was reported by 61% of the respondents. They did state however that between 80% and 100% of people who enrol in an on-line learning program stay with it until completion. They were more concerned with enrolment rates than they were with the completion rates of their programs.

And finally, of the training organizations surveyed, 39% said they would be interested in participating as a training partner in a community Internet-based learning network for Huron and Perth while 50% stated that they were interested but would like to have more information.

Next are some selected recommendations from the training organization survey report. The main issue seems to be around awareness and interest.

There is a need to create interest among training organizations in Huron and Perth as well as the Provincial and Federal Government regarding a Huron and Perth on-line learning network. This would mean that there is a need to increase awareness of on-line post secondary education and training opportunities to high school students, employees and employers in Huron and Perth counties.

What is proposed here is that three marketing and education campaigns should be created and directed at high school students, employers and employees of Huron and Perth counties.

- Students should be made aware of on-line learning as an alternative to relocating for post secondary education.
- Employers should be aware of the on-line curriculum as it relates to their sector of the economy. Employers should also be informed of the potential that on-line learning has for their businesses.
- Employees should be made aware of the importance that life long learning has to a successful career and the potential that on-line learning has in meeting their skill upgrading needs and desires.

Consequently, there should be an encouragement of strategic partnerships and the involvement of local businesses, training organizations and the school board in the development and delivery of an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties. To facilitate further monitoring of the needs, efficiency and effectiveness of on-line programs and marketing campaigns, the profiles of students who enrol in the on-line learning courses should be documented in order to better understand enrolment and completion rates. It is important to have an understanding of your clients as well as track change and success. Similarly, program evaluations of students who complete, drop out or fail a course should be conducted in order to modify the course and better meet the needs of students. Evaluations of the students who complete a course could also be conducted by employers (who should be familiar with the curriculum of the course) to rate the applicability and advantages that the course provided to the employees' job.

And finally, the promotion of group enrollment in on-line learning courses should be emphasized to allow greater interpersonal interaction between students, which can facilitate the students' learning.

High School Survey

The high school survey was conducted to assess the skills of the future labour force in the area. Overall, 939 questionnaires were distributed to all grade 12 English classes in all of the 9 public high schools and in the 2 Catholic high schools in Huron and Perth counties. The teachers of selected courses administered the questionnaire during 15 minutes of class time. In total, 750 completed questionnaires were returned and are discussed in this report.

The respondents were between the ages of 17 and 21 with the majority of them (78.7%) being 18 years old. The women represented 54% of the respondents while only 46% were men. The 2001 Canadian Census shows that the population of 15 to 19 years olds is actually evenly divided with a 50.4% and 49.6% distribution between females and males respectively. Therefore, in this study, the women are slightly over represented. However, that 3% overrepresentation is of minimal concern given that 2% of the students did not provide their gender and that the 2001 Census information describes 15 to 19 year-olds, not 17 to 21 year olds.

To get a sense of what types of skills and how well the skills are learned in school, the students were asked to respond on the following: the types of course, the level, and their marks. Regarding the types of courses they take, they mostly took arts, world studies, and technological courses while the business and computer courses were the types of courses where the students had the least number of credits. That low number of credits taken in business or computer studies can be due to the fact that there are overall fewer of those types of courses available. However, with a research agenda aimed at specifically assessing computer skills, the low prevalence of computer credits should be of concern.

The average marks in all their classes and in English, Math and in Science ranged between 71.9% and 75.7%. The women tend to report higher marks by 1 to 3% except in Math where they tend to state that their marks were on average 0.5% lower than men. The students were also asked to provide the level of their English, Math and Science courses; whether they were university, college or workplace preparation course. Those taking university level classes tended to report higher marks than those taking college preparation courses, which, in turn, tended to have higher marks than students taking workplace preparation courses. Such a tendency was also found in a similar study done in the counties of Bruce and Grey in 2004 (Cummings et al., 2004). The one surprise in Huron and Perth is that the students taking workplace preparation Math did not ascribe to the tendencies outlined above. They reported marks averaging around 74.8%, which is almost as high as the university level Math classes at 75.5%, higher than all reported college level classes and higher than all levels of science classes. Such high marks in workplace Math were not found in Bruce and Grey and warrant further consideration.

Next in the questionnaire, the students were asked to provide information regarding their work experiences as volunteers, as co-op students, at home and for-pay. Such information provides useful data on the types of work the students have done and therefore, what types of work skills they have obtained which can be directly translated into work skills in the labour force. They were asked to report on the industry of their employer, their occupation and their reason for such a job. The main point of interest in this information is that women are not employed in the same manner as men. Women tend to work in jobs traditionally reserved for women and for fewer hours than men, especially in the summer time where men increased their work hours and women's hours stayed relatively the

same as throughout the school year. This can have an effect on the students' perception of the job market in the area and hence their plans to stay in the area.

This effect can be seen in the students' future plans for post-secondary education and their plans to stay and work in the county. The differences in gender are also clear in this section. The men are somewhat evenly divided between completing a university, a college or a trade program. The women on the other hand are mostly interested in university and college as only 5% of them are interested in completing a trade program. Consequently, such choices in post-secondary education are linked to the students' plans on staying as most students who plan on doing a trade program (66.3%) plan on staying while only 31.8% of those heading to university plan on staying. The main reasons for leaving revolved around the idea that life would be more exciting elsewhere and that there are no interesting jobs in the area while the reasons to stay centered on the desire to remain close to friends and family and on liking the community.

Changing those perceptions and opinions will not be easy. Students were asked for their sources of information regarding work and education and most responded that their friends, family and neighbours had the most influence on their decisions. The students stated that printed ads, counselors, and teachers had minimal impact on them. Therefore, reaching them means tapping into their social networks.

A final section of the questionnaire focused on assessing the students' Internet and computer skills. Despite the reported low number of completed credits in computer studies, students have good computer skills. This was measured with a variety of direct and indirect questions. The questions ranged from how good they think their skills are to how often and how recently they have completed a task. Whether they mostly completed university level courses or workplace university courses, the students demonstrated enough experience on-line and with computers to be able to complete an on-line training course.

Despite the presence of computer skills, there are some issues with presenting an on-line curriculum to the students. The main issue is that a full one third of them do not have access to high speed Internet. Therefore, any program based on access on-line will have to take that into consideration and reduce the size of web pages, documents, and programs. Another issue, possibly a more problematic one, is that students are not very interested in obtaining training on-line. Ten percent of them do not even know of on-line training opportunities or how they could help them. On the positive side, 51% of them do agree that such programs are useful, and an extra 23% think that they 'might be useful'. It seems as though they are short on information regarding on-line post-secondary training. More information may raise interest in such courses.

Overall, the students demonstrated that their answers were well thought out and consistent. More details on each section of the questionnaire are available in the main report.

Employer Focus Groups

As part of this report, 4 focus groups were conducted during August and September 2005: 2 in each county. In Huron County, 17 employers participated while 9 employers participated in the Perth County discussions. In Huron, the industries represented were manufacturing, health care and social assistance, public administration, educational services, and mining, oil and gas extraction. On the other hand, Perth employers represented the manufacturing, accommodation and food service, agriculture, public administration, accounting and finance, and arts, entertainment, and recreation industries.

The main issues brought forth by the employers were around the education of the labour force. Due to the rural nature of the area, accessing post-secondary education involves travel time and travel expenses. The employers do attempt to provide for those and allow training to be taken during company time; however, few employees take them on their offer unless they really need to obtain the training. Compounded to the costs of accessing training is the fact that there is no guarantee that the investment in education will pay off since there is no guarantee that the employee will stay.

On-line learning is considered a viable and useful options to the issues mentioned above as on-line learning does not require one to travel and can be done whenever is most practical. However, on-line learning is also understood as having its own set of barriers. Namely, the access to high speed Internet and to the necessary technology is an issue. Also, personal learning style preferences, such as the need for social interaction and social support, come into play when learning on-line. For on-line programs to be effective, employers state that they should incorporate technical simulations and interactions. Students should be able to see the consequences of making one decision over another. Overall, the employers are interested in the opportunities offered by on-line learning and are ready to help develop and implement such programs. Their in-depth knowledge of the skills requirements for employment in the region would be useful.

Employers are also interested in the high school curriculum and what high school students learn about the local economy, local businesses, and local career opportunities. They understand that a greater interaction between them and the schools could help facilitate the students' learning about local employment.

Finally employers stated that trades skills and other specific skills were in demand. They add that women should be specifically targeted since they do not participate a lot in trades. Increasing women's participation in trades would increase the available labour force. They also specifically need employees with soft skills such as people skills, customer service, public relations, business management and teamwork skills.

Employee Survey

The employee survey was conducted over August and September 2005 over the phone between the hours of 6 and 9pm. In total, 507 persons completed the questionnaire after making 4 746 telephone calls where 1 831 calls were answered by someone who qualified; 1 321 refused to participate. The participants were equally divided between counties and were divided between genders according to the proportions outlined by Statistics Canada's 2001 Census.

The participants were mostly all employed (92%) and some even had second jobs (17%). Respondents from Huron County were more likely to have a second job as 75% of those who have a second job live there. There are also differences in employment between genders. Women are less often employed on a full-time and on a permanent basis. Women also tended to have changed jobs more recently than men. Overall however, most respondents are satisfied with their job. Of those who did feel they were underemployed, most felt so because they thought their skills and experience were being underutilized.

The respondents were then asked about their current skills. They had to rate them on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 meant 'very poor' and 5 meant 'very good'. They hence rated themselves highest on reading, teamwork and verbal communication skills, among others, and lowest on writing, math, artistic, and computer skills. Women also rated themselves lower on physical hands-on skills.

Next, the participants were asked about their recent training experiences, how they felt about them, and whether they were interested in training through an on-line course. Overall, respondents felt positive about their recent upgrading experience, although it was less so when asked specifically about on-line training experiences. Men tended to be more negative towards on-line training than women. Comments regarding their on-line training experiences varied greatly. Some stated that the course was appropriately interactive and practical while others stated that the course lacked in social interaction, and support. It must be understood here, that personal learning preferences, needs for support and social interaction vary from one individual to the next. Hence, while some courses were not liked by some respondents, it is possible to provide on-line learning programs where the participants leave happy and are interested in doing it again. In the end, 41% stated an interest in on-line training, which is higher than the 15.5% of the respondents who did take a course; that shows that there is a larger market out there that has not used the product yet.

However, to provide such programs, information regarding the ability of one to complete such course is important. Hence the participants were asked to respond to various questions aimed at evaluating their computer and Internet literacy. Overall, they regularly access the Internet, however, their self-ratings indicate that their computer skills are among the lowest rated skills. Also, the older the respondent, the less often s/he stated having performed certain chosen tasks on his/her computer.

Conclusion

The completion of this research has enabled all interested parties to have access to information regarding employment skills and on-line skills upgrading from a wide range of perspectives. Information from the employers, the current and future labour force and from the institutions providing them all with training is now available to help strengthen the local economy. That information can be used to assist employers in their search for employees, to develop training programs addressing the skills gaps, and to help employees successfully participate in the labour force. Numerous lessons were learned during this exercise regarding employment, skills and training.

The need for a more educated labour force, especially regarding soft skills, is made clear by the employers. High school students also state that their planning and self-management skills are low. However, the students and the employees rate their teamwork and social/interpersonal skills highest among other skills. Hence, it is not enough to say that more soft skills such as social and teamwork skills are in need. The indication is rather towards a more complex need. Basic social/interpersonal skills are not enough; rather, what seems to be missing is knowledge on how to deal with difficult customers, or with conflict situations, an understanding of business administration, a self-motivation and a dedication to work. These improvements are not meant to be completed by the employee alone. Understanding a business, dealing with conflict, motivation and dedication are things that need to be developed and fostered by both the employer and the employee. Healthy work environments, social and personal as well as dollar incentives are built by both employers and employees. Hence, comprehensive initiatives guided by this research will help further develop and strengthen the local economy and the community overall.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the steering committee as well as other groups representing employers, such as the Huron Manufacturers Association, the local Chamber of Commerce, etc., work in partnership with educational institutions such as the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) and post-secondary institutions to improve the provision of workplace experience to learners.

This can be achieved through various methods, namely, the further development of co-op programs by strengthening the relationships with local employers and by increasing communication with them, facilitating the process to participate in co-op, and by creating more opportunities for them to participate. Co-op programs are a great opportunity to provide the soft-skills demanded by employers during focus groups; however, they are not used to their full extent.

Furthermore, the development of co-op programs should take into account women's low level of interest in trade occupations. Therefore, co-op opportunities should be further developed in occupations and industries of

interest to women such as health care. These co-op opportunities should also be marketed as an opportunity for *all* to get into great careers, and counter the perception that these courses are easy alternatives to other courses.

2. It is recommended that the steering committee take gender differences into consideration while marketing and providing on-line training opportunities.

Women have shown more positive interest in on-line upgrading as they are less frequently employed in a full-time permanent position. On-line training is especially practical to them as they can complete the course on their own terms while working part-time and tending to their families. Women also have different career interests than men. The occupations and industries men and women work in are distinctly different. Therefore, their topics of interest will differ and marketing strategies, which take that into account, will be more effective.

3. It is recommended that the steering committee, in partnership with various employers associations, promote on-line training in the workplace.

The data show that the men are more likely than women to work full-time impermanent jobs and hence to not have the time to pursue on-line training outside of work hours. Providing more opportunities to training during work time without penalty would help increase men's interest in on-line training. It would help to emphasize the fact that on-line training saves one from traveling and all the lost time and money associated with having to travel to a training institution to complete the course.

4. It is recommended that the steering committee and partners take into consideration the low level of computer skill and lack of high speed Internet access when developing on-line training programs.

Courses designed especially for older groups will need to reduce the complexity of their programs, as older groups are less active, familiar and comfortable with the use of a computer. It is necessary to simplify and clarify the process of completing an on-line course from the point of obtaining information regarding the course all the way to the end when the course is complete and feedback is gathered.

5. It is recommended that the steering committee, in partnership with the AMDSB and post-secondary institutions with local employers associations, local employers and other local employment organizations, develop a communication strategy to educate men and women on the more diverse and emerging career opportunities in the area.

The research shows that career choices are segregated by gender. This may be a product of not knowing or seeing anyone doing anything different than what is traditionally seen in a rural community. Such a communication strategy would

provide information on little known careers where local people are and could be successful. The direct link between the career and a clear local opportunity for that career is important to ensure the belief in the potential of that career. The data shows that the job search is done through social connections, not through career counselors, information bulletins, or postings. People tend to respond to people they know, people they see and can meet. Hence, meeting a person succeeding in a little known career would be the best way to communicate new career opportunities.

6. It is recommended that the steering committee in partnership with educational institutions develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to make high school students, employers and employees aware of the opportunities and advantages of on-line training as well as the importance of life-long skills upgrading.

The students should be made aware of on-line learning as an alternative to relocating for post-secondary education. On-line learning needs to be understood as a method by which an accredited degree can be earned and be used. Similarly, employers need to know how on-line learning can help them upgrade the skill level of their employees as well as help them improve their business with many convenient advantages. Employees also should understand how continuous skills upgrading is beneficial for them.

Similarly, the marketing strategy would need to address the perceived negatives of on-line learning such as the low-level of social interaction and direct personal support. Hence avenues for social interaction such as live phone support need to be integrated and promoted. The promotion of group-enrollment would also help those who need the social support see that they can enroll and complete the course alongside others and hence have the ability to talk things over with them as they are all going through the same course at the same time.

7. It is recommended that the steering committee develop and promote a “one-stop” source for all employment opportunities in the region.

This source would be a comprehensive list of all job and career opportunities. Presently, various types of jobs are available through various mediums in various locations. The promotion of this source is important to ensure that all types of qualified individuals visit it so that employers are successful in recruiting valuable employees and thereby encourage employers to post their opportunities. There are several organizations available that could play this role. The challenge is to agree on the agencies and then to get employers and people to use them.

8. It is recommended that the steering committee, the AMDSB and post-secondary institutions develop a soft skills training component for all on-line courses.

According to the results of the focus groups, employers are not just looking for employees with a specific hard or technical skills used to complete a set of tasks. They are looking for employees who also have the soft or transferable skills. Hard skills in general are easier to provide for because they require on the job or short-term training, but soft skills are usually much harder to teach independently. In each of the focus groups, employers expressed the need to find employees, who possess soft skills such as customer service, teamwork, problem solving, organization, the ability to work independently, and many others. Employers not only identified their demand for such skills in employees but also their difficulty in finding them.

Similar results were found in the Bruce and Grey Skills Inventory Study. A survey of 368 employers was conducted in Bruce and Grey counties finding that soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving and decision-making were on average more difficult to find than the hard skills such as reading, math and written skills. Among all the skills assessed for importance teamwork was on average the skill that was considered most important by employers. Although customer service skills were considered an important skill to employers it was the least difficult to find among all the soft skills assessed (Cummings, et al., 2005)

The soft skills identified by employers in Huron, Perth, Bruce and Grey counties are hard to teach within a short period of time and independent from other curriculum. The dynamics of teams, and the skills that are best suited for a team environment, are best taught and experienced when actually working on a team. Problem solving skills are valuable to almost any career but each problem is unique to each situation. Professionalism, politeness and good communication are all aspects of customer services skills, which are more difficult to teach on their own. The creation of on-line curriculum whether it is for a technical trade, business management, or hospitality and tourism needs to include and emphasize the importance of soft skills in the work place.

9. It is recommended that the steering committee and the AMDSB develop a skills assessment tool for people with low level computer skills and formal education who wish to enroll in an on-line course. Skills assessments could be made available at The Centres for Employment & Learning.

On-line learning is a method of education that may not be suitable for every individual based on their own skills and preferred learning styles. To provide guidance and support for new students who wish to enroll in an on-line course a personal skills assessment could be completed. Of the training organizations surveyed, 13 of 18 (72%) have or do conducted client needs assessments. The most popular method used by 7 of 18 (39%), is a client orientation assessment. The needs and skills of incoming students could be assessed and matched with the appropriate on-line course or an alternative means of gaining the training they desire. An assessment of the student could help to determine if an on-line course is right for them and potentially increase their success rate of the course.

10. It is recommended that the AMDSB give business related courses a greater emphasis in the high school curriculum.

In all phases of this research, business management skills have been shown to be lacking. The high school students have fewer business credits than any other subject. Business management upgrading courses are among the most recently completed course topics listed by employees and employers also cited the need for employees to have business management skills. Hence, there is a need for more training in all aspects of business management skills from soft skills such as human resource management to other skills such as financial and accounting related skills.

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Huron and Perth Community Mapping Report

1.0 Introduction

Huron and Perth counties like many rural communities in Ontario have experienced youth out migration, lack of skilled labour as well as changes in the education system due to new provincial funding formulae. Education and job creation have been used as economic development strategies in many communities over time. Huron and Perth counties are looking to education as a means of increasing the local skilled labour pool.

Many youth who plan on attending college or university after high school must leave the county to do so. There is always the possibility that these youth will never return once they have received the education they had originally left to obtain. Subsequently, since Huron and Perth lack skills training facilities, requiring residents to travel far distances to receive training, on-line learning as a viable alternative is being explored. On-line learning is a concept that brings the curriculum to the comfort of the student's home or work via the Internet. Perspectives of students, employees and employers regarding on-line learning are important to understand before investment in this type of education is made.

In 2004 the Huron Business Development Corporation (HBDC) and the Avon Maitland District School Board made public a request for proposals to undertake a community mapping exercise funded by the Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) division of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The proposal was for an On-line Learning in Rural Communities Skills Adaptation Partnership study, which is a component of Huron County's Human Resources Retention and Expansion Plan. A partnership of community agencies, including the Avon Maitland District School Board, Fanshawe College, the Bruce Grey Huron Perth Georgian Triangle Training Board and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada formed a Project Steering Committee to advise and guide the project. A University of Guelph research team, headed by Harry Cummings and assisted by Aaron Clodd and Cindy Pelletier, was hired to take that challenge.

The goal of this community mapping exercises was to determine the existing and needed skills of the labour force in Huron and Perth County. For the purposes of On-line Learning component of this project, specific attention was given to computer literacy and interest in on-line training. Achieving this goal would help local organizations understand the gaps between the skills needed, the skills currently available, the skills the future employees will have as well as the skill training currently available to fill those gaps.

Hence, the project was divided in two phases each with their own objectives. Phase I included a survey of local training organizations and high school students and was completed during the spring and summer of 2005. The objectives were to determine the skills and future aspirations of the upcoming labour force as well as to examine the training opportunities available in the region. Phase II, aimed to survey employees and employers regarding the skills present and those needed in the labour force today and was completed during summer and fall 2005.

2.0 Project Overview

2.1 Study Area

The study area is a Huron and Perth county which are located in South-western Ontario, north of the City of London and west of the Greater Toronto Area. The area covers approximately 5,600 square kilometres with a population of 133,400 dispersed throughout several small towns, villages and rural townships. With a population density of just 17.7 persons per square kilometre, and 55% of the residents living in non-urban countryside, the area is substantially rural. Map 1 illustrates the municipal and county boundaries as well as major roads and towns within the study area.

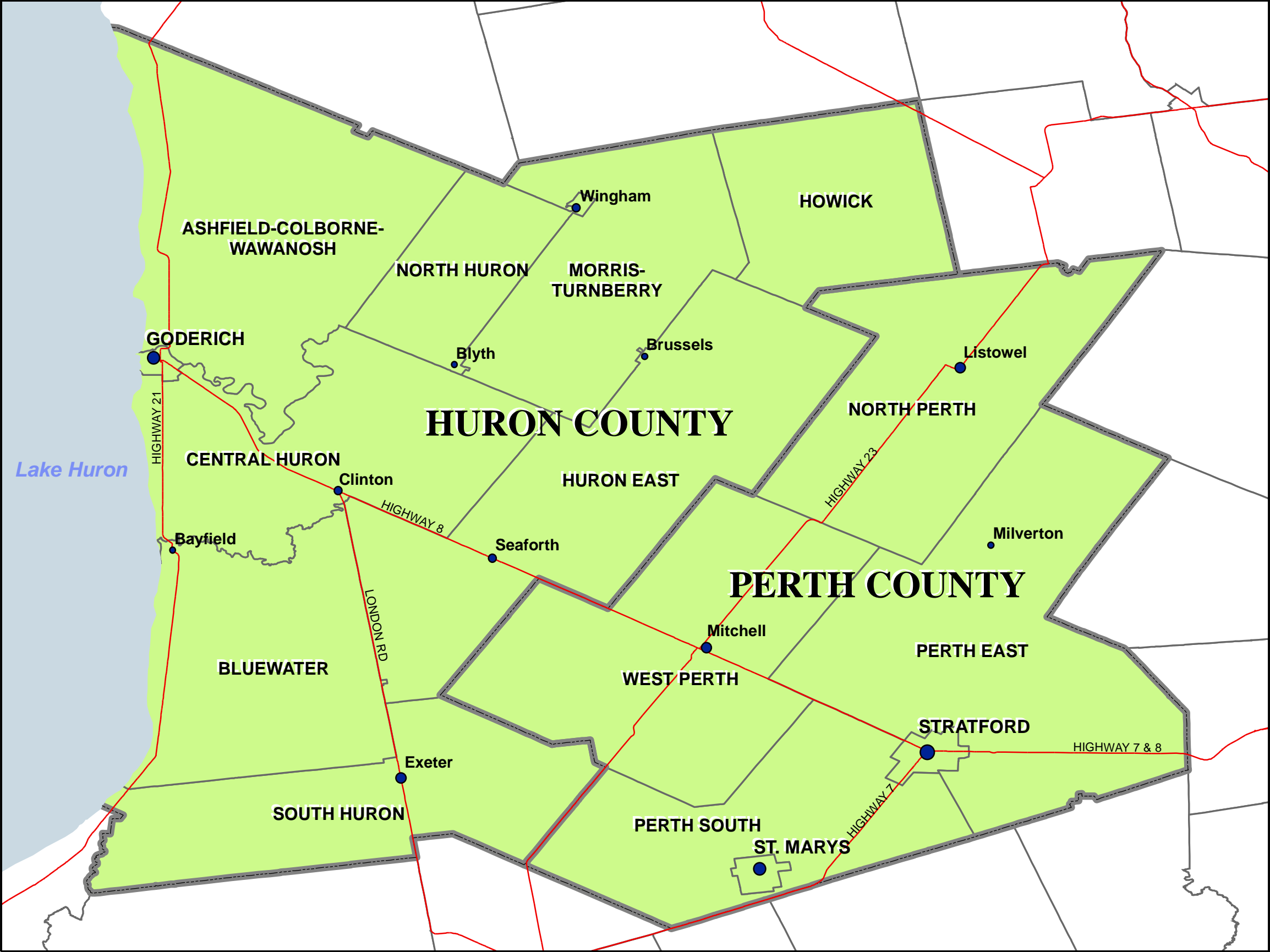
2.2 Demographics

Using data compiled from the 2001 Canadian Census and joined with boundary data created by DMTI Spatial, a geographic information system was used to display several demographic trends related to the study. Data is displayed at the Dissemination Area (DA) or the Census Subdivision (CSD) level depending on data availability. A DA is defined as a small, relatively stable geographic unit composed of one or more blocks. DAs are uniform in terms of population size, which is targeted from 400 to 700 persons but can contain less or more in order to respect the boundaries of census subdivisions and census tracts. A CSD is an area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes.

Education levels for the two counties are displayed at the CSD level because of unavailable data at the DA level through the University of Guelph. Map 2 illustrates the percentage of the population who is 20 years and over for each CSD in Huron and Perth that obtained high school or less as their highest level of education. The majority of the CSDs have 45% of their population with high school or less as their highest level of education. Of the 15 municipalities in the two counties, Goderich has the smallest percentage of low education attainment at 43%. On the other hand the CSD of Howick has the highest percentage of people with only high school or less as their highest level of education at 65%. The rates of lower education attainment may seem low among the municipalities in the study area but they are not a good representation of what the current education trends are. Historically not as many people attended post secondary education as they do today which suggests that the large older population in Huron and Perth who did not attend post secondary education possibly skew the percentages of low education attainment. However, the Huron and Perth high school survey conducted as part of this Community Mapping project provides more insight into the percentage of grade 12 students who plan to carry on with post secondary education.

The percentage of the population 20 years and over for each CSD that obtained a college diploma or a trades certificate as their highest level of education is displayed in Map 3. Perth South is currently the CSD with the highest population percentage that has obtained a Trades or College education at 34.5% while Howick has the lowest at 24.9%.

Study Area
Huron and Perth County: Map 1



LEGEND *University of Guelph*

Population 2001

- 909 - 1999
- 2000 - 3999
- 4000 - 5999
- 6000 - 7999
- 8000 - 29676

— Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

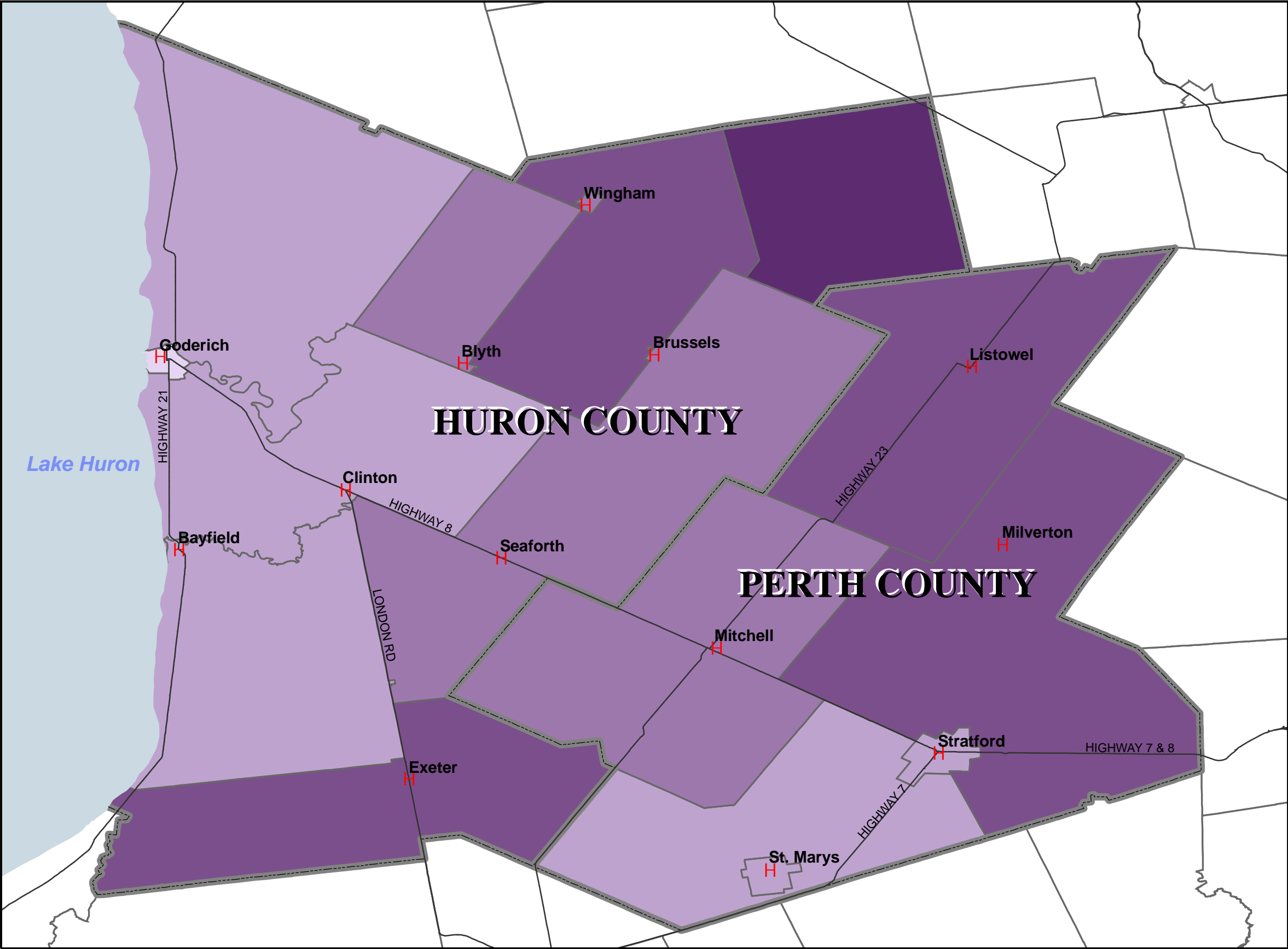
Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30
Kilometers



High School or Less as Highest Level of Education for Population 20 Years and Older
Huron and Perth County: Map 2



LEGEND *University of Guelph*

High School Education or Less (%)

- < 45.00
- 45.00 - 49.99
- 50.00 - 54.99
- 55.00 - 59.99
- 60.00 +

Town

Major Road

County Boundary

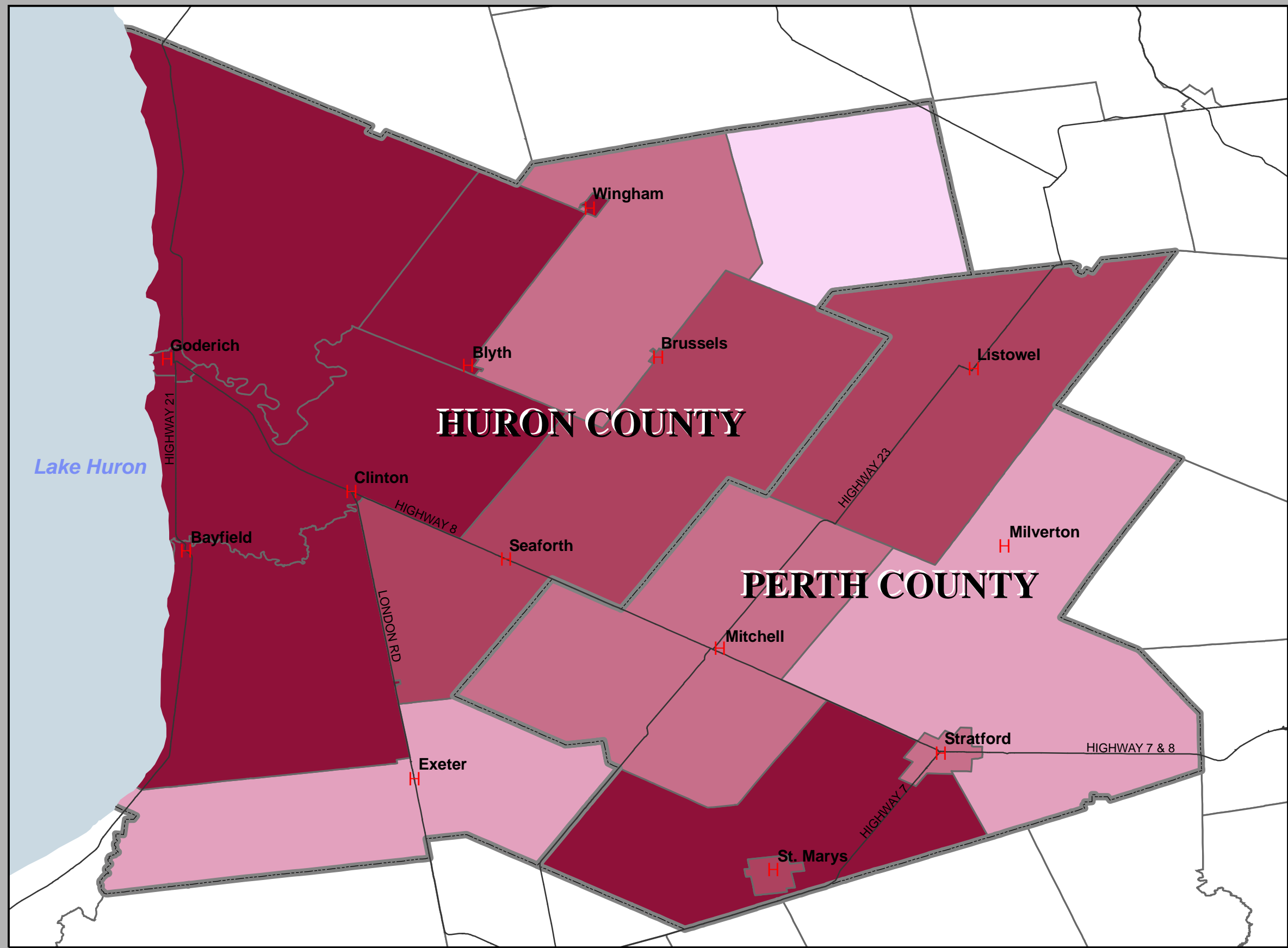
CSD Boundary

Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30
Kilometers

College or Trade as Highest Level of Education for Population 20 Years and Older
Huron and Perth County: Map 3



LEGEND *University of Guelph*

College or Trade Education (%)

- < 26.00
- 26.00 - 27.99
- 28.00 - 29.99
- 30.00 - 31.99
- 32.00 +

H Town

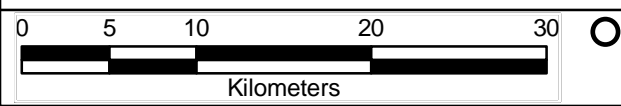
Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial



Lastly, Map 4 illustrates the percentage of the population 20 years and over for each CSD that obtained a university degree or higher as their highest level of education. Goderich and Stratford have the highest population percentage of university-educated people at 11.7% and 13.5% respectively. Table 2.1 illustrates the same information displayed in Map 1, 2 and 3 but provides the exact percentage of each level of education attained per CSD. Although these statistics demonstrate the current population percentage of education levels, the Huron and Perth high school survey results address the percentage of grade 12 students who plan on achieving a trade, college or university degree.

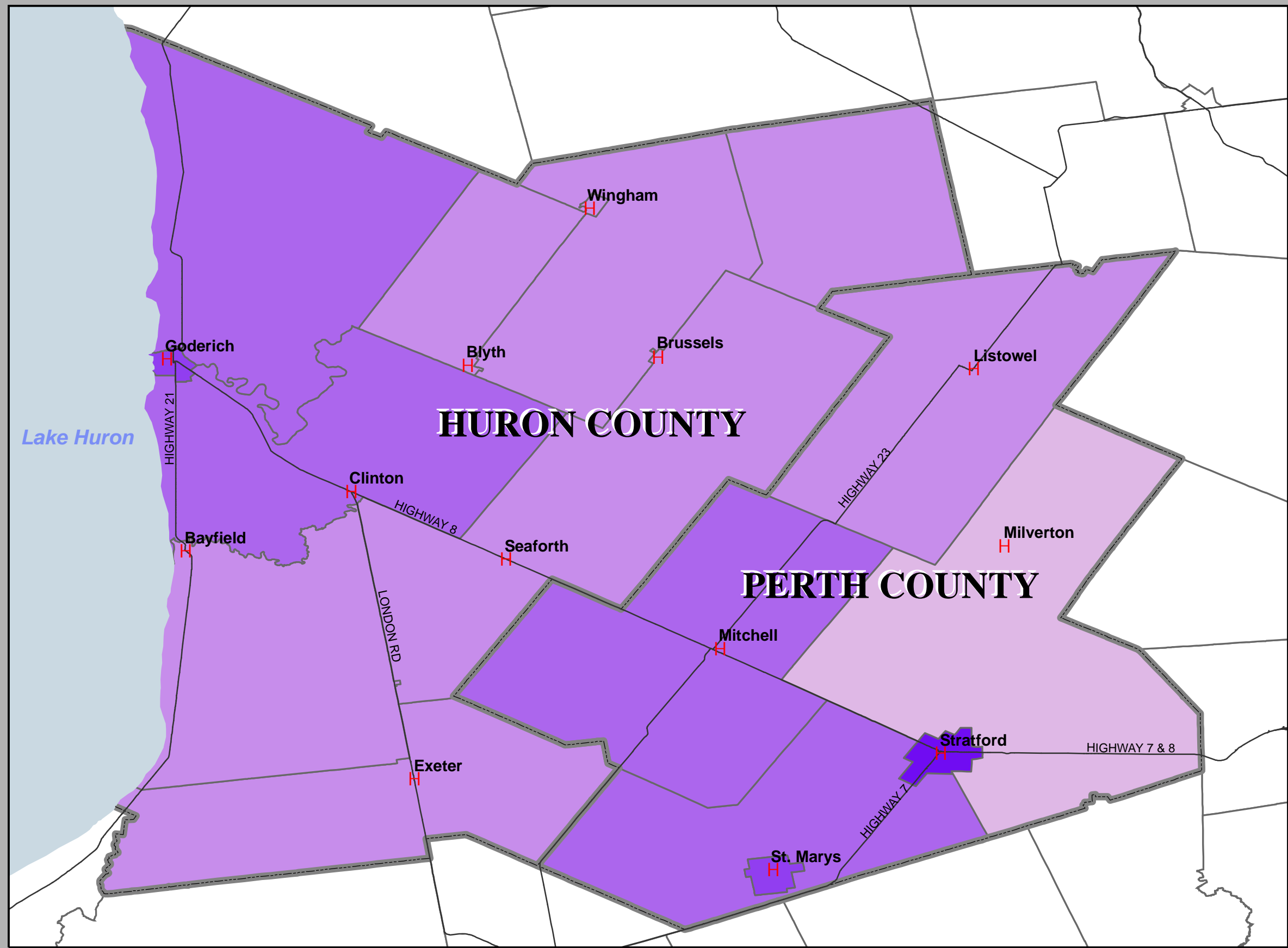
Table 2.1: Education Levels by CSD in Huron and Perth Counties

| | High School or Less | College Diploma or Trades Certificate | University Degree or Higher |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh | 48.19% | 33.73% | 8.96% |
| Bluewater | 49.29% | 32.18% | 7.69% |
| Central Huron | 49.78% | 32.51% | 8.06% |
| Goderich | 43.02% | 32.37% | 11.71% |
| Howick | 64.60% | 24.89% | 6.17% |
| Huron East | 53.05% | 30.47% | 6.88% |
| Morris-Turnberry | 55.35% | 29.01% | 7.81% |
| North Huron | 53.40% | 33.10% | 6.25% |
| North Perth | 56.85% | 30.16% | 6.46% |
| Perth East | 55.91% | 27.48% | 5.94% |
| Perth South | 46.14% | 34.47% | 8.06% |
| South Huron | 56.30% | 27.60% | 7.46% |
| St. Marys | 48.34% | 30.74% | 11.20 |
| Stratford | 45.71% | 29.23% | 13.48% |
| West Perth | 51.88% | 29.21% | 8.67% |

The education level attainment is reflected in the average family income levels displayed in Map 5. For example, Goderich, having the lowest level of only high school educated people and one of the highest levels of College, Trades and University educated people in both counties has an average family income per DA between \$50,928 and \$84,125. Since Stratford has a larger population than Goderich it also has more DAs, providing a more detailed spatial understanding of income distribution. The average family income per DA in Stratford ranges between \$46,784 and \$98,088.

However, like many urban areas, income levels tend to cluster together. The DA's in Northeast Stratford have higher average family incomes than those on the south side of Highway 7 and 8. The two DAs with the highest average family income for both Huron and Perth are those directly adjacent to highway 7 and 8 on the east side of Stratford.

University as Highest Level of Education for Population 20 Years and Older
Huron and Perth County: Map 4



LEGEND *University of Guelph*

University Education (%)

- < 6.00
- 6.00 - 7.99
- 8.00 - 9.99
- 10.00 - 11.99
- 12.00 +

Town (H)

Major Road (—)

County Boundary (—)

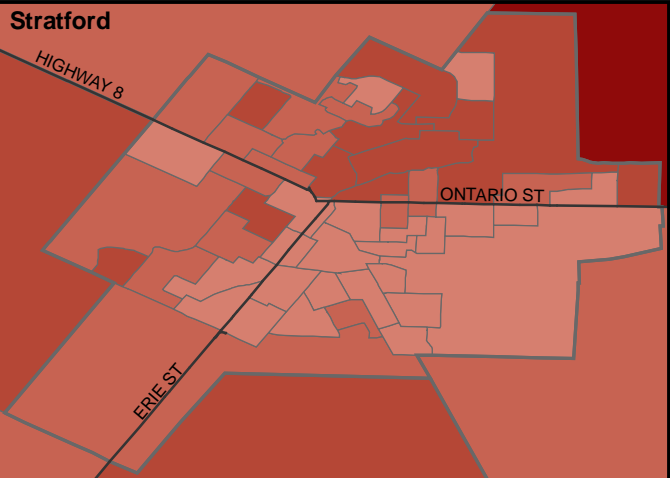
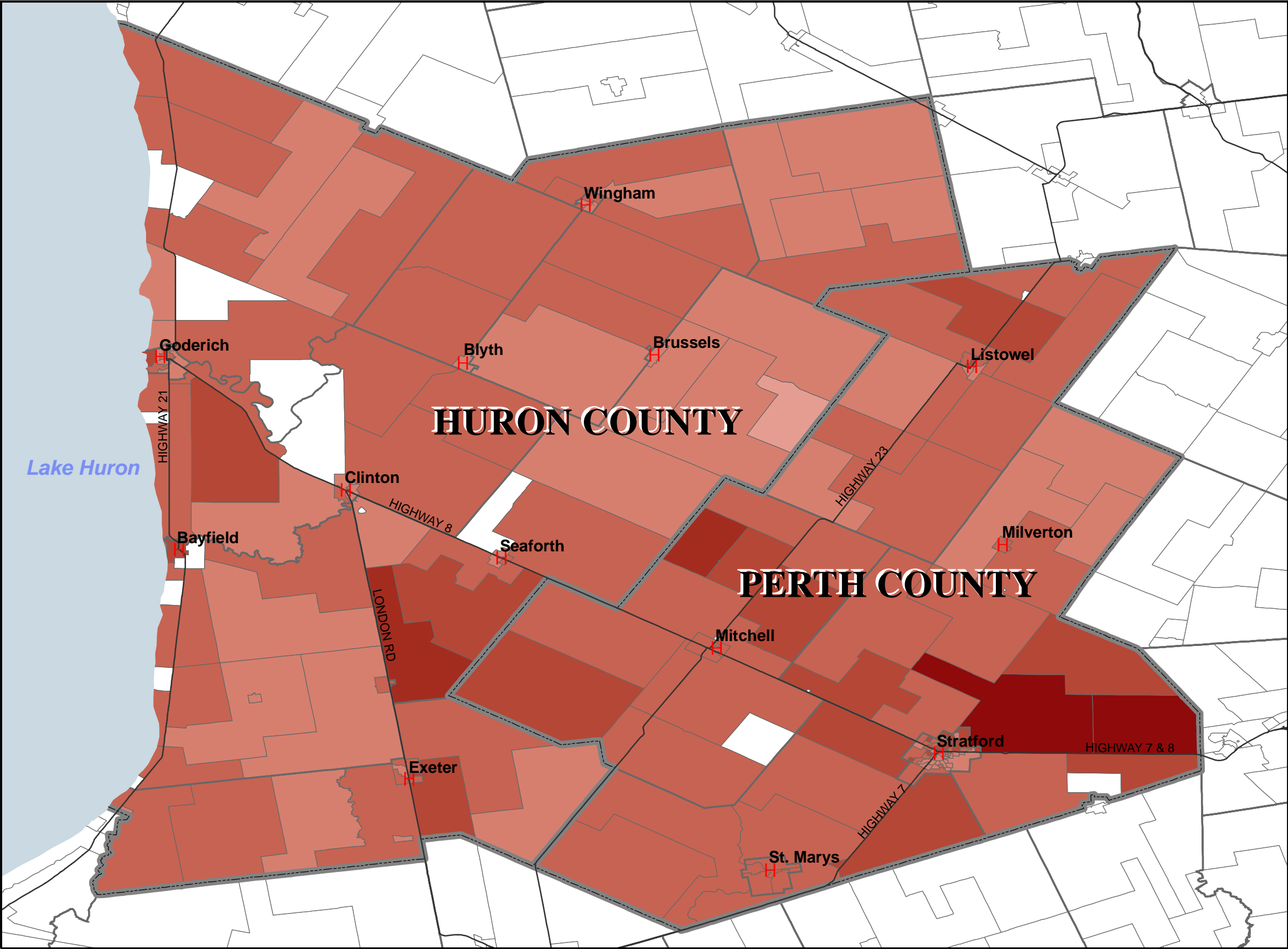
CSD Boundary (—)

Water (Blue)

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30 Kilometers

Average Family Income for the Year 2000
Huron and Perth County: Map 5



University of Guelph

LEGEND

Income (\$)

- No Data
- 0 - 19,999.99
- 20,000.00 - 39,999.99
- 40,000.00 - 59,999.99
- 60,000.00 - 79,999.99
- 80,000.00 - 99,999.99
- 100,000.00 - 119,999.99
- 120,000.00 +

H Town

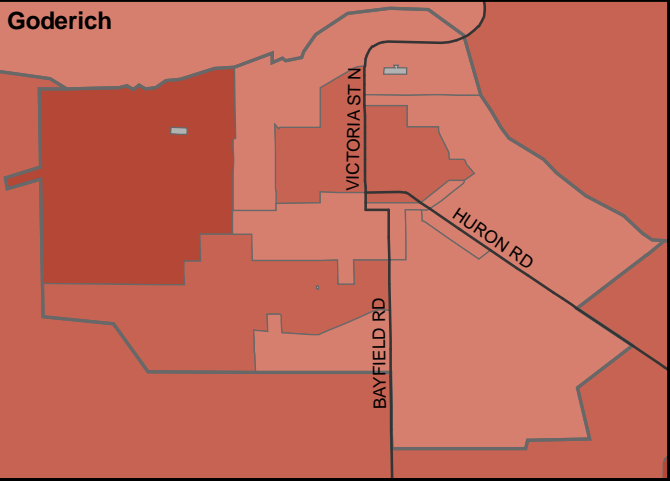
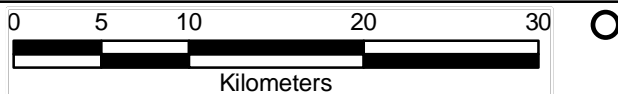
Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial



Map 6 illustrates the highest male represented field of study of post secondary education at the CSD level. The DA level would have been used to display the data but there were too many DAs with unavailable data. The majority of the male population that went on to post secondary education studied applied science technologies and trades. The percentage of males that studied applied science technologies and trades range between 39% and 62% depending on the CSD. The second most popular post secondary education chosen by males was agriculture, biological, nutritional and food sciences followed by commerce, management and business administration.

Map 7 displays the highest female represented field of study of post secondary education per CSD for Huron and Perth counties. Similar to the male post secondary education choices, one area of study dominated the female majority. Health professions and related technologies dominated the majority of female's post secondary education in 13 of the 15 CSDs in the study area. The percentage of females that pursued a health profession or related technology as their post secondary education ranged between 19% and 34% depending on the CSD. Commerce, management and business administration represented the highest percentage of female's post secondary education for Goderich and Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh but was second to health professions and related technologies for the rest of the CSDs. Although not shown on the map, educational, recreational and counselling services was the third most popular area of female's post secondary education representing between 10.7% and 23%, depending on the CSD.

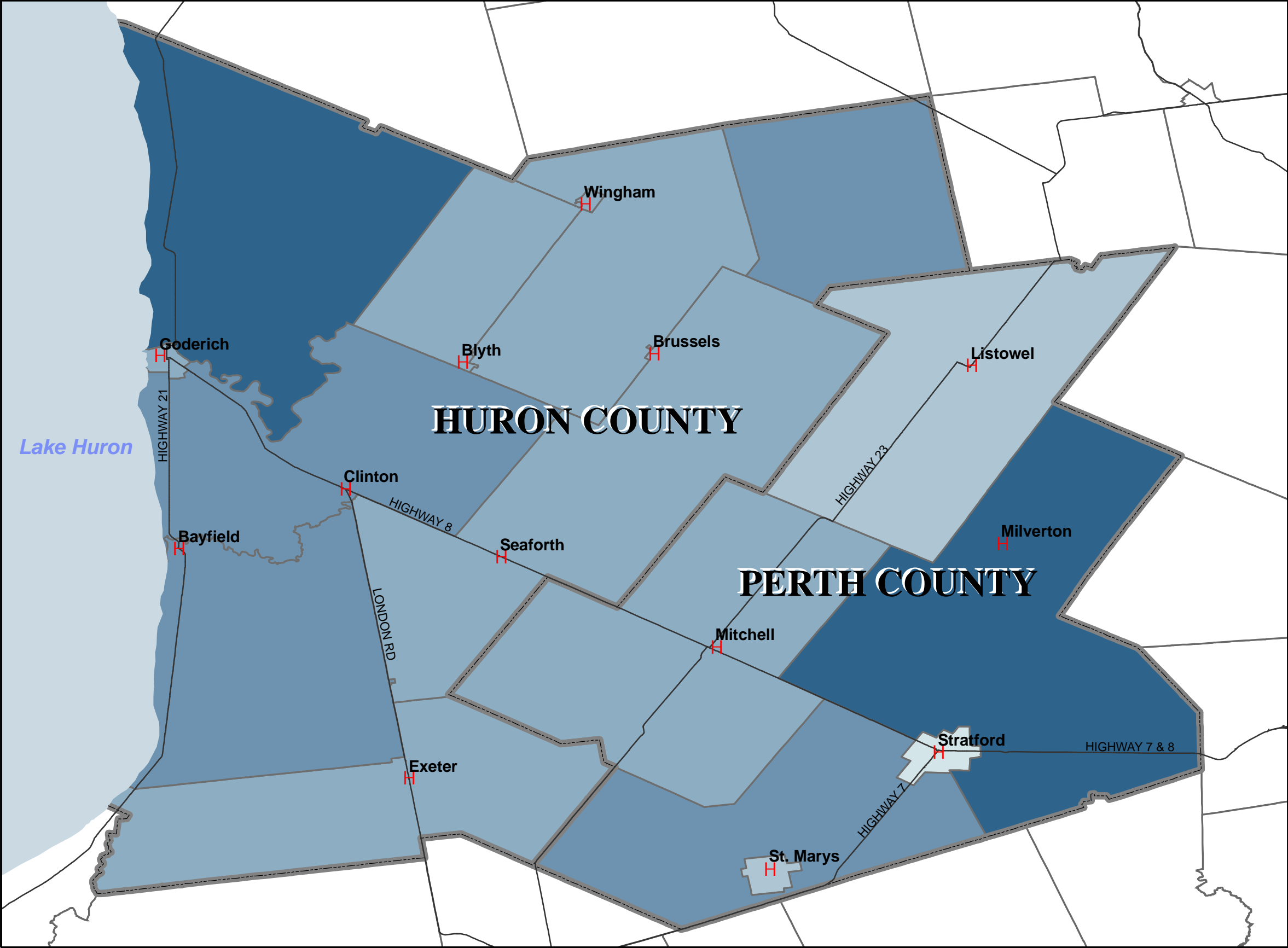
Map 8 illustrates the highest represented employment by industry per DA. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting are the highest represented employment industries for the majority of the DAs outside of the urban boundaries. However, for most of the small towns and the majority of Stratford, manufacturing is a highly represented employment industry. For both Huron and Perth counties manufacturing and construction industries is where the majority of the labour force is employed. Although manufacturing and construction industries continue to represent the majority of employment for Huron and Perth counties, it is important to understand that agriculture has a tremendous influence on both of these industries as well as several others.

2.3 Employment by Industrial Sector

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is an industry classification system developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico and the United States. The classification system was designed and created as a result the North American Free Trade Agreement in order to provide common definitions of the industrial structure of the three counties and a common statistical framework to facilitate analysis of the three economies. The NAICS classification system replaces the Standard Industrial Classification system, which was used by Statistics Canada prior to the 2001 Census.

NAICS organizes Canadian, American and Mexican industries into distinguishable categories, or classifications. At the greatest level of aggregation these industries are divided up into 20 separate categories, and are presented in Table 2.2.

Highest Male Represented Field of Study of Post Secondary Education
Huron and Perth County: Map 6



LEGEND*University of Guelph*

Percentage (%) **

< 40.00

40.00 - 44.99

45.00 - 49.99

50.00 - 54.99

55.00 - 59.99

60.00 +

H

Town

—

Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

Water

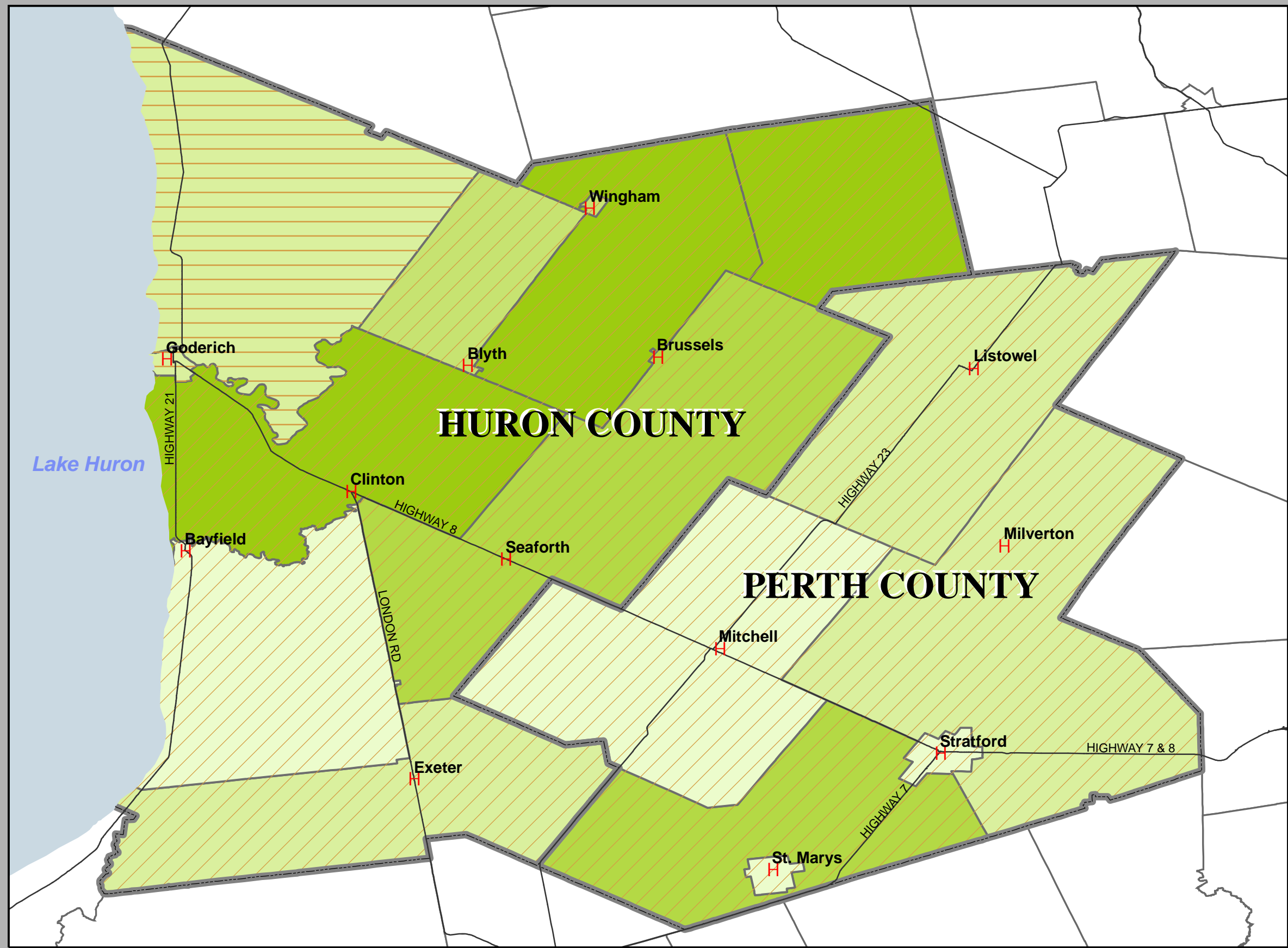
** Applied Science Technologies and Trades is the highest male represented field of study of post secondary education.

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30

Kilometers

Highest Female Represented Field of Study of Post Secondary Education
Huron and Perth County: Map 7



LEGEND*University of Guelph*

Field of Study

- Health professions and related technologies
- Commerce, management and business administration

Percentage (%)

| |
|---------------|
| < 24.00 |
| 24.00 - 25.99 |
| 26.00 - 27.99 |
| 28.00 - 29.99 |
| 30.00 + |

Town

Major Road

County Boundary

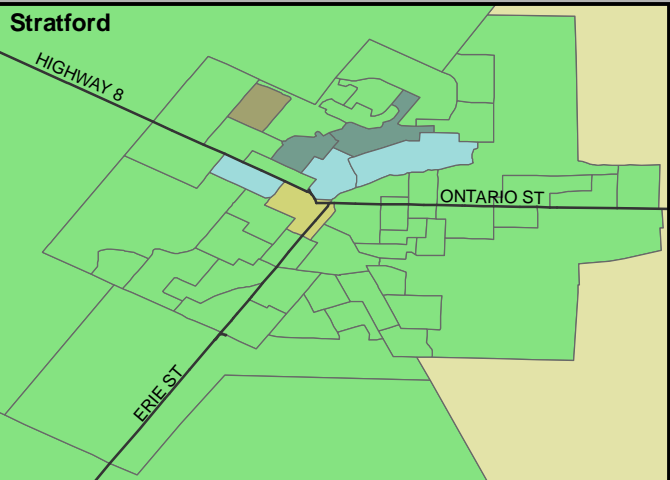
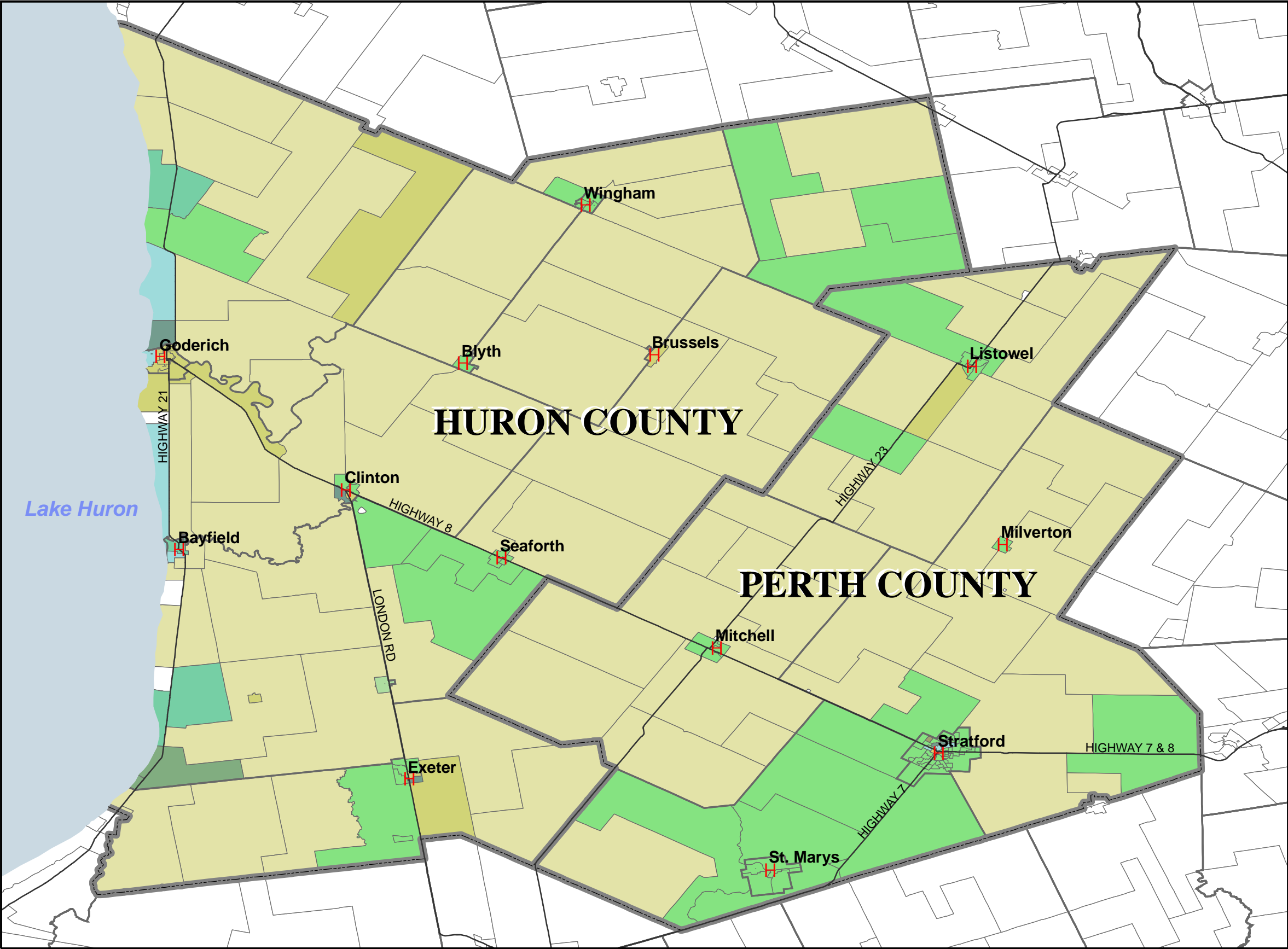
CSD Boundary

Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30 Kilometers

Highest Represented Employment by Industry (NAICS Code)
Huron and Perth County: Map 8



LEGEND

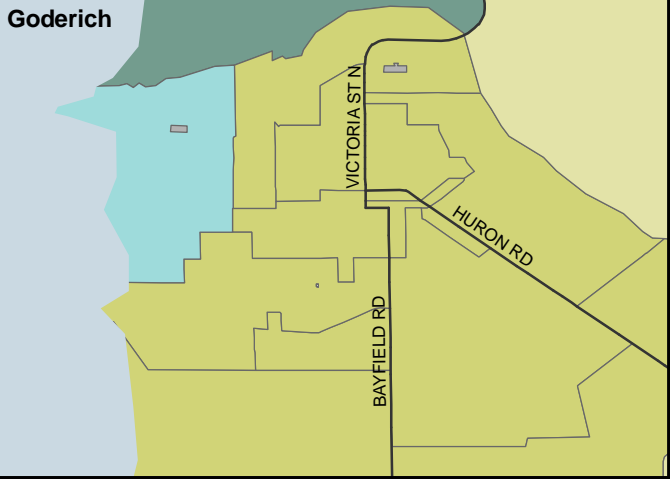
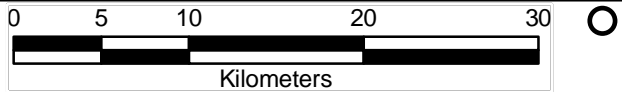
University of Guelph

Industry

- No Data
- Accommodation and food services
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting
- Construction
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Manufacturing
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Retail trade
- Transportation and warehousing

- Town
- Major Road
- County Boundary
- CSD Boundary
- Water

Source: Statistics Canada 2001 and DMTI Spatial



Perth County reported a total of 41,125 jobs in 2001. Manufacturing was the largest employment sector in Perth County in 2001 with 10,290 jobs or 25.0% of the total jobs in the County. The other top ranking sectors in Perth County include Agriculture with 4,375 (10.6%), Retail Trade with 4,190 (10.2%), Health Care and Social Assistance with 3,590 (8.7%), and Accommodation and food Services with 2,590 (6.3%).

Huron County reported a total of 31,460 jobs in 2001. Manufacturing was the largest employment sector in Huron County in 2001 with 4,895 jobs or 15.6% of the total jobs in the County. The other top ranking sectors in Huron County include Agriculture with 4,850 jobs (15.4%), Retail Trade with 3,400 jobs (10.8%), Health care and Social Assistance with 3,040 (9.7%), and Construction with 2,125 jobs (6.8%).

The top ranking sectors at the provincial level in terms of jobs are Manufacturing (16.4% of the total jobs), Retail Trade (11.2%), Health Care and Social Assistance (8.9%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (7.2%), Accommodation and Food Services (6.3%), and Educational Services (6.2%). While the Agriculture sector (1.8%) accounts for a small percentage of the total jobs in Ontario, this sector employs a significant percentage of the total population in Huron and Perth.

Table 2.2: Population by Industry Sector for Ontario, Huron County and Perth County, 2001^a

| | Perth | | Huron | | Ontario | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Total Jobs | % | Total Jobs | % | Total Jobs | % |
| Manufacturing | 10,290 | 25.0% | 4,895 | 15.6% | 984,330 | 16.4% |
| Agriculture | 4,375 | 10.6% | 4,850 | 15.4% | 110,475 | 1.8% |
| Retail trade | 4,190 | 10.2% | 3,400 | 10.8% | 671,865 | 11.2% |
| Health care and social assistance | 3,590 | 8.7% | 3,040 | 9.7% | 531,795 | 8.9% |
| Construction | 2,475 | 6.0% | 2,125 | 6.8% | 332,255 | 5.5% |
| Accommodation and food services | 2,590 | 6.3% | 2,040 | 6.5% | 380,060 | 6.3% |
| Wholesale trade | 1,710 | 4.2% | 1,535 | 4.9% | 278,865 | 4.7% |
| Educational services | 1,695 | 4.1% | 1,515 | 4.8% | 371,200 | 6.2% |
| Other services | 1,840 | 4.5% | 1,345 | 4.3% | 273,125 | 4.6% |
| Transportation and warehousing | 1,635 | 4.0% | 1,330 | 4.2% | 280,150 | 4.7% |
| Administrative and support | 1,115 | 2.7% | 880 | 2.8% | 257,025 | 4.3% |
| Professional, scientific | 1,275 | 3.1% | 850 | 2.7% | 429,095 | 7.2% |
| Public administration | 800 | 1.9% | 825 | 2.6% | 308,955 | 5.2% |
| Finance and insurance | 1,475 | 3.6% | 825 | 2.6% | 292,555 | 4.9% |
| Arts, entertainment and recreation | 1,075 | 2.6% | 500 | 1.6% | 121,950 | 2.0% |
| Information and cultural industries | 410 | 1.0% | 395 | 1.3% | 171,750 | 2.9% |
| Real estate, rental, leasing | 350 | 0.9% | 410 | 1.3% | 108,890 | 1.8% |
| Mining, oil, gas extraction | 55 | 0.1% | 385 | 1.2% | 21,110 | 0.4% |
| Utilities | 140 | 0.3% | 185 | 0.6% | 46,230 | 0.8% |
| Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 15 | 0.0% | 95 | 0.3% | 13,200 | 0.2% |
| Management of companies | 20 | 0.0% | 40 | 0.1% | 7,895 | 0.1% |
| All industries | 41,125 | 100% | 31,460 | 100% | 5,992,765 | 100% |

^a Employment is linked to place of residence not place of work and refers to a period of at least three months of work in the last year.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

A different assessment of industrial specialization in Huron and Perth counties can be obtained using the Location Quotient (LQ). Location Quotients measure how specialized a geographic area is in a particular industry. The term 'specialized' in this instance refers to the relative size or presence of an industrial activity. In assessing industrial sector specialization, the local share of a particular industrial sector is compared to the provincial share in the same sector. Using the Agriculture sector in Huron County as an example, the LQ formula for 2001 appears as follows:

$$LQ = \frac{\text{number of agriculture jobs in Huron}}{\text{total number of jobs in Huron}} \div \frac{\text{number of agriculture jobs in Ontario}}{\text{total number of jobs in Ontario}}$$

$$LQ = (4,850 \div 31,460) \div (110,475 \div 5,992,765) = 8.4$$

For the purpose of interpreting the LQ, the LQ has a base value of one. An LQ of one suggests that the county and the province have an equal level of specialization in the chosen industry. Local economies with LQ values equal to one for any given sector suggests that local production in these industries are just sufficient to satisfy local demand. If the LQ for the County is greater than one, it indicates that the County has a higher degree of specialization in the industrial sector than the province. Local economies with LQ values greater than one for any given sector suggests that local production in these industries exceeds local demand allowing the excess to be exported. An LQ of less than one indicates that the industrial sector is less specialized in the County than it is for the province. Local economies with LQ values less than one for any given sector suggests that local production in these industries is insufficient to meet local demand and require products or services to be imported.

Table 2.3 presents the LQs for Huron and Perth counties using the data presented in Table 2.2. Based on 2001 LQ calculations, the economy of Huron County is specialized in several industrial sectors including Agriculture, Mining, oil, gas extraction, and Forestry, Fishing and Hunting while the economy of Perth County is specialized in Agriculture, Manufacturing and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation. A location quotient near one indicates an average level of specialization, below one is below average, and above one is above average.

Table 2.3: Location Quotient for Huron and Perth counties Industrial Sectors, 2001

| NAICS Industrial Sector | Perth | Huron |
|---|-------|-------|
| Agriculture | 5.8 | 8.4 |
| Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 0.2 | 1.4 |
| Mining, oil, gas extraction | 0.4 | 3.5 |
| Utilities | 0.4 | 0.8 |
| Construction | 1.1 | 1.2 |
| Manufacturing | 1.5 | 0.9 |
| Wholesale trade | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| Retail trade | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| Transportation and warehousing | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Information and cultural industries | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Finance and insurance | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Real estate, rental, leasing | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Professional, scientific | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| Management of companies | 0.4 | 1.0 |
| Administrative and support ^a | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Educational services | 0.7 | 0.8 |
| Health care and social assistance | 1.0 | 1.1 |
| Arts, entertainment and recreation | 1.3 | 0.8 |
| Accommodation and food services | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Other services ^b | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Public administration | 0.4 | 0.5 |

^a Includes waste management and remediation services

^b Except public administration.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001.

A study of the economic impact of Agriculture on the economy of Huron County found that for every direct job in Agriculture, approximately four jobs are supported in the wider economy outside of Agriculture (Cummings, Morris and McLennan, 1998). The study found that surveyed manufacturing companies are heavily influenced by the agriculture industry in Huron County. The average total gross sales for surveyed manufacturing businesses serving the agriculture community are \$3.5 million per year. Approximately 70 percent of these sales are attributed to the agriculture sector (\$2.3 million). Half of all sales for businesses surveyed in the construction industry are related to agriculture. Of the businesses surveyed, the average annual sales for 1996 were \$1 million with sales related to agriculture reaching \$460,000 per year. Plumbing, heating and electrical businesses in the survey were particularly linked to agriculture (Cummings, Morris and McLennan, 1998).

The study also determined that there are 4,428 direct, 12,128 indirect and 3,528 induced total jobs created as a result of the agriculture sector in Huron County. Thus, farm operations, businesses they buy from and sell to, and services that support farmers and farm businesses are estimated to support approximately 20,000 jobs. The estimates indicate that all the jobs supporting agriculture are more important than those within agriculture. However, the jobs supporting the agriculture industry help Huron County alone produce more farm gate sales than four provinces in Canada resulting in a productivity of \$512

million in direct agriculture sales and \$1.5 billion in indirect agriculture sales in the county (Cummings, Morris and McLennan, 1998).

Cummings and Associates (2000) conducted a similar study titled "The Economic Impacts of Agriculture on the Economy of Perth County" which determined similar findings. The study indicates that 29% of the county's total number of jobs is linked to agriculture in Perth County and over \$1.083 billion in sales from farms and businesses that buy from and sell to farms per year. The employment and sales expenditure multipliers produced in the study indicate that for every on-farm job in Perth County, there are an additional 1.26 jobs off the farm and for each dollar in farm gate sales, there are \$1.52 in sales in businesses that deal with farmers (Cummings and Associates, 2000).

The study found that manufacturing businesses surveyed had average gross sales of almost \$1.25 million. Of this, 54.7%, or about \$682,000 are sales related to agriculture. Average gross sales for businesses surveyed in the construction industry in Perth County were just over \$1.4 million. Of this, 41.9%, or almost \$607,000 can be attributed to sales related to agriculture. Although Perth County produces less farm gate sales than Huron County, it still ranked seventh among all 10 provinces with \$430 million in farm gate sales in 1996 (Cummings and Associates, 2000).

The studies mentioned above show that several sectors of the economy support and are supported by the agriculture industry. Due to the dependent relationships between agriculture and several other sectors it is important that employees are given the opportunity to continue to advance their own professional skills through post secondary education. Increasing the skill sets of employees in the manufacturing sector will not only benefit the individual businesses but also the agriculture sector itself through better products and services. Skill upgrading will help better meet the needs of businesses and thus the several industries through which they are linked.

Although providing post secondary education to rural residents is challenging, so is attracting to and/or retaining skilled labour in Huron and Perth counties. Although local youth represent the majority of the future labour pool, there continues to be a trend of out migration among rural youth, which threatens the local economy. Building social capital through post secondary education and instilling a sense of community in local youth are considered ways of preparing them for local job opportunities and reducing their willingness to migrate out.

3.0 Training Organization Survey

3.1 Introduction

As a component of the community mapping project, a training organization survey was conducted in order to better understand the current trends, attitudes, and services of local training and education organizations in Huron and Perth counties. Huron and Perth, like many rural communities throughout Canada are facing future labour shortages as a result of changing demographic trends. Between 1996 and 2001, the population of Huron County declined by 1,025 people or almost 2%. According to historical patterns of economic growth, the Huron and Perth labour market is expected to create approximately 500 new jobs each year for the next three years. The expected new jobs will most likely be in the farm service, skilled trades, and hospitality and health care sectors (Huron Business Development Centre, 2003). According to the Huron Business Development Centre (HBDC), job opportunities are expected to increase for Huron and Perth counties. It is important that local training providers are capable of offering the appropriate skills training to complement the availability of jobs. Due to an out migration of youth to urban centres, rural areas have lost a portion of their future labour market along with consumer spending.

In 2000, COMPAS Inc. conducted an information needs assessment survey for Industry Canada of 1,014 managers and operators of small business across Canada. The report defined a small business as one with less than 100 employees. Of all the respondents, 64% were from urban areas and the remaining 36% were from rural areas. Rural was defined as communities with less than 20,000 people. When small business executives were asked to rate the importance of a number of issues or challenges facing their business in terms of the importance to their business, three of the top four challenges, as rated by respondents, involve the retention, recruitment and training of employees.

Respondents were asked to use a 7 point Likert scale, where 1 equalled not important at all, and 7 equalled very important, in order to record the importance of each challenge facing their business. For the purpose of graphing, the research analysts combined the top two scores and the bottom two scores (i.e. 6+7's and 1+2's). The following percentages are determined from those survey respondents who provided a 7 or 6 on the Likert scale regarding the respective business challenge. Of employers surveyed, 58% identified keeping or retaining valued employees as very important, 44% indicated that recruiting new employees with the skills needed was very important and 42% said that training and skills development was also very important (COMPAS Inc., 2001).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Survey Design

Understanding your client's capabilities, needs, attitudes, and perceptions are instrumental in creating and sustaining training and educational opportunities in any community. Huron and Perth counties have a mix of training and educational organizations that operate under for-profit and not-for-profit initiatives

and offer a variety of programs. In order to collect the information required to better understand the current trends, attitudes, and services of local training and education organizations a phone questionnaire was created. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the survey used in this study. It is designed to cover the major interests of the steering committee with regards to training organizations within Huron and Perth counties.

The areas covered by the questionnaire include the sector and length of service of the training organization, as well as their financial providers and other partners involved with their organization. Different promotional methods are used by various training organizations in Huron and Perth counties and were also collected by the questionnaire. Methods of program evaluations and client need assessments in use by the training organizations as well as the reasons why clients are enrolling in their services are also collected through the questionnaire. On-line learning initiatives and experiences of organizations is one of the main focuses of the Community Mapping Project and are included in the questionnaire. Lastly, the amount of interest shown by the survey respondents in participating in an Internet based learning network was also collected.

3.2.2 Survey Administration

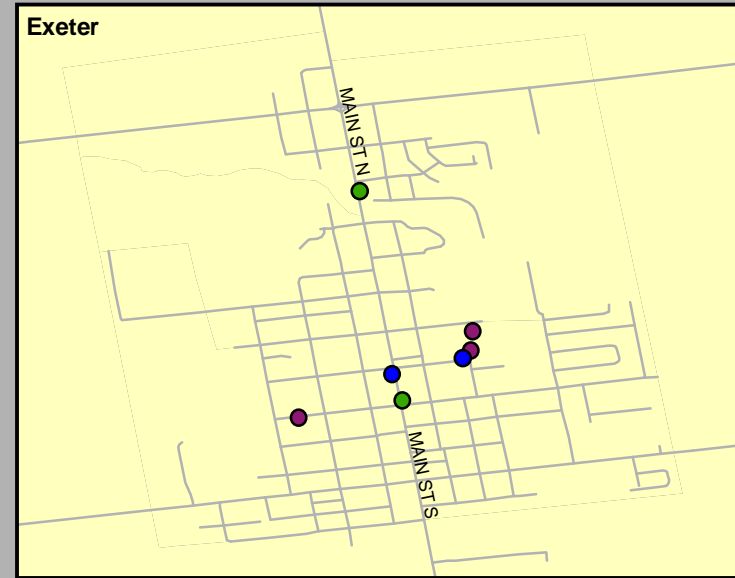
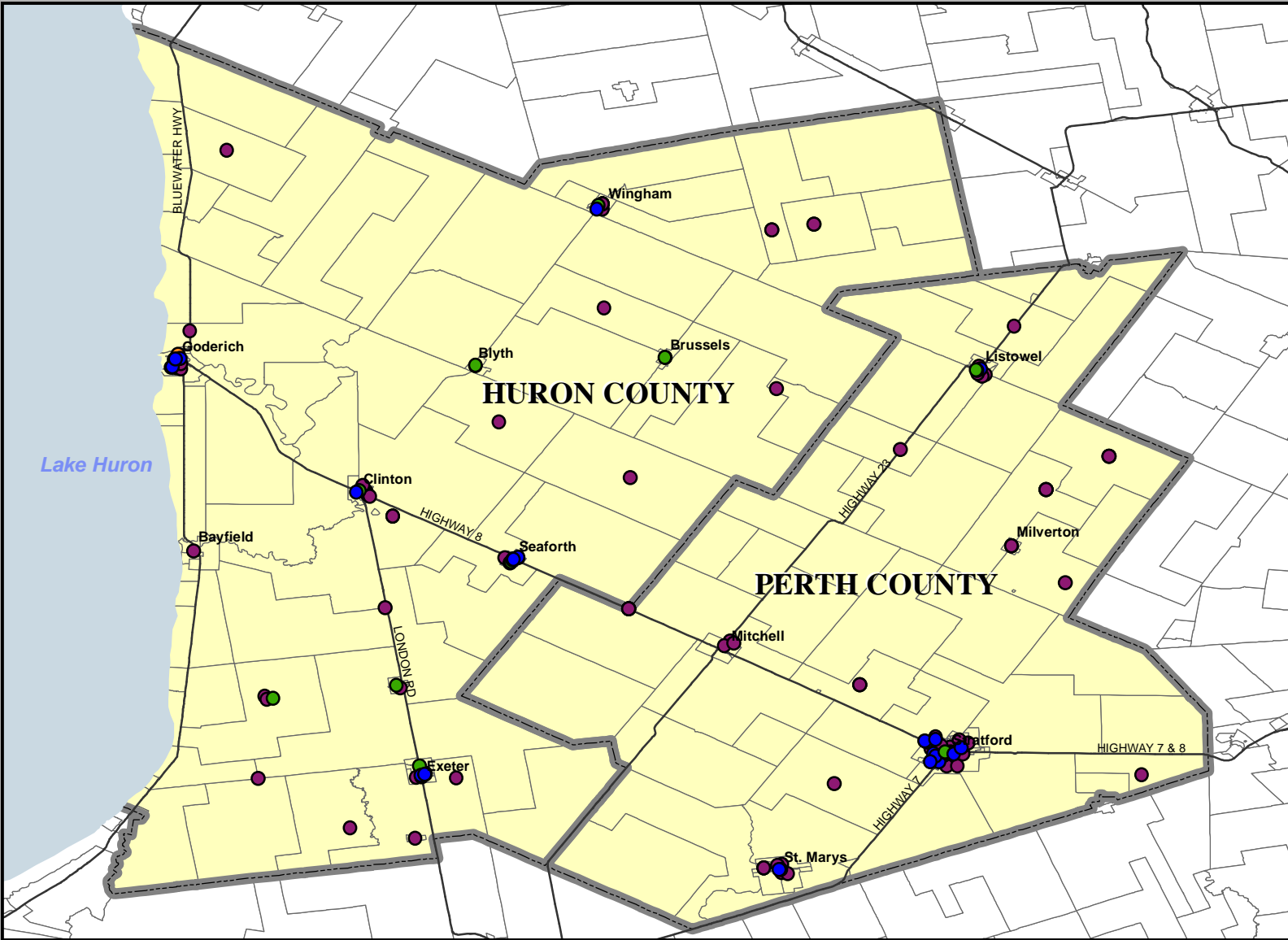
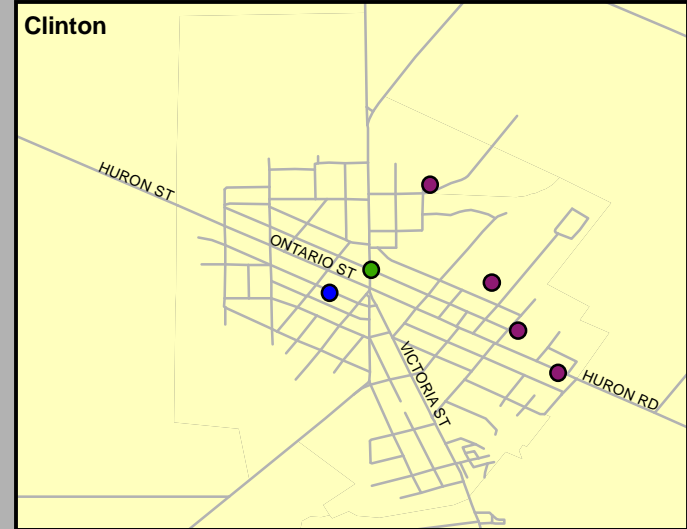
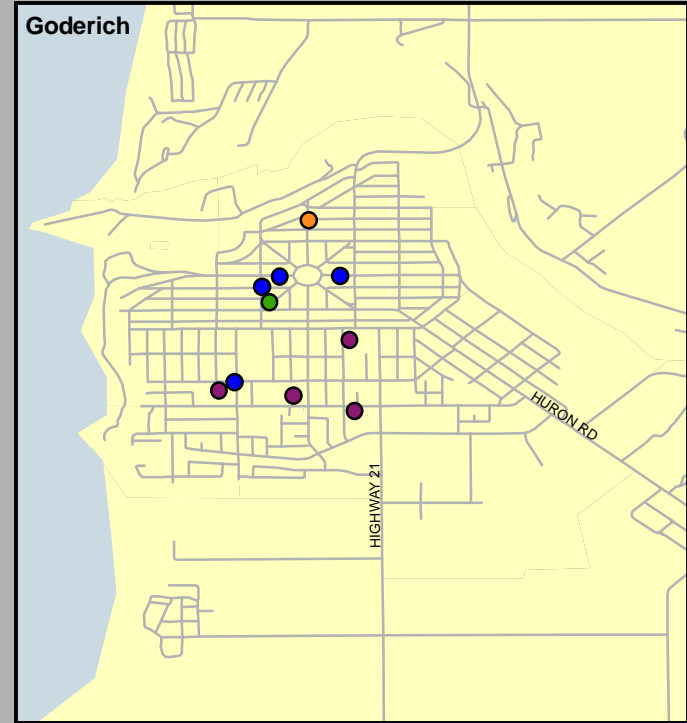
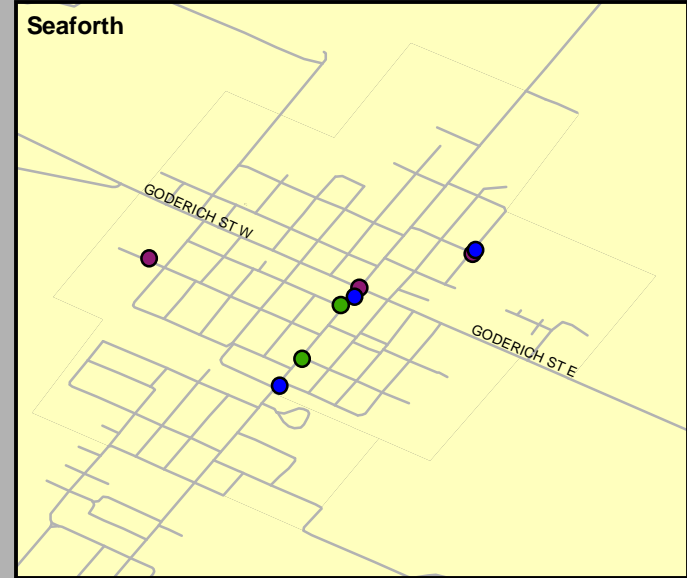
A list of training organizations in Huron and Perth counties was compiled using secondary sources from the Avon Maitland District School Board and the Bruce Grey Huron Perth Georgian Triangle Training Board as well as an internet search for any additional organizations. Although each organization may offer several programs or courses dealing with a variety of topics, it was decided to focus on the organization itself, the general training and educational services it provided and its physical location within the community.

Appendix B provides a list of the organizations that completed the survey, the sector in which they operate, the number of years they have been in service, the main reasons their clients enroll in their programs and if they were willing to be a part of an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties. In total, 69 training locations were identified. These included secondary schools, libraries, and other for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Although 69 training locations were identified, this number includes those organizations with more than one training location and thus does not represent the actual number of individual organizations within Huron and Perth counties. Map 9 illustrates the spatial distribution of all training and educational related facilities within Huron and Perth counties. From the final list of training organizations, secondary schools, and libraries were removed and the remaining 25 were contacted to fill out the survey.

Secondary schools and libraries were removed because they do not provide post secondary education. Table 3.1 shows the response rate of the organizations contacted. If an organization had more than one location, the main branch was contacted in order to complete the survey. If an organization had training locations outside the study area the questions were asked pertaining to those training locations within Huron and Perth counties.

Training and Education Facilities

Huron and Perth County - Map 9



LEGEND

University of Guelph

Facility

- Blue dot: Training
- Green dot: Library
- Orange dot: Museum
- Purple dot: School

— Major Road

— Local Road

▭ County Boundary

■ Dissemination Area

■ Water

Source: DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30 40 Kilometers

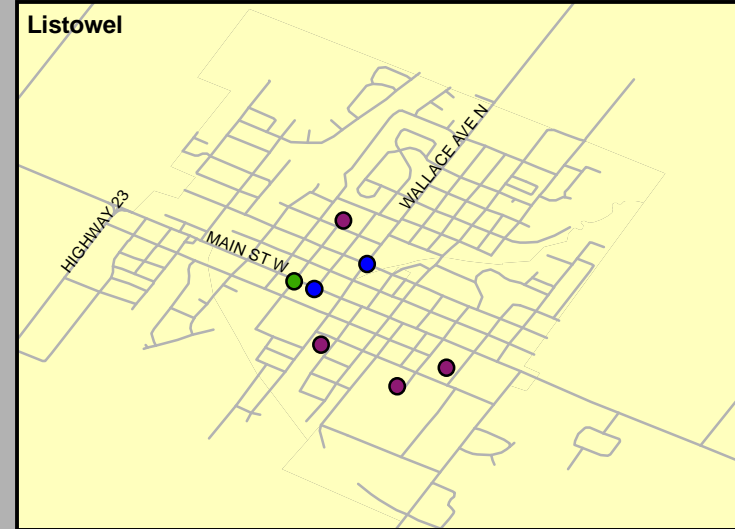
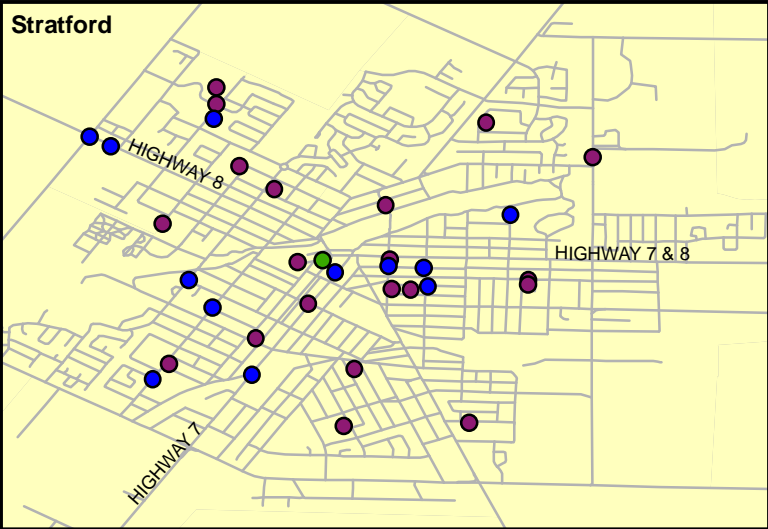
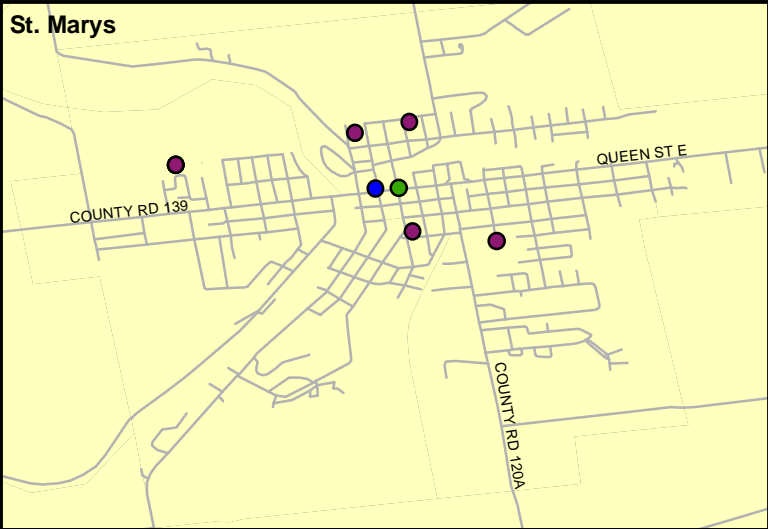


Table 3.1: Response Rates

| Response | N | % |
|---|----|------|
| Completed Survey | 18 | 72.0 |
| Not able to Contact the Appropriate Personnel | 3 | 12.5 |
| No Time | 2 | 8.3 |
| Not Interested | 2 | 8.3 |

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Training Organization Distribution

Using Geographic Information System (GIS) software, the training organizations that responded to the survey were mapped. Map 10 displays the distribution of the training organizations that responded to the survey. The spatial distribution of the respondents shows that Huron County contained only four of the respondents while 14 of the respondents are located in Perth County. The clustering of training organizations in Stratford is created by Stratford playing a role as a higher-level educational service center for the whole region. Stratford has the largest population in Perth County and larger than any community in Huron County. It is clear that heavier populated areas have access to more services, which is true for Stratford with regards to training services. The same effect is true for Clinton, Wingham, Exeter and Mitchell, which have smaller populations and thus fewer training organizations.

The clustering effect of training organizations in higher populated communities is also supported by the location of the profit based training organizations. Map 11 shows the location of the for-profit and not-for-profit training facilities and illustrates that all the for-profit organizations that responded to the survey are located in Stratford. Although the survey did not ask the respondents why their organization located where they did, it could be assumed that the for-profit organizations located in a larger populated community because of the higher potential and frequency of clients and hence higher potential for profit.

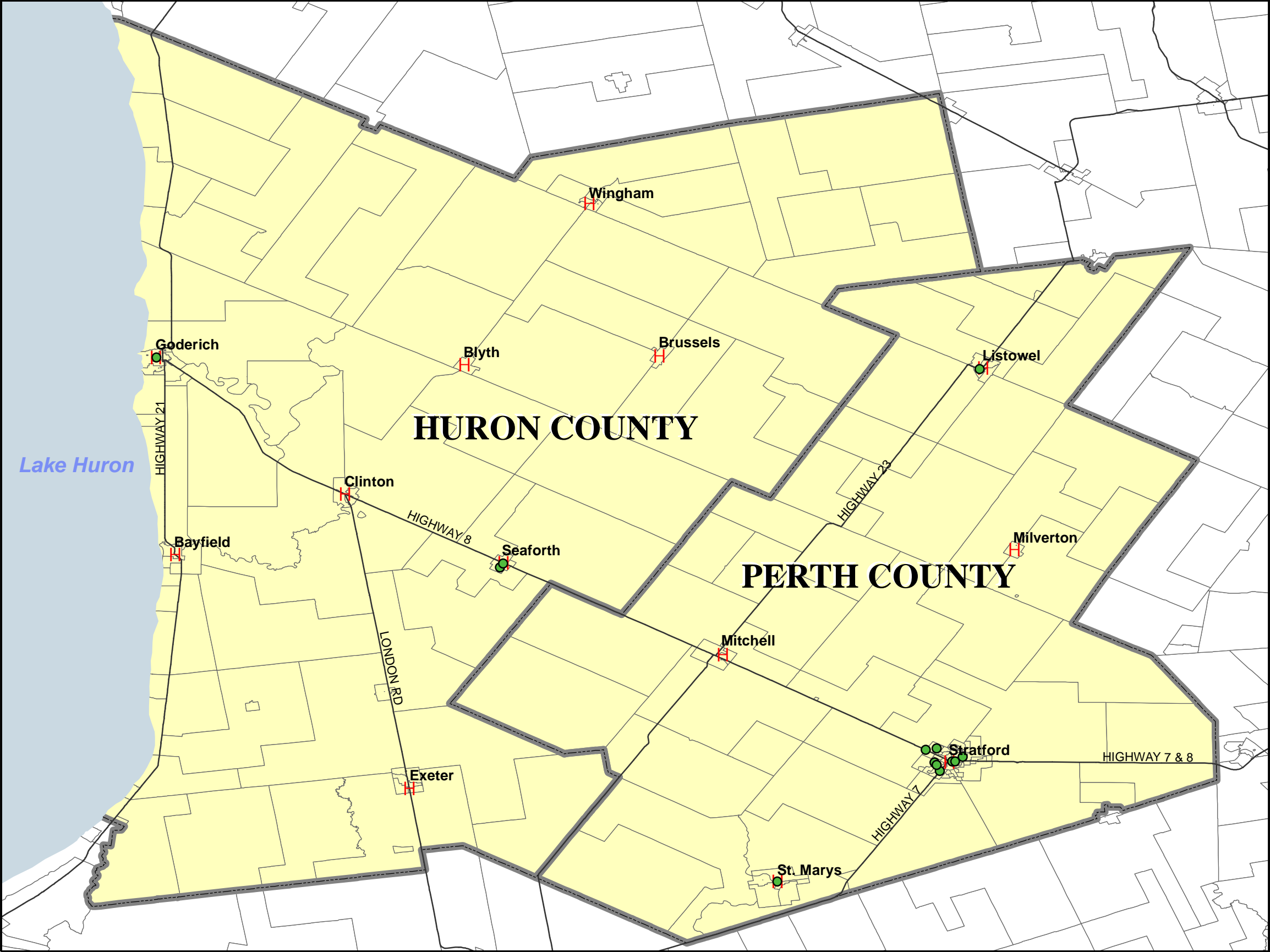
However, Map 10 does illustrate that every urban area in Huron and Perth counties has at least one training service apart from the local school boards and library services. Fanshawe College is not shown on Map 10 because it is located outside of Huron and Perth but was included in the survey because of their post secondary education influence on the two counties.

3.3.2 Organization Sector and Service

The majority of the training organizations that were not called to fill out the survey, such as the school boards, libraries and those branches of an organization other than their main office, operate in the not-for-profit sector. Of the organizations surveyed, 14 of 18 (78%) are not-for-profit and 4 of 18 (22%) are for-profit. According to the survey results, the not-for-profit organizations have been established longer and have provided the largest contribution to training opportunities in the two counties. All the for-profit organizations surveyed have been in service for 5 years or less. Given that all the for-profit organizations are relatively young in terms of their presence in the counties,

Location of Organizations Surveyed

Huron and Perth County - Map 10



LEGEND*University of Guelph*

Surveyed

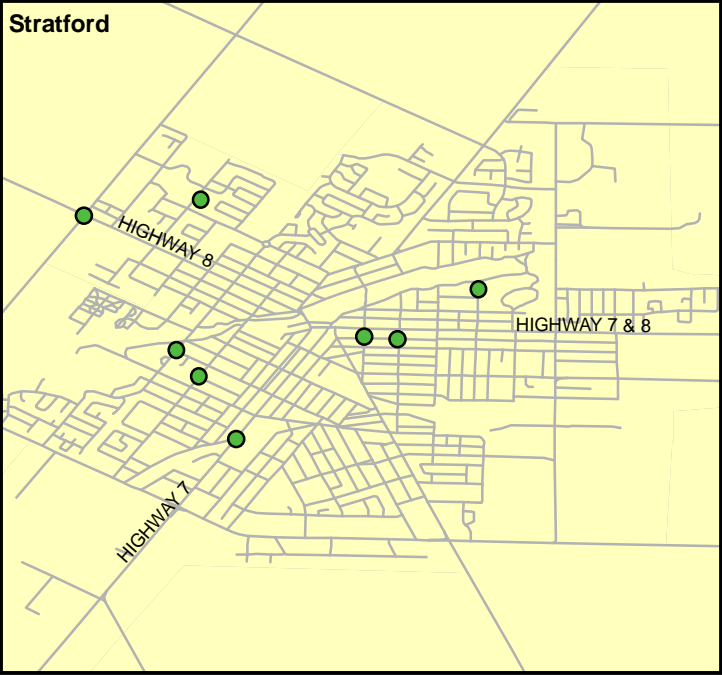
- Yes
- H Town
- Major Road
- Local Road
- ▭ County Boundary
- Dissemination Area
- Water

Source: DMTI Spatial

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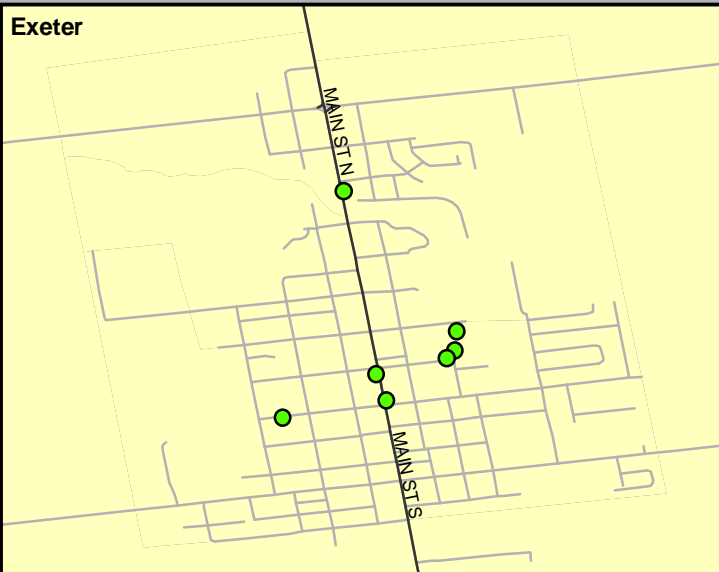
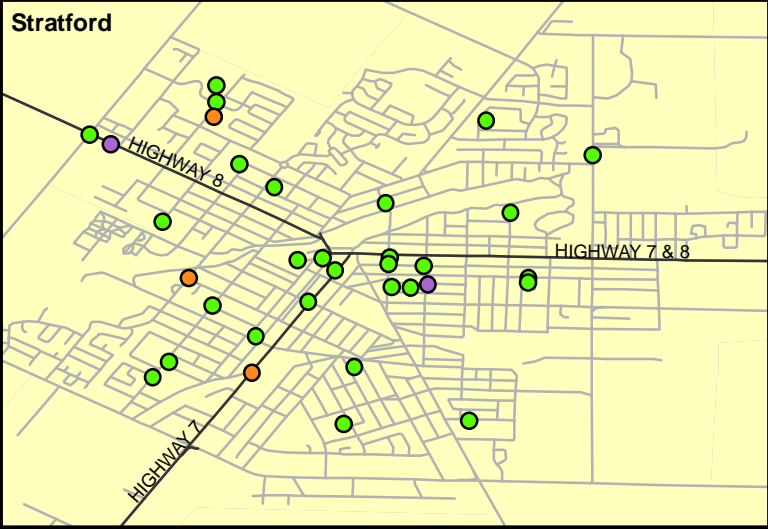
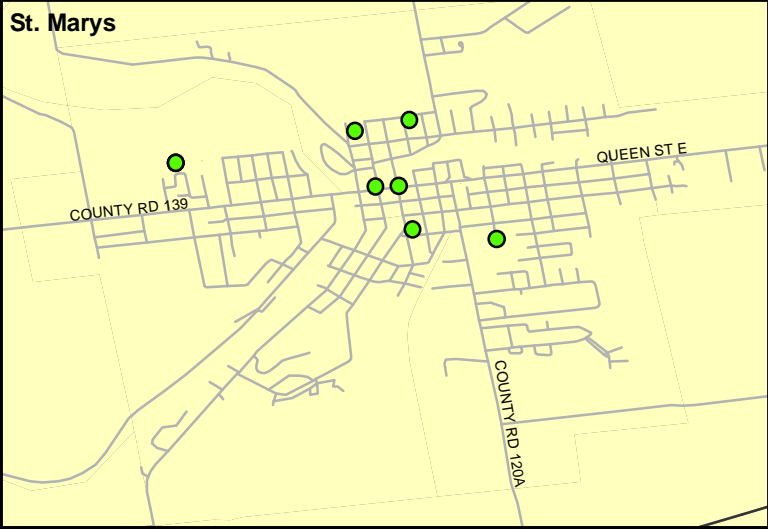
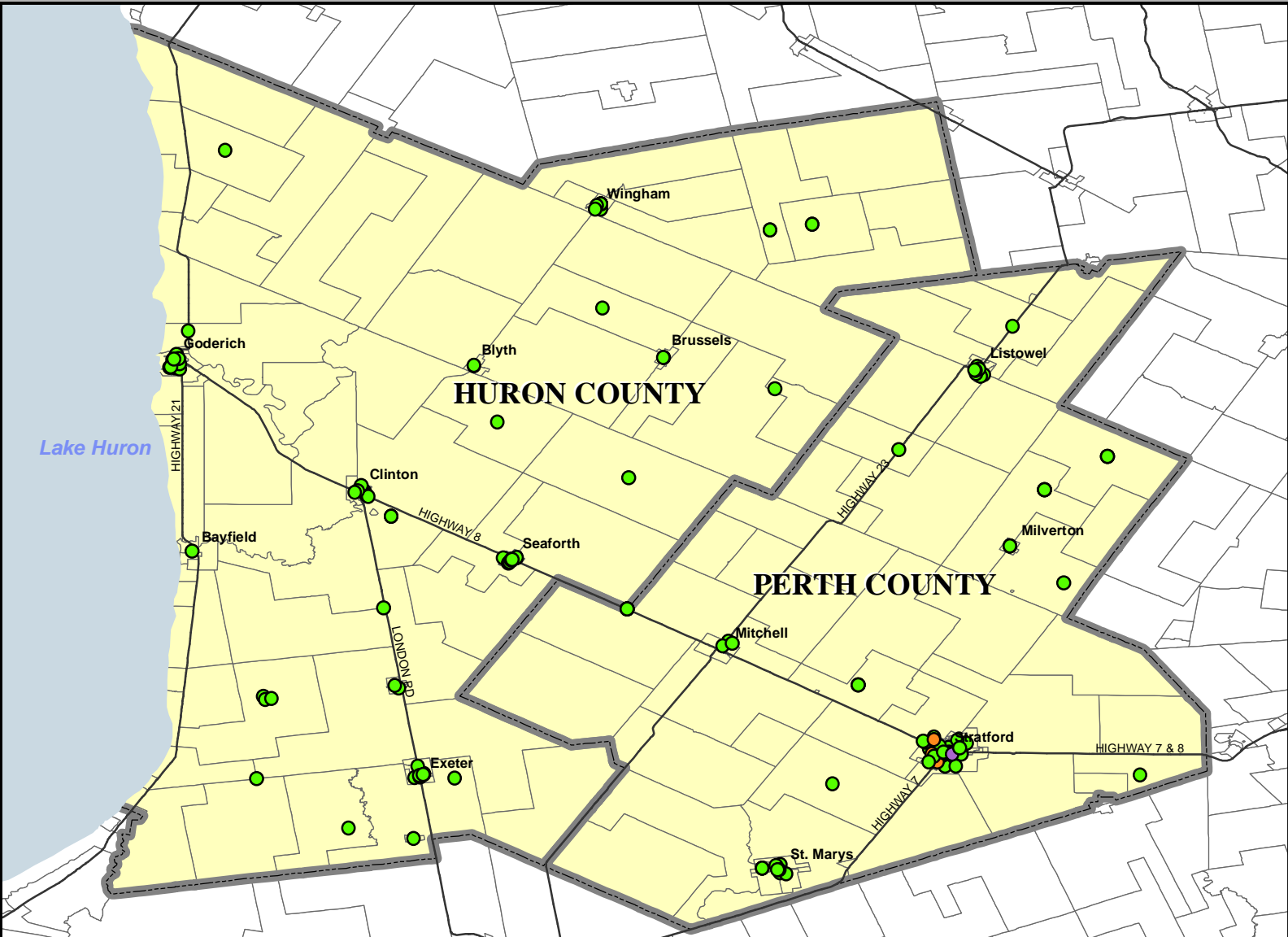
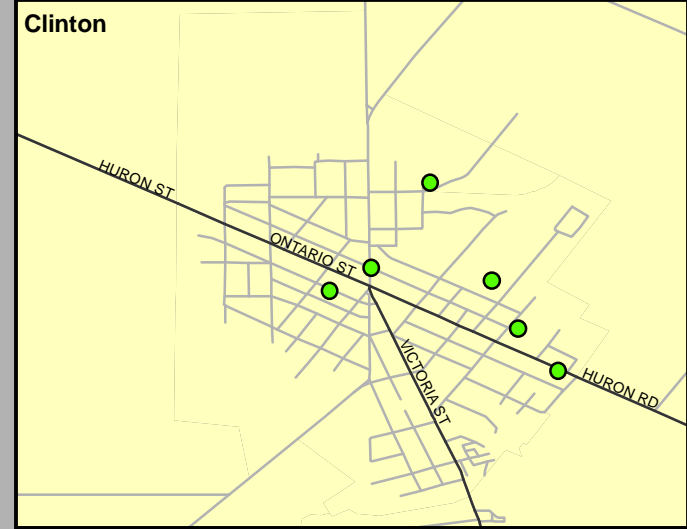
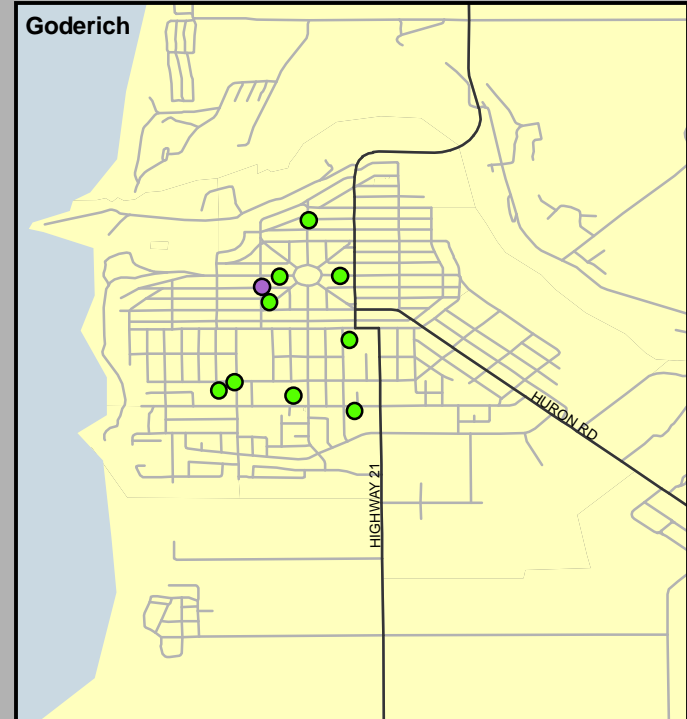
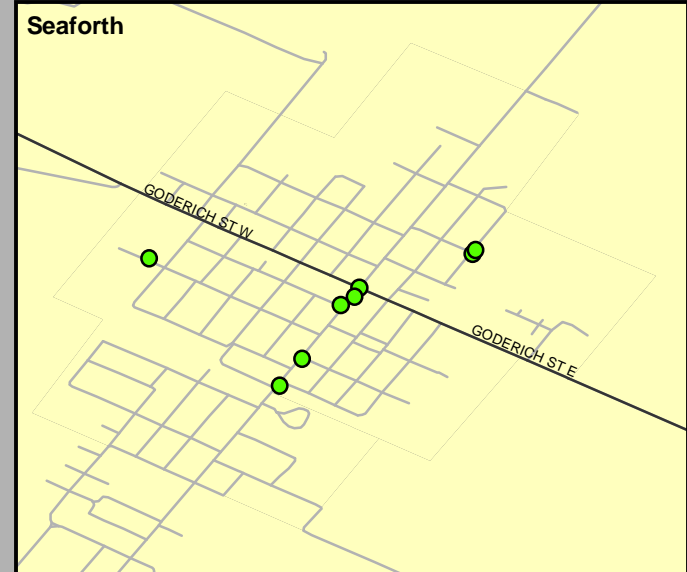
Kilometers

○



For-Profit and Not-For-Profit Training Locations

Huron and Perth County - Map 11



LEGEND *University of Guelph*

Sector

- For-profit
- Not-for-profit
- No Data

Major Road

Local Road

County Boundary

Dissemination Area

Water

Source: DMTI Spatial

0 5 10 20 30 40

Kilometers



indicates that the private sector is beginning to realize that Huron and Perth counties are in need of training opportunities and are taking advantage of such demand. However, the for-profit organizations choose to locate in higher populated areas in order to increase their possibility of success, but at the same time limiting their availability to residents of smaller communities. Although an organization maybe located in a specific area, this does not entirely limit the services that they provide. One of the organizations surveyed mentioned that they provided group training at their client's place of work and a few others offer on-line learning opportunities. These training organizations have eliminated the space and time constraints on their clients by brining their training services to them.

The number of years the not-for-profit organizations have been in operation, range between 3 and 54 years. The majority, 9 of 14 (64%), of the not-for-profit organizations have been serving Huron and Perth counties for over 10 years while the remaining have been in service for less than 10 years. Over the years, the not-for-profit training organizations have created strong partnerships amongst themselves and other organizations within Huron and Perth counties. The partnerships that exist are a strong foundation from which to develop an on-line learning network.

3.3.3 Partnerships

Determining an organization's partners can help create a network of training providers and also potentially discover new organizations that were unknown. The survey asked a question regarding the partners or agencies that the organization works with in any capacity. Although the role and extent of each partnership was not collected, respondents considered partners to be an organization who referred clients to them and vice versa, financial partners, information providers, and/or other community groups. Conestoga College, Avon Maitland District School Board and Human Resources Skills Development Canada were mentioned the most frequently followed by, the Employment Resource Centres, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Partners in Employment, HBDC, the local Chamber of Commerce and Perth Community Futures Development Corporation. Most of the partners mentioned are located in the County of Perth, which can be explained by the larger number of survey respondents located in Stratford. On average, the not-for-profit organizations listed more partners than the for-profit based ones, which can be explained by the length of time the not-for-profit organizations have been serving the two counties. Profit based organizations could also be more concerned with competition and less likely to create partnerships with other local training organizations. However, the organizations listed above would be instrumental in creating an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties.

3.3.4 Methods of Promotion

The organizations were asked to provide the various methods they use to promote their services to the community. Word of mouth was the initial response provided by 5 of 18 (28%) of the respondents. Almost one third of the respondents partially rely on word of mouth to promote themselves to the community which is comparable to the 6 of 18 (33%) of the respondents who

mentioned that their website was a method of promoting their services. Considering that 12 of 18 (71%) of the organizations did not mention their website as a means of promoting their services provides insight into their perception of the Internet and possibly the Internet usage of their clients. The traditional advertising methods using television, radio, newspapers, and posters are used by 14 of 18 (78%) of the respondents as a means of promoting their services.

3.3.5 Program Evaluations and Client Needs

The majority of training organizations in Huron and Perth counties are a wealth of information regarding client needs, attitudes, abilities and training preferences. We asked two questions regarding program evaluations and client needs assessments. Of the organizations surveyed 15 of 18 (83%) conduct program evaluations. Client satisfaction surveys were the most popular method of conducting program evaluations with 12 of 18 (67%) of the organizations making use of them. The client satisfaction surveys were always administered after the client had completed the program or course. However, no mention was made of contacting those clients who did not complete the program or course in order to find out why they dropped out. Although client surveys were used to evaluate their programs some organizations conducted internal evaluations. Some internal evaluations compared program results and original objectives and others reviewed programs through a financial audit. Internal evaluations were used by 5 of 18 (28%) of the survey respondents.

In order to change, adapt or provide new programs to the community, a client needs assessment would have to be conducted. Of the organizations surveyed, 13 of 18 (72%) have conducted client needs assessments. The most popular method of conducting client needs assessments, used by 7 of 18 (39%) respondents, is a client orientation assessment. Students' needs are assessed before the program begins so that the education or training instructors can best meet the student's needs through the curriculum. Using focus groups in order to determine client needs was only mentioned by 3 of 18 (17%) of the organizations surveyed.

Training organizations in Huron and Perth counties are frequently documenting the success of their programs through program evaluations and client needs assessments. The organizations surveyed know what makes a successful program or course and understand the needs of the general population with regards to the specific services that they offer. Any effort to create an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties should build on the knowledge accumulated over the years by each training organization. Partnerships and the sharing of information among organizations will facilitate and help to ensure the success of an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties.

3.3.6 Sources of Funding

Of the not-for-profit organizations serving Huron and Perth counties, 78% stated that government funding is the lifeline that keeps them in service. Most of these organizations receive funding from several sources and very seldom rely on only one source. Of the not-for-profit organizations surveyed, 10 of 14 (71%)

reported that the Ontario Provincial Government is one of their major sources of funding through such ministries as the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Federal Government, through departments such as Human Resource Skills Development Canada and Industry Canada was also considered to be a major source of funding by 6 of 14 (43%) of the not-for-profit organizations surveyed.

The for-profit organizations all reported that tuition fees were a major source of their funding along with help from financial institutions and private donors. Considering that a substantial number of training providers in Huron and Perth counties rely heavily on funding from the government, suggests that these services could be in jeopardy at every provincial and federal budget review. However, considering the new 2005 Ontario Budget has allocated \$6.2 billion to postsecondary education and is titled "*Investing in People, Strengthening our Economy*", suggests that current funding trends could continue, maintaining the present level of funding and service.

3.3.7 Training Services

Determining the main reasons that clients are enrolling in training programs is important to identify service overlap, which in return can create competition between organizations in the same geographic area. Although competition drives innovation, it is important that government funding for similar programs is geographically distributed evenly, limiting overlap. Since most of the organizations surveyed offer several programs, a question was asked to determine the main reasons that the organization's clients enrol in their programs. Reasons for enrolment can provide an overview of the types of programs and training that are offered. Of the organizations surveyed, 6 of 18 (33%) mentioned that job search assistance is one of the main reasons that people take their programs and 12 of 18 (67%) considered that post secondary education or skill training and upgrading was one of the main reasons for enrolment. Business start up assistance was reported by 3 of 18 (17%) to be the main reason that people enrol in their programs. See Appendix B to determine the response provided by each organization regarding the main reasons their clients enrol in their programs. The main focus of the training organizations in Huron and Perth counties is post secondary education, skill training and upgrading with some providing job search assistance and others offering business start up help. Although some of the organizations only provide one area of service others offer services in one or more of the areas identified.

3.3.8 On-line Learning

In order to assess the Internet based learning initiatives among training organizations in Huron and Perth counties the survey asked if any of their programs were offered through an on-line learning format. Of the organizations surveyed 7 of 18 (39%) said that they offer some programs that can be accessed through the Internet. The training providers that service Huron and Perth counties and provide on-line learning capabilities include Fanshawe College, Conestoga College, AMDEC On-line, Community Futures Development Institute,

Centre for Employment & Learning, the Job Finding Centre/Time Training Services, and the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Although some programs and courses are offered in an on-line learning format there are others that are not. It is important to understand the barriers to transferring the classroom-based programs to an on-line learning format in order to determine the feasibility of on-line learning in several capacities. The on-line learning providers listed above whom are at the forefront of Internet based learning understand the challenges to such learning initiatives better than others. Some of their responses to the survey questions regarding barriers to on-line learning include the following:

“For our Literacy and Basic Skills Program a barrier is low literacy levels of clients which would be prohibitive. One on one tutoring is required for this client group.”

~Director of Continuing Education~
Fanshawe College

“Few people are willing to sign-up which is similar to correspondence courses. Plus there is a lack of high-quality, interactive courses available.”

~General Manager~
Perth Communities Future Development Corporation

“Initial start up costs, plus technical support staff and teaching staff to respond to students questions regarding course content.”

~Administrator~
The Centre for Employment & Learning

The remaining 11 of 18 (61%) of the respondents who do not offer any of their programs through an on-line learning format gave similar but brief answers to the question regarding barriers to on-line learning. Some of their responses included the instructional nature of the program, lack of client computer skills, provide hands-on trades training, interpersonal interaction required, and the over all cost of starting up an on-line learning system. The most frequently mentioned perceived barrier, stated by 11 of 18 (61%) of the respondents, was that the nature of the training they provide would be difficult to near impossible to offer in an on-line learning format.

Understanding the current completion rates of on-line learning programs offered throughout Huron and Perth counties would help in understanding the success of these initiatives. The survey results indicate that between 80% and 100% of people who enrol in an on-line learning program stay with it until completion. The high success rate of on-line programs reported by the training organizations identified in this report is much higher than what was expected and experienced by the committee members of this project. However, it is unknown how these organizations collect and calculate their on-line program's completion rates. Do completion rates include every student who does not drop out of the course regardless if they fail or not? Or do only those students who pass the course make up the completion rate? These are some of the factors that

contribute to differences between completion rates. Of the organizations that provide on-line learning very few document the demographics of their students and the related success rates of each group. Without further information regarding the types of people enrolling in on-line programs, it is not reasonable to assume that every on-line program will experience high success rates like those reported here.

AMDEC is an on-line secondary school credit program administered by the Avon Maitland District School Board and is available to Ontario residents under the age of 21, who are not already registered on a full-time basis at a school board other than the Avon Maitland District School Board. Although AMDEC is focused on providing high school credits and not post secondary education it was included in the survey because they only offer on-line learning. AMDEC reported that 85% of the students who enrol in their courses pass. Included in the remaining 15% are those who fail or drop out of the course. AMDEC reported that some of the students that enrol in their courses consist of those whose course of interest is not offered at their school, students who are home schooled, and the young world-class athletes or artists that are away from home performing. AMDEC also has a contract with the Canadian National Defence to provide high school credits to those armed forces members who are trying to complete their high school education. All of AMDEC's students are different in many ways and have different external factors affecting their interest and success in the on-line programs they enrol in.

The high school survey report examines both male and females' experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards on-line learning and the results clearly identify several differences. The following are two organization's responses to the survey question regarding on-line program completion rates.

"80% of the people who start a program finish them. Our problem isn't completion/abandonment as much as it is take-up rate."

~General Manager~

Perth Community Futures Development Corporation

“For our Continuing Education programs we have noticed no differential between student completion rates (80%) of on-line, hybrid or classroom programming. This may be due to the professional development nature of the programs offered through this format. Typically, business, advanced accreditation programs”.

~Director of Continuing Education~
Fanshawe College

The organizations providing on-line learning seemed to be more concerned with enrolment rates than they are with the completion rates of their programs. The findings reported by three pieces of literature (Baren et al. 2000, Thompson-James 1999, and Singh 2004) suggest reasons why enrolment rates in adult learning programs could be low. According to the 1998 Adult and Education and Training Survey, paid employees participated in job-related training at a rate twice that of self-employed individuals. Workers in large firms participated at a much higher rate than those in smaller firms. Managerial and professional employees participated in more training than blue-collar workers and sales and clerical staff. And lastly, university degree graduates participate in adult learning training programs more than twice the rate of high school graduates (Baren et al., 2000). Although the Adult and Education Training Survey did not look at on-line learning participation, its findings are helpful in understanding adult learning behaviours, which would affect the success of an on-line learning network. More research is required to determine why a large number of adults do not perceive a need or have a desire to participate in training.

It is important to understand adult training participants and non-participants' expectations of returns on skill development. The incentives and disincentives that influence adults' decisions regarding continuing education and training is vital to understand for the development of appropriate programs (Baren et. al., 2000). Insight into adult learning behaviours will be provided through the employer and employee survey component of the Community Mapping Project.

Enrolment rates of rural residents in on-line learning programs could also be limited by their current Internet usage, and attitudes. Many rural regions in Canada have suffered from either a lack of Internet services or a slow rate of Internet connection. Although various levels of government have made efforts to increase Internet accessibility for rural households, recent studies have shown that rural residents are less likely to use the Internet compared to people living in urban areas (Thompson-James, 1999). Singh (2004) states that Internet usage is higher among younger people and as a result, households with a younger 'head' are more likely to use the Internet. There are several reasons for lower Internet usage among older Canadians which include lack of interest, resistance to computer technology and change or uneducated on the possible usefulness of the Internet.

The literature suggests that although human capital investment can increase economic development, these efforts are in vain unless investment in physical capital complements it. As important as the Internet is for future economic development, the literature states that rural residents are less likely to

use the Internet. The older an individual is, the less likely they are to use the Internet as well. The findings on rural internet usage as well as the knowledge gaps regarding adult learning perceptions suggest some of the potential barriers to the success of an on-line learning network in Huron and Perth counties.

3.3.9 Interest in Internet based Learning Network

Despite the barriers to Internet based learning identified in this report, 7 of 18 (39%) of the respondents answered yes to participating as a training partner in an internet-based learning network for Huron and Perth counties. However, none of the respondents who answered 'yes' were profit-based organizations. Due to the current preliminary research stage of the Internet based learning network, 9 of 19 (50%) of the respondents answered 'maybe' and would like to receive further information when it is made available. Of the organizations surveyed only one said 'no' to participation in an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties, which means there is interest in such an initiative.

3.4 Discussion

Huron and Perth counties are expected to experience labour force opportunities in the farm service, skilled trades, and hospitality and health care sectors. It is important for productivity and effectiveness of the local economy that the necessary skilled people are available to fill these emerging jobs. Youth out migration is considered to be a problem because the potential labour is leaving either for post secondary education, because they believe more job opportunities lie elsewhere or for the reason of not liking their community.

Providing post secondary education and training for Huron and Perth while allowing people to reside and work locally poses a challenge. Market forces drive the location choices of profit-based training organizations because they are dependent on profits to succeed. All of the profit-based organizations that were surveyed for this project happen to be located in Stratford. Although their reasons for location choice were not noted it can be assumed that population size was greatly considered. The majority of training organizations in Perth County cluster in Stratford. A similar pattern is seen with Goderich in Huron County. It may seem that there is an unfair advantage for those residing in the more urban areas in Huron and Perth counties with regards to training opportunities. However, market forces control how for-profit organizations behave.

Providing services in rural areas is not easy because of the low population densities requiring people to travel far to obtain a service or for the services to travel far to their client. From the point of view of the client, it may not be economical to travel long distances to obtain a service unless the perceived value added is greater than the value spent. The cost of traveling between home and a training institution (in both directions) is borne by the student. The full cost of a training course to the student, including travel, increases with distance from the training facility. As the distance to the facility increases, the costs become so large that the potential interest of a student is reduced to zero and is considered the spatial extent of the market.

The Ontario Government tries to evenly distribute their Elementary and High schools among the population reducing traveling time for those far away.

However, there are always students who must travel much further than others. The problem becomes more difficult for post secondary education. A solution to increasing enrolment in post secondary education has been made available through the use of the Internet, which eliminates spatial constraints.

Several of the organizations surveyed for this project offer some of their programs in an on-line learning format. However, in order to increase equal opportunity for the greatest number of people, bandwidth limitations associated with dial up connections must be considered when developing on-line learning curriculum and network systems.

The organizations that were surveyed which offer on-line learning, report that their course completion rates are between 80% and 100%. Again this is contrary to what the steering committee members have experienced and expected. It is important to note that it is unknown how these organizations calculate their completion rates and what the demographics are of their clients who enrol in their on-line programs. Completion rates can vary among students depending on their demographics, employment status, reasons for enrolment and many other external factors. Although only one organization stated that enrolment rates rather than completion rates is the issue of concern, a marketing and education campaign will be important for the success of the on-line learning network. The potential that on-line learning can have to better one's career and job prospects must be communicated effectively to the local community as well as to local businesses. Local businesses must be aware of the on-line curriculum as it relates to their sector of the economy and help in the post evaluation of skills upgrading.

The problem faced by those organizations that do not offer on-line learning is the perceived barriers to transferring their classroom based programs to on-line. Of those organizations surveyed 61% said that because of the nature of the training they provide it would be difficult to near impossible to offer the same programs in an on-line learning format. Collaboration between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations will be vital in creating a successful on-line learning network. Since 39% of the organizations surveyed said 'yes' and 50% said 'maybe' to participating in an on-line learning network, suggests there is a substantial amount of interest among training organizations in Huron and Perth counties. Those who responded with 'maybe' were interested in the concept but would like to know more about it before they could commit to saying 'yes'.

Creating interest among training organizations in Huron and Perth as well as the government will be instrumental in creating an on-line learning network. Since the government funds many programs offered by the not-for-profit organization, the programs have the potential to be discontinued because of funding cutbacks. In order to make the on-line training attractive to local residents, government funding or another stable source of funding will be essential to keep enrolment cost low.

According to the results of the survey, an on-line learning network in Huron and Perth counties has the potential to be successful as long as there is interest and involvement from the training/education community, local businesses and the appropriate funding providers.

3.5 Conclusions

As more and more people enrol in post secondary education to obtain a trades certificate, diploma, degree or to upgrade specific skills, competition for jobs also increases. It is important that Huron and Perth's labour market stays competitive in the local economy as well as the global one. Due to low population densities in rural areas, classroom-based post secondary training may not work. However, on-line learning eliminates the cost of travel time by offering education in the comfort of the student's home. As long as all the appropriate physical capital investments mentioned in this report are implemented and partnerships are built and developed, on-line learning has the potential to increase skills development in rural areas and strengthen their economies.

4.0 High School Student Survey

4.1 Introduction

A constant challenge in rural areas is the maintenance and growth of local communities both demographically and economically. There is always the danger that a community will lose its population to bigger and 'better' places. More services, more choice in employment, higher salaries, etc. can entice many to larger cities and leave behind a dwindling population in an already small community. The counties of Huron and Perth are facing such a challenge.

One approach that local organizations can use to prevent this exodus is to analyze the local economy and its labour market. This knowledge can help them better tailor their services and programs for the current and future labour market trends and needs. For example, they can ensure that jobs are available for the type of skills the local population has to offer by targeting their incentives to employers who will use such skills. The opposite is also true whereby the local training organizations can use the information to teach the skills that are useful for the local employers already present. Gathering such information is the main purpose behind this project.

Currently, some of that information is already available through channels such as Statistics Canada on the federal level, through provincial ministries, and through various local organizations. However, some of that information has either been too general and basic or too specific to a target population. In addition, the information that is available is not offered at the smaller area or county level. No comprehensive report existed where all facets of the current and future labour market is detailed for Huron and Perth counties. That is, no report revealed the present skill requirements of employers, the current available skills of the employable population and the available skills of the up and coming employable population who will be entering the labour force full time in the near future.

The Huron Perth Community Mapping Exercise aims to provide such needed information. This section of the report presents the findings from the high school survey. The work included the administration of a survey to a sample population of grade 12 students from all 11 public high schools in the area.

The idea behind this survey is that the grade 12 students represent the future labour force as they will graduate from high school, college, and/or university in the next few years and work full time. When combined with new immigrants or in-migrants it will be up to these students to replace the aging population and maintain the economic viability of the area. The goals of this survey then were to gather information on:

- The students' current skills
- The students' aspiration towards post-secondary education
- The students' plans regarding their future place and type of employment

4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Survey Design

The questionnaire used here was originally developed by Harry Cummings and colleagues for an earlier similar project in the counties of Bruce and Grey in Southern Ontario (Bruce Grey Huron Perth Georgian Triangle Training Board (BGHPGTTB), 2005). It was found to be a useful tool for gathering pertinent data on high school students.

It is designed to cover the major categories of interest relating to the labour market as established by the research team and the steering committee of the Bruce and Grey county project. The current steering committee and research team added a few adjustments and added a new section to cover some of the more specific needs of this project.

The main categories covered by the questionnaire focus on the level of skills the students currently have, where they have acquired these skills, their plans on acquiring more skills, their plans regarding future education and employment, and the reasons and influences behind their choices. The added section covered Internet and computer skills, which were seen as increasingly pertinent for available jobs and future training programs.

The questionnaire is expected to provide information on the students' current skills by firstly asking about their averages overall and in three major fields of study, and then by asking about the level of study of those fields (i.e.: University preparation, college preparation, or workplace preparation). The amount of credits obtained in various others fields also provided information as to the types of skills they learned. Additionally, a section where the students were to rate themselves on various skills were used as indicators of learned skills and provided triangulation for the data. The combination of self-assessed skilled ratings with the number of credits completed, the level of classes taken and the average mark in class were expected to provide a representative picture of the skills the students have learned in high school.

Questions regarding the students' work history, which includes volunteer, paid part time, paid summer time, and/or family business work, also served to provide detail as to the skills they currently have as well as where they tend to obtain those skills. The students' recent employment record can provide insight into the types of employments skills they have learned (i.e.: management skills, welding skills, customer service skills, etc).

Information regarding the students' future educational and employment plans were collected with direct questions regarding the post-secondary institutions they plan on attending, their future field of study, the industry and occupation in which they expect to be as well as whether they expect to live and work in Huron and Perth counties.

Throughout, the students are also polled on their reasons for choosing such fields of work or study. They are also asked on the details of whom or what has influenced their decisions and aspirations.

And finally, the students' level of Internet and computer skill was assessed with various direct and indirect questions. Some questions involved the direct self-assessment by the students on their level of skill while other questions pertained to amount of use of a computer or the Internet. These later questions

included such variables as the number of search engines used recently and the recency of having performed various activities. Again, this combination of direct and indirect question was used to provide a clearer picture of the students' computer and Internet skills.

4.2.2 Population

The future labour force for a region is composed of the current work force, minus those who die or leave, plus new entrants from the school system or via in-migration. The youth component would even include unborn children as they too may grow up to work in the area. Obviously, it would be quite impossible to representatively sample such a population. Therefore, the youth population studied here is that of all grade 12 students enrolled at one of the 11 public high schools. Overall then, there are 2,656 grade 12 students enrolled in 9 high schools from the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) and 2 high schools from the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board (HPCDSB). Due to time, monetary and logistical constraints, the other grades and the private schools were not part of the sample frame.

Table 4.1: Participating Schools by County, Location, and School Board

| County | School | Location | School Board |
|--------|---|-----------|--------------|
| Huron | Central Huron Secondary School (CHSS) | Clinton | AMDSB |
| | St. Anne Catholic Secondary School | Clinton | HPCDSB |
| | South Huron District High School (SHDHS) | Exeter | AMDSB |
| | F.E. Madill Secondary School (FEMSS) | Wingham | AMDSB |
| | Goderich District Collegiate Institute (GDCI) | Goderich | AMDSB |
| Perth | Stratford Northwestern Secondary School (SNWSS) | Stratford | AMDSB |
| | Stratford Central Secondary School (SCSS) | Stratford | AMDSB |
| | St. Marys District Collegiate & Vocational Institute (DCVI) | St. Marys | AMDSB |
| | Mitchell District High School (MDHS) | Mitchell | AMDSB |
| | Listowel District Secondary School (LDSS) | Listowel | AMDSB |
| | St. Michael Catholic Secondary School | Stratford | HPCDSB |

4.2.3 Sampling Strategy

For the sample to be statistically representative of the population of 2,656 students and to have a 5% confidence interval and a 95% confidence level, it was technically necessary to obtain 336 valid responses from randomly selected individuals in the sample frame. The sample would have to be drawn from an all-inclusive list of 2,656 students. Given the administrative difficulties of delivering questionnaires to students randomly selected from all classes, the researchers were forced to use cluster sampling using the class as the unit to be sampled. For such a cluster sample then, a design factor of two is applied and a sample of 672 students or 25% of the total population is necessary.

While this is twice the number and hence is more difficult to achieve, cluster sampling also affords a few benefits. Mainly, it makes the administration of the survey much simpler since the researchers now only have to address 47 different classes rather than trying to contact 336 individual students. Additionally, the questionnaire can hence be administered through regular class times by the instructor for that class rather than having to make alternate arrangements for a few students from various classes to complete the questionnaire.

Consequently, the researchers were restricted to sampling classes from semester 2 only due to the time frame of the overall research. The challenge then was to select classes that reached the greatest number of students while not sampling any students twice. Duplicating students would endanger the representativeness of the sample. To circumvent this, the researchers had to choose classes that did not overlap in roster. That is, the chosen classes had to be clearly separate so that it would be nearly impossible for a student to be in two sampled classes. The solution was to select only English grade 12 classes. According to the Avon Maitland District School Board policy for assigning classes, it would be quite rare for one student to be taking two grade 12 English classes during the same semester.

All grade 12 English classes represented 47 different classes and a total of 939 students. Therefore to obtain a sample of 672 as mentioned earlier, it was necessary to survey all classes and expect at least a 72% response rate to maintain representativeness.

4.2.4 Survey Administration

Starting in February, the superintendents for the two school boards and principals of all 11 high schools were contacted to obtain their permission to carry out this survey. Subsequently, the principals were all alerted via email of the upcoming survey and were then contacted via regular mail to invite them to participate. In March, a package, which included a copy of the questionnaire, a renewed invitation, and specific dates for the survey, was sent to all principals via regular mail. At that time, they were also asked to confirm their availability and willingness to participate.

Meanwhile, Goderich District Collegiate Institute principal Pat Senn agreed to have a pre-test conducted at her high school. A class of 25 students for a grade 11 English media class completed the questionnaire. The pre-test provided valuable information regarding some new question formats and some new answer choices. After adjusting the questionnaire based on the feedback received from the grade 11 class, it was printed in *Snap* format for distribution to all schools.

During the week of March 29 to April 4 members of the research team visited all 11 high schools and met with principals, vice-principals, heads of English departments and a few teachers. They were all introduced to the goals of the survey and the process for administering it was explained. At that time they also received all the necessary copies of the survey and were asked to have them completed within the following week. They were asked to return the completed surveys via interdepartmental mail to the head office of the Avon

Maitland District School Board. Arrangements were made with the two Catholic schools to pick up the questionnaires once completed.

The *Snap* software was used to speed up and facilitate the administration and analysis of the survey. It is a program that allows for the scanning of a questionnaire as a method of data entry. The software is designed to efficiently look at scanned images of completed questionnaires and record the students' responses thereby saving numerous hours of manual data entry. It also prevents manual entry errors by automatically flagging out-of-range or unreasonable answers.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Response Rates

As outlined earlier, 939 questionnaires were distributed to 11 high schools in Huron and Perth counties. At least 672 responses were necessary to ensure representativeness. That is 72% of the population needed to respond. As outlined in the following table, the response rate exceeded that threshold by 78 responses (8.9%). That provided us with a 95% confidence level with a +/-3% confidence interval. Positive attitudes from all high school representatives in response to the requests for the administration of this survey are clearly reflected in the number of completed questionnaires received.

Table 4.2: Response Rates

| County | School | Location | Total Sample | Total Response | Response Rate |
|--------|-------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Huron | SHDHS | Exeter | 86 | 76 | 88.4% |
| | GDCI | Goderich | 48 | 40 | 83.3% |
| | CHSS | Clinton | 50 | 41 | 82.0% |
| | FEMSS | Wingham | 109 | 88 | 80.7% |
| | St. Anne | Clinton | 87 | 66 | 75.9% |
| Perth | MDHS | Mitchell | 81 | 70 | 86.4% |
| | DCVI | St. Marys | 57 | 48 | 84.2% |
| | SNWSS | Stratford | 60 | 50 | 83.3% |
| | LDSS | Listowel | 120 | 99 | 82.5% |
| | SCSS | Stratford | 112 | 86 | 76.8% |
| | St. Michael | Stratford | 129 | 86 | 66.7% |
| Total | | | 939 | 750 | 80.9% |

4.3.2 Respondent Profiles

To verify how representative a sample is to the overall population one can compare the gender proportions. The following table outlines the sampled gender gap and the census gender gap for those aged 15 to 19. It shows that we have more females in our Perth county sample than in the population at large. However, this analysis is just meant as a general marker as the census data encompasses all those aged 15 to 19 while our sample counts all grade 12

students, which can be between the ages of 17 to 21. Consequently, differences between our sample and census data can be partially explained. However, all further comparisons between genders will still need to take into account that there are overall more females. For example, a direct comparison of frequencies between genders will no longer be correct since the females responded in higher frequencies overall. Instead, proportions of males versus the proportions of females will be used for comparison.

Table 4.3: Sample Population by Gender Compared with Census Data

| | | Gender | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|------|
| | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Huron County | Sample | 154 | 49.8% | 155 | 50.2% | 309 | 100% |
| Huron County | Census (15-19) | 144 5 | 47.1% | 1620 | 52.9% | 3065 | 100% |
| Perth County | Sample | 180 | 42.3% | 246 | 57.7% | 426 | 100% |
| Perth County | Census (15-19) | 182 5 | 51.9% | 1690 | 48.1% | 3515 | 100% |

The age variable is also another useful one for describing the sample and for noticing any irregularities. One thing to notice here is that the males tend to be older than the females. One possible explanation for this is that males may fail more grades than females. Unfortunately, this questionnaire did not cover the students' educational history that far back. The implications for our interpretations are minimal as the relationship between age and gender is weak at best.

Table 4.4: Sample Population by Gender and Age

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 17 | 7 | 2.1% | 13 | 3.3% | 20 | 2.7% |
| 18 | 248 | 74.3% | 330 | 82.5% | 578 | 78.7% |
| 19 | 69 | 20.7% | 49 | 12.3% | 118 | 16.1% |
| 20 | 8 | 2.4% | 6 | 1.5% | 14 | 1.9% |
| 21 | 2 | .6% | 2 | .5% | 4 | .5% |
| Total | 334 | 100.0% | 400 | 100.0% | 734 | 100.0% |

The following table highlights the average mark by gender. The females have significantly higher averages in the 'All Classes' category and in English. In math and science, however, there is no significant difference between males and females; they equally do as well in those subjects. The same tendencies were also found in the Bruce and Grey results.

Table 4.5: Average Marks by Gender

| | Gender | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | N |
| Marks in All Classes | 74.02 | 323 | 77.13 | 393 | 75.73 | 716 |
| Marks in English | 71.67 | 317 | 75.29 | 379 | 73.64 | 696 |
| Marks in Math | 73.10 | 324 | 72.64 | 391 | 72.85 | 715 |
| Marks in Science | 71.43 | 311 | 72.24 | 373 | 71.87 | 684 |

4.3.3 Skills

Skills can be measured in a number of ways and no single method exists to fully identify them. In this survey skills were measured according to the students' extra credits, extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, part time work, summer time work, family business/house/farm related work and computer/internet use. These were thought to cover all main areas where one learns skills useful in future employment. Extra emphasis was put on computer skills as they are of special concern in this community mapping exercise. On-line learning possibilities are a major focus of this work.

4.3.4 Courses

Firstly, before we look at the number of credits taken, one must look at how well the students learn the material. The well-known indicator for learning is the average mark students get from teachers who test their learning. At first glance, students have adequate averages with the university level scoring the highest, college level scoring lower and workplace preparation scoring the lowest. However, that tendency is not maintained in math courses where the workplace preparation student scored as high as the university level students.

The Bruce and Grey data also displayed the decrease in average from university to college to workplace levels but did not replicate the high workplace math averages (Cummings et al, 2005). This suggests that there are some differences between Huron and Perth workplace preparation math and Bruce and Grey workplace math and the skills they learn in such classes.

Overall however, students have adequate averages to say that they do learn the materials thought in class. In other words, they learn the skills taught by their respective courses. Therefore, looking at the courses they have taken should be an adequate indicator of the skills they have learned.

Table 4.6: Mean Mark in Course by Level

| | Course | | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|-------|-----|---------|-----|
| | English | | Math | | Science | |
| | Mean | N | Mean | N | Mean | N |
| University Preparation | 76.28 | 336 | 75.51 | 267 | 73.94 | 359 |
| Univ/College Preparation | 74.15 | 13 | 71.28 | 97 | 72.63 | 38 |
| College Preparation | 71.75 | 308 | 70.27 | 294 | 69.21 | 243 |
| Workplace Preparation | 67.58 | 50 | 74.81 | 67 | 69.27 | 45 |
| Total | 73.65 | 707 | 72.76 | 725 | 71.88 | 685 |

The number of credits taken in various fields of study provides useful information as to the types of skills learned. As per the following table, Huron and Perth counties do not vary significantly in their choice of courses. However, Bruce and Grey County have different tendencies.

While all counties display a similar distribution whereby 'World Studies' has the highest average of completed credits and 'Computer Studies' has the lowest average, there are differences in the size of that average. Bruce and Grey County report higher averages over every category as if the students took more courses. Given that all students in both counties spend relatively the same amount of time in class, the difference cannot exist because Bruce & Grey students actually get more credits. That difference can be explained by differences in answer choices available. In Huron and Perth, the students had the option of being more specific in their answer by selecting .5 options. Bruce and Grey students only had whole numbers from which to choose. That forced the students to round up the amount of credits they had actually completed (e.g.: In Huron and Perth a student having completed 2.5 credits in 'World Studies' could choose that exact response while students in Bruce and Grey had to decide between 2 and 3 since 2.5 was not offered as an answer choice). Therefore, Bruce and Grey students seem to take more credits however, that difference is due to the fact that the students rounded up the number of credits they had completed.

The facts remain then that 'Business' courses and 'Computer Studies' courses have the lowest averages. This difference may be due to various factors namely the restricted choice of courses offered in those categories. There is overall a smaller number of courses offered in business and in computer studies. The especially low average of 'Computer Studies' courses should be of special interest in this project specifically as on-line learning possibilities are particularly explored.

Table 4.7: Mean Number of Credits by County

| County | | Arts Credits | Business Credits | World Studies Credits | Technological Education Credits | Computer Studies Credits |
|-----------------|------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Huron County | Mean | 2.04 | 1.25 | 2.66 | 2.51 | .99 |
| | N | 284 | 259 | 283 | 278 | 248 |
| Perth County | Mean | 2.09 | 1.27 | 2.52 | 2.24 | .79 |
| | N | 405 | 383 | 401 | 392 | 363 |
| Total | Mean | 2.07 | 1.27 | 2.58 | 2.35 | .87 |
| | N | 689 | 642 | 684 | 670 | 611 |
| Bruce County | Mean | 2.82 | 2.01 | 3.31 | 2.72 | 1.82 |
| | N | 461 | 461 | 461 | 461 | 461 |
| Grey County | Mean | 2.88 | 1.86 | 3.18 | 2.54 | 1.69 |
| | N | 468 | 468 | 468 | 468 | 468 |
| Total | Mean | 2.85 | 1.93 | 3.24 | 2.63 | 1.75 |
| | N | 929 | 929 | 929 | 929 | 929 |

4.3.5 Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities may be a less traditional method of measuring skills but it should not be ignored. They can provide insight into a major part of students' structured activities, which would normally go unnoticed. Around 211 males and 284 females have stated that they have participated in such activities during the school year. This is close to the 60% average participation rate set by Bruce and Grey students. The great majority of students spent between 1 and 6 hours per week doing such activities.

For this research, three main categories of extra-curricular activities were outlined. The distribution of groups in which they have participated is outline below. For the 'Other group' students reported participating in a wide variety of clubs and organizations namely 4-H, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving (OSAID), Cadets, Girl Guides/Scouts, church groups, various school committees (prom, yearbook, etc.), and various other civic organizations (e.g.: Amnesty International, Lion's Club, Kinsmen/Kinettes). The percentages here represent the proportions of the respondents who do participate in extra-curricular activities. That is, for example, of all males who do participate in extra-curricular activities, 75.9% of them participate in a sport group as one form of activity. The percentages add up to more than 100% since some students participate in more than one group.

Sports activities are by far the most popular for both genders both as coaches and as players. The 'other' category also has a high percentage of participation however, that category includes many types of activities. Participation in youth/church groups as well as in school committees (e.g.: prom, yearbook, and graduation committees) were the most popular with 18%

participation rates each. Overall women demonstrated higher participation rates except in sports activities where the men edge them out.

Table 4.8: Extra-Curricular Participation by Gender

| | Gender | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Sport Group | 161 | 75.9% | 206 | 72.8% | 367 | 74.1% |
| Art Group | 66 | 31.3% | 138 | 48.6% | 204 | 41.2% |
| Council/Government Group | 35 | 16.7% | 53 | 18.7% | 88 | 17.8% |
| Other Group | 109 | 51.7% | 189 | 66.3% | 298 | 60.1% |

4.3.6 Volunteer Activities

Volunteer activities provide insight into student skills from a different perspective than that previously taken. That is, rather than looking at an academic measurement of skills, this is where directly employable skills are examined. The following sections will deal more directly with skills learned on the job, for the job.

As per the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requirements, students are to perform at least 40 hours of volunteer work during their high school years. So far, 73.4% of the students reported having completed such a requirement and 64.2% stating that they had superseded that engagement and volunteered more of their time. At first that seems as though the respondents are motivated to volunteer by more than the requirements for a diploma, however, once polled on their reason for volunteering, almost half of the valid responses still stated that their main reason was graduation.

Table 4.9: Reasons for Volunteering

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| To Graduate | 91 | 45.7% | 95 | 31.9% | 186 | 37.4% |
| Asked to Help by Friend, Family | 45 | 22.6% | 72 | 24.2% | 117 | 23.5% |
| To Gain Skills, Experience for Future Job | 31 | 15.6% | 66 | 22.1% | 97 | 19.5% |
| Help a Cause I Believe in | 27 | 13.6% | 57 | 19.1% | 84 | 16.9% |
| Parents Wanted me to | 5 | 2.5% | 5 | 1.7% | 10 | 2.0% |
| Legal Duty to Complete Public Service | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.0% | 3 | .6% |
| Total | 199 | 100.0% | 298 | 100.0% | 497 | 100.0% |

The following table outlines the industries within which students volunteer. The notable ones are 'Agriculture' where the males outnumber the females 4 to 1

and 'Health Care and Social Assistance' where the females outnumber the males 3 to 1. Similarly, 'Information, Culture and Recreation' and 'Religious, Civic, Environmental and Social Advocacy' represent around 60% of all responses.

Table 4.10: Distribution of the Industries of Volunteers by Gender

| | Gender | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Religious, Civic, Environmental, Social Advocacy | 57 | 29.5% | 113 | 36.9% |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 17 | 8.8% | 74 | 24.2% |
| Information, Culture, Recreation | 57 | 29.5% | 72 | 23.5% |
| Educational Organization | 14 | 7.3% | 24 | 7.8% |
| Agricultural | 32 | 16.6% | 13 | 4.2% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 9 | 4.7% | 4 | 1.3% |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate | 0 | 0% | 2 | .7% |
| Public Administration | 5 | 2.6% | 2 | .7% |
| Other | 2 | 1.0% | 2 | .7% |
| Total | 193 | 100.0% | 306 | 100.0% |

Similar data are available for the type of activity done as a volunteer. The females still outnumber the males in the 'Health Care, Support, and Counselling' category while the males focus in the 'Building, Repairing, Technical and Hands-on' work. Meanwhile, the organization and supervision of community events as well as coaching are quite popular activities by both genders.

Table 4.11: Main Volunteer Activity by Gender

| | Gender | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Social Assistance, Teaching, Coaching | 48 | 14.7% | 122 | 19.9% |
| Organizing/Supervising Events | 47 | 14.4% | 102 | 16.6% |
| Health Care, Support, Counselling | 15 | 4.6% | 81 | 13.2% |
| Selling Products, Services for Fundraising | 30 | 9.2% | 52 | 8.5% |
| Designing Posters, Web Pages, Painting, Photography | 11 | 3.4% | 42 | 6.8% |
| Other | 39 | 11.9% | 36 | 5.9% |
| Managing Money/Finances | 10 | 3.1% | 31 | 5.0% |
| Office Work | 11 | 3.4% | 30 | 4.9% |
| Committee or Board Member | 13 | 4.0% | 25 | 4.1% |
| Using Agricultural, Horticultural Skills | 28 | 8.6% | 23 | 3.7% |
| Providing Information to the Public, Canvassing | 6 | 1.8% | 21 | 3.4% |
| Mentoring with Doctor, Veterinarian | 2 | 0.6% | 18 | 2.9% |
| Computer-based Work | 16 | 4.9% | 13 | 2.1% |
| Building, Repairing, Technical, Hands-on Work | 43 | 13.1% | 10 | 1.6% |
| Mentoring in Law Office, with Social Worker, Teacher | 2 | 0.6% | 8 | 1.3% |
| Mentoring in Business/Finance Organization | 2 | 0.6% | 0 | 0% |
| Mentoring with Scientist, Engineer, Agricultural Specialist | 4 | 1.2% | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 327 | 100.1%* | 614 | 99.9%* |

*Due to rounding error

The industries within which the students volunteer and the types of activities they perform provide useful information as to the types of skills learned. Those in agricultural industries performing technical hands-on work will learn different things than those who are working in recreation and cultural industries and are organizing or supervising events.

Information regarding how the students learned of the volunteer position can also be beneficiary to local organizations. Understanding the lines of communication can help an organization reach its target group more efficiently. As for volunteer positions, word of mouth between family and friends is clearly the most important channel. That can be an issue for local organizations, as standard methods for publicity do not seem to work.

Table 4.12: Source of Volunteer Position

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Friend, Family Told Me | 153 | 73.9% | 217 | 70.0% | 370 | 71.6% |
| Contacted the Organization | 23 | 11.1% | 46 | 14.8% | 69 | 13.3% |
| Heard it at School | 26 | 12.6% | 40 | 12.9% | 66 | 12.8% |
| Saw an Ad, Flyer, Sign | 4 | 1.9% | 4 | 1.3% | 8 | 1.5% |
| Other | 1 | .5% | 3 | 1.0% | 4 | .8% |
| Total | 207 | 100.0% | 310 | 100.0% | 517 | 100.0% |

4.3.7 Paid Employment

The great majority of students in Grade 12 are employed during the school year as well as during the summer time. That is, 83.2% of the respondents had part time employment during the school year and 85.9% had employment during the summer. Compared to Bruce and Grey County, the employment rates in Huron and Perth are higher. In Bruce and Grey only 76.9% of the respondents worked during the school year and 81.3% worked during the summer.

Table 4.13: Employment Rate by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Paid Job During School Year | 268 | 82.7% | 331 | 83.4% | 599 | 83.1% |
| Paid Job During Summer | 287 | 87.8% | 336 | 84.2% | 623 | 85.8% |

One can also notice that the males have an increase in employment during the summer while the females stay relatively the same. The following tables may help to elucidate that point. One reason might be that the females seem to maintain the average number of hours throughout the year. The males consistently have more hours than the females. That may make getting work during the summer time less encouraging since they will not get more hours.

Table 4.14: Hours Worked per Week During the School Year

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 0 | 2 | .7% | 5 | 1.5% | 7 | 1.1% |
| 1 to 3 | 12 | 4.3% | 11 | 3.2% | 23 | 3.7% |
| 4 to 6 | 13 | 4.7% | 20 | 5.8% | 33 | 5.3% |
| 7 to 9 | 16 | 5.7% | 26 | 7.6% | 42 | 6.8% |
| 10 to 12 | 29 | 10.4% | 66 | 19.2% | 95 | 15.3% |
| 13 to 15 | 38 | 13.6% | 64 | 18.7% | 102 | 16.4% |
| 16 to 18 | 38 | 13.6% | 47 | 13.7% | 85 | 13.7% |
| 19 to 21 | 35 | 12.5% | 44 | 12.8% | 79 | 12.7% |
| 22 to 24 | 24 | 8.6% | 36 | 10.5% | 60 | 9.6% |
| 25 or more | 72 | 25.8% | 24 | 7.0% | 96 | 15.4% |
| Total | 279 | 100.0% | 343 | 100.0% | 622 | 100.0% |

Table 4.15: Hours Worked per Week During the Summer

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 0 | 2 | .7% | 1 | .3% | 3 | .5% |
| 1 to 5 | 5 | 1.7% | 12 | 3.5% | 17 | 2.7% |
| 6 to 10 | 12 | 4.1% | 26 | 7.7% | 38 | 6.0% |
| 11 to 15 | 11 | 3.8% | 26 | 7.7% | 37 | 5.9% |
| 16 to 20 | 12 | 4.1% | 29 | 8.6% | 41 | 6.5% |
| 21 to 25 | 10 | 3.4% | 44 | 13.0% | 54 | 8.5% |
| 26 to 30 | 29 | 9.9% | 40 | 11.8% | 69 | 10.9% |
| 31 to 35 | 12 | 4.1% | 30 | 8.8% | 42 | 6.6% |
| 36 to 40 | 49 | 16.7% | 47 | 13.9% | 96 | 15.2% |
| 41 to 45 | 50 | 17.1% | 37 | 10.9% | 87 | 13.8% |
| 46 to 50 | 37 | 12.6% | 23 | 6.8% | 60 | 9.5% |
| More than 50 | 64 | 21.8% | 24 | 7.1% | 88 | 13.9% |
| Total | 293 | 100.0% | 339 | 100.0% | 632 | 100.0% |

The industries within which the students work can help to better understand these differences in employment and hours. While the males tend to work in 'Agriculture, Forestry, etc', in 'Construction', 'Wholesale and Retail' and in 'Accommodation and Food Service', the females tend to work in the last 2 categories only. The males then benefit from the increase in agriculture and construction job in the summer time. The females do not seem to be able to benefit from such a seasonal increase. The surprising source of such a lack in summertime boom is the 'Accommodation and Food Services' category, which

actually employs fewer students in the summer. One would expect that industry to increase mostly due to the increase in tourism during that time of year.

Table 4.16: Employment Industry by Time of Year and Gender

| | Gender | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Male | | Female | |
| | School Job Industry | Summer Job Industry | School Job Industry | Summer Job Industry |
| Wholesale and Retail Trade | 17.9% | 12.4% | 34.8% | 27.3% |
| Accommodation, Food Services | 21.9% | 15.5% | 31.3% | 27.3% |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 1.8% | 1.4% | 10.4% | 14.2% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil, Gas | 23.4% | 25.9% | 4.8% | 6.8% |
| Information, Culture, Recreation | 4.4% | 6.6% | 5.1% | 6.5% |
| Other Services | 2.2% | 5.2% | 1.5% | 5.0% |
| Manufacturing | 7.3% | 6.9% | 3.3% | 3.0% |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing | 0% | 0% | 1.5% | 2.4% |
| Business, Building, Support Services | 1.1% | .3% | 1.5% | 2.1% |
| Educational Services | 1.1% | .3% | 2.1% | 1.8% |
| Construction | 11.7% | 18.6% | .6% | 1.2% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 1.5% | 1.7% | 1.5% | .9% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 2.9% | 2.4% | .3% | .6% |
| Public Administration | .7% | 1.0% | .6% | .6% |
| Religious, Civic, Social Advocacy | 0% | 0% | .6% | .3% |
| Utilities | .7% | .7% | 0% | 0% |
| Other | 1.5% | 1.0% | .3% | 0% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

The reasons and the means for finding paid employment can also be helpful. Understanding the reasons behind the students' choices means understanding what is important to them. Local organizations can use that to better present their information by focusing on what is important to the students. As per the following table, the females tend to want to work for their education as much as they want to work for extra cash while the males clearly favour having extra money. However, the males also consider their jobs as a way to obtain skills and experience more than the females do.

Table 4.17: Reasons for Employment by Gender

| | | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | Male | | Female | | | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| | Money for Free Time, to Buy Things | 156 | 56.5% | 144 | 42.1% | 300 | 48.5% |
| | Money for Future Education | 57 | 20.7% | 139 | 40.6% | 196 | 31.7% |
| | To Gain Skills, Experience | 24 | 8.7% | 22 | 6.4% | 46 | 7.4% |
| | Parents Wanted me to Work | 17 | 6.2% | 18 | 5.3% | 35 | 5.7% |
| | To See if it Was Interesting | 15 | 5.4% | 11 | 3.2% | 26 | 4.2% |
| | Money to Help my Family | 6 | 2.2% | 5 | 1.5% | 11 | 1.8% |
| | Other | 1 | .4% | 3 | .9% | 4 | .6% |
| Total | | 276 | 100% | 342 | 100% | 618 | 100% |
| | Money for Free Time, to Buy Things | 156 | 56.9% | 139 | 42.2% | 295 | 48.9% |
| | Money for Future Education | 66 | 24.1% | 126 | 38.3% | 192 | 31.8% |
| | For Skills, Experience | 32 | 11.7% | 25 | 7.6% | 57 | 9.5% |
| | Asked by Friend, Family | 5 | 1.8% | 13 | 4.0% | 18 | 3.0% |
| | Parents Wanted me to Work | 7 | 2.6% | 10 | 3.0% | 17 | 2.8% |
| | To See if it Was Interesting | 5 | 1.8% | 11 | 3.3% | 16 | 2.7% |
| | Money to Help my Family | 1 | .4% | 4 | 1.2% | 5 | .8% |
| | Other | 2 | .7% | 1 | .3% | 3 | .5% |
| Total | | 274 | 100% | 329 | 100% | 603 | 100% |

Similarly, how the students found their employment can also be useful. Of note here is that not only is word of mouth between family and friends a popular method, but also so is applying for jobs that are not advertised. Similar results were also found in Bruce and Grey County. Here again, as in the volunteer work section, the students do not seem to respond to traditional means of employment publicity. Therefore, the local organizations still face the challenge of reaching the students through other means than advertisements.

Table 4.18: Source of Employment

| | How Part-time Job was Found | | How Summer Job was Found | |
|--|--------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------|
| | N | % | N | % |
| Family, Friend, Neighbour | 324 | 51.3% | 384 | 61.9% |
| Submitted Application for Job Not Advertised | 192 | 30.4% | 141 | 22.7% |
| Newspaper, Printed Ad | 93 | 14.7% | 80 | 12.9% |
| Consulted Employment Agency, Job Counsellor | 11 | 1.7% | 7 | 1.1% |
| Posted an 'Employment Wanted' Ad | 5 | .8% | 5 | .8% |
| Other | 7 | 1.1% | 3 | .5% |
| Total | 632 | 100.0% | 620 | 100.0% |

4.3.8 Co-op Employment

Co-op employment is another area where one can learn skills for future employment. This program is especially designed so that students get a more practical combination of academic and hands-on learning. Here, 95 males and 92 females responded on the co-op courses they had taken. The majority of them had either taken 2 or 4 credits in co-op and their distribution of industries is similar to that of the other types of employment.

The males still dominate the traditional industries such as agriculture, forestry, construction, manufacturing, transportation and warehousing. The females also do their co-op course in industries traditionally reserved for women such as education services and health care and social assistance.

Categories where both genders evenly worked include the wholesale and retail trade, professional and scientific technical services, accommodation and food services as well as the category 'other services' which includes repair, maintenance, personal care, hairstyling, pet care and photo finishing.

Table 4.19: Co-op Industry by Gender

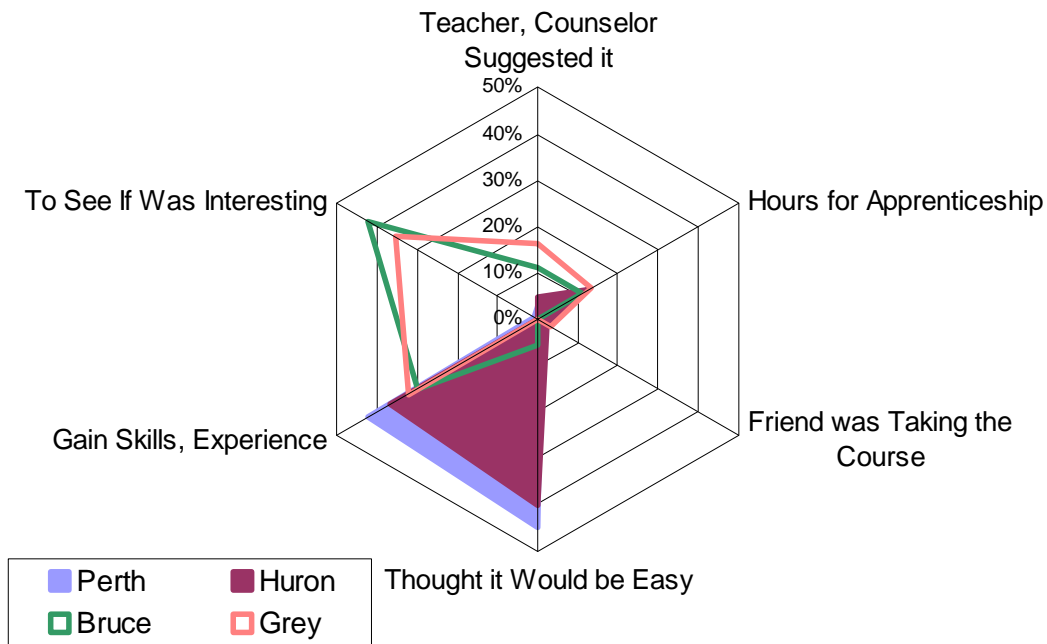
| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Educational Services | 7 | 7.4% | 22 | 23.9% | 29 | 15.5% |
| Other Services | 13 | 13.7% | 9 | 9.8% | 22 | 11.8% |
| Wholesale and Retail Trade | 8 | 8.4% | 11 | 12.0% | 19 | 10.2% |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 0 | .0% | 19 | 20.7% | 19 | 10.2% |
| Construction | 17 | 17.9% | 1 | 1.1% | 18 | 9.6% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 8 | 8.4% | 8 | 8.7% | 16 | 8.6% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil, Gas | 10 | 10.5% | 2 | 2.2% | 12 | 6.4% |
| Manufacturing | 10 | 10.5% | 1 | 1.1% | 11 | 5.9% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 9 | 9.5% | 0 | .0% | 9 | 4.8% |
| Business, Building, Support Services | 2 | 2.1% | 7 | 7.6% | 9 | 4.8% |
| Accommodation, Food Services | 5 | 5.3% | 4 | 4.3% | 9 | 4.8% |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing | 0 | .0% | 5 | 5.4% | 5 | 2.7% |
| Utilities | 4 | 4.2% | 0 | .0% | 4 | 2.1% |
| Public Administration | 2 | 2.1% | 1 | 1.1% | 3 | 1.6% |
| Information, Culture, Recreation | 0 | .0% | 2 | 2.2% | 2 | 1.1% |
| Total | 95 | 100.0% | 92 | 100.0% | 187 | 100.0% |

As for the reason behind choosing a co-op course, the great majority either thought it would be easy or wanted to gain some experience. The idea that a co-op course can provide skills and experience is commendable however; the perception that it would be easy should be addressed. The males particularly said that they thought it would be easy. While the females also thought so, their most prevalent reason was to gain some experience.

Table 4.20: Reason for Taking Co-op Course

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Thought it Would be Easy | 48 | 50.0% | 33 | 35.9% | 81 | 43.1% |
| Gain Skills, Experience | 20 | 20.8% | 54 | 58.7% | 74 | 39.4% |
| Hours for Apprenticeship | 16 | 16.7% | 2 | 2.2% | 18 | 9.6% |
| Teacher, Counsellor Suggested it | 5 | 5.2% | 2 | 2.2% | 7 | 3.7% |
| Parents Wanted me to Work | 4 | 4.2% | 0 | .0% | 4 | 2.1% |
| Friend was Taking the Course | 2 | 2.1% | 1 | 1.1% | 3 | 1.6% |
| To See If Was Interesting | 1 | 1.0% | 0 | .0% | 1 | .5% |
| Total | 96 | 100.0% | 92 | 100.0% | 188 | 100.0% |

That perception that the course would be easy was not present in Bruce or Grey County. Similarly, few Huron and Perth students tried co-op courses to see if it would be interesting while most Bruce and Grey students gave that as the reason. Bruce and Grey students also took the advice of a teacher or counsellor more often. The percentages in the following figure represent the proportion of students for each county who selected a given reason (e.g.: 19% of students in Bruce County said that a teacher or a counsellor's suggestion was their main reason for taking a co-op course).

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Reasons for Taking a Co-op Course by County

4.3.9 Unpaid Work from Home

This can be the most difficult variable to measure since in this category the student does not always have the clear label of employee with a regular pay stub and delineated work hours. However, this is one of the best sources for assessing skills since the skills learned here have often been learned over several years. Just the fact that the “employer” and the “employee” most often share a home, share meals and participate in each other’s daily lives for several years allows for more thorough learning.

Around 337 students responded that they do work for the family business or the family farm. They normally work anywhere between 1 and 10 hours per week with some increase in hours during the summer time. Here is the distribution of the type of work the students do.

Table 4.21: Type of Unpaid Work at Home

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| On Family Farm | 82 | 50.0% | 54 | 31.4% | 136 | 40.5% |
| Chores Around the House | 26 | 15.9% | 65 | 37.8% | 91 | 27.1% |
| For Family's Trade Business | 38 | 23.2% | 23 | 13.4% | 61 | 18.2% |
| Other Business Type | 8 | 4.9% | 15 | 8.7% | 23 | 6.8% |
| For Family's Store | 6 | 3.7% | 12 | 7.0% | 18 | 5.4% |
| For Family's Restaurant | 4 | 2.4% | 3 | 1.7% | 7 | 2.1% |
| Total | 164 | 100.0% | 172 | 100.0% | 336 | 100.0% |

The females are more or less restricted to farm or housework while the males seem to be able to benefit from the family farm and from the trade business which can ultimately provide employable skills more so than housework normally would.

4.3.10 Self-Assessment of Skills

Triangulation was used to ensure that the research results are valid and represent the population accurately. Here, a student’s self-assessment of his/her own skill can be considered such a method as it provides a different angle of measurement than what the other variables provided. In this sense, self-assessments can be very useful despite all their shortcomings. That is, self-assessments on their own are usually not all that reliable since the respondents often tend to judge themselves more positively than they should and since they may misunderstand what they should be assessing. Nonetheless they can prove to be useful tools to corroborate all the other variables that did not actually measure skills directly as much as they measured the types of skills they might have learned.

Here, the students evaluated themselves on a 5-point scale from poor to excellent on various skills such as reading, writing, problem solving, self-management, and technological. Although technically statistics do not allow for

the averaging of 5-point scales such as this one, the mean score on each variable is still the most easily recognizable measure. Therefore, the means given for each score are only to be taken as a guide for locating the most prevalent answers and for discerning any clear patterns.

The following table outlines the average scores for each variable according to gender. There is no real difference between the males and the females except for a few weak correlations and for the categories of 'Technological Skills' and 'Physical, Mechanical, Hands-on Skills' where the females tended to grade themselves lower than the males. Of note however is that there are weak to moderate correlations between self-assessment scores and the level of classes taken by the student. That is, students who took university preparation classes tended to rate themselves higher than those who took college preparation, which were in turn higher than those taking workplace preparation. The only exception to this again is the 'Technological Skills' and the 'Creativity, Artistic Skills', which showed no relationships between self-assessment and class level and the 'Physical, Hands-on Skills' which actually portrayed the opposite: workplace students graded themselves higher than the university preparation students.

In Bruce and Grey similar results were also found. On most of the skills, the university preparation students rated themselves higher than college preparation, which in turn rated themselves higher than workplace preparation students. The exceptions here however were found in the 'Technological Skills' section and in the 'Physical, Hands-on Skills'. Results such as those could be taken as a sign that students rated themselves somewhat truthfully if one assumes that those who are taking workplace preparation are indeed less skilled at things like reading and writing and are more skilled at technical work. Another hint that the students rated themselves rather truthfully is that they did make use of the 'Poor' and 'Fair' options and did not just select 'Excellent' across the board.

Table 4.22: Mean Self-Assessment of Skills

| | Gender | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total |
| Teamwork Skills | 3.82 | 4.03 | 3.93 |
| Social, Interpersonal Skills | 3.67 | 4.09 | 3.90 |
| Creative Thinking Skills | 3.67 | 3.69 | 3.68 |
| Adaptability Skills | 3.53 | 3.66 | 3.60 |
| Leadership Skills | 3.45 | 3.65 | 3.56 |
| Reading Skills | 3.42 | 3.64 | 3.54 |
| Oral Communication Skills | 3.39 | 3.53 | 3.46 |
| Analysis, Decision-making Skills | 3.56 | 3.35 | 3.44 |
| Computer Skills | 3.40 | 3.38 | 3.39 |
| Writing Skills | 3.13 | 3.50 | 3.33 |
| Creativity, Artistic Skills | 2.84 | 3.60 | 3.25 |
| Self-management Skills | 3.05 | 3.38 | 3.23 |
| Physical, Mechanical, Hands-on Skills | 3.77 | 2.77 | 3.22 |
| Administration, Planning Skills | 3.05 | 3.32 | 3.20 |
| Technological Skills | 3.67 | 2.69 | 3.14 |
| Math Skills | 3.32 | 2.89 | 3.08 |

4.3.11 Future Education Plans

As part of studying the future labour force, it is good to understand its current skills, but it is also important to study their expected future skills; the skills they will have once they do enter the labour force.

In terms of a general description of the students' plans, the one noteworthy observation is that very few females plan on enrolling in a trade, vocational or apprenticeship program. Those females that do enroll in a trade program are mostly doing a hairstylist program while a few are planning on taking an automotive technician course or a baker's course. The following tables outline those differences in gender.

Table 4.23: Educational Institution Choices by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| University | 99 | 35.9% | 167 | 44.7% | 266 | 40.9% |
| College | 104 | 37.7% | 188 | 50.3% | 292 | 44.9% |
| Trade, Vocational, Apprenticeship | 73 | 26.4% | 19 | 5.1% | 92 | 14.2% |
| Total | 276 | 100.0% | 374 | 100.0% | 650 | 100.0% |

Looking at these variables may seem repetitive, however, they do help to reveal how gendered career choices can be. Understand how much stereotypes are still reflected in career choice can be very useful for training organizations and other local organizations in their endeavours to provide the most efficient and effective services. Examples of the gendered career choices are visible through each of the three types of educational institution.

In university programs, the majority of females plan to go for arts degrees and some for science degrees while few contemplate commerce degrees. On the other hand, males tend to prefer science degrees and give more consideration to the commerce degrees.

Table 4.24: University Program by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Bachelor of Arts | 34 | 32.1% | 101 | 57.7% | 135 | 48.0% |
| Bachelor of Commerce | 16 | 15.1% | 17 | 9.7% | 33 | 11.7% |
| Bachelor of Science | 56 | 52.8% | 57 | 32.6% | 113 | 40.2% |
| Total | 106 | 100.0% | 175 | 100.0% | 281 | 100.0% |

Similar 'traditional' gendered divisions are visible at the college level where females focus on community services and health sciences while the males take over the engineering technology and information technology fields.

Table 4.25: College Program by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Health Sciences | 3 | 2.5% | 55 | 26.6% | 58 | 17.8% |
| Community Services | 9 | 7.6% | 45 | 21.7% | 54 | 16.6% |
| General Arts, Sciences | 16 | 13.4% | 29 | 14.0% | 45 | 13.8% |
| Business | 13 | 10.9% | 24 | 11.6% | 37 | 11.3% |
| Engineering Technology | 32 | 26.9% | 5 | 2.4% | 37 | 11.3% |
| Media Studies | 13 | 10.9% | 15 | 7.2% | 28 | 8.6% |
| Protective Services | 14 | 11.8% | 13 | 6.3% | 27 | 8.3% |
| Hospitality, Tourism | 8 | 6.7% | 18 | 8.7% | 26 | 8.0% |
| Information Technology, Computing | 9 | 7.6% | 2 | 1.0% | 11 | 3.4% |
| Other | 2 | 1.7% | 1 | .5% | 3 | .9% |
| Total | 119 | 100.0% | 207 | 100.0% | 326 | 100.0% |

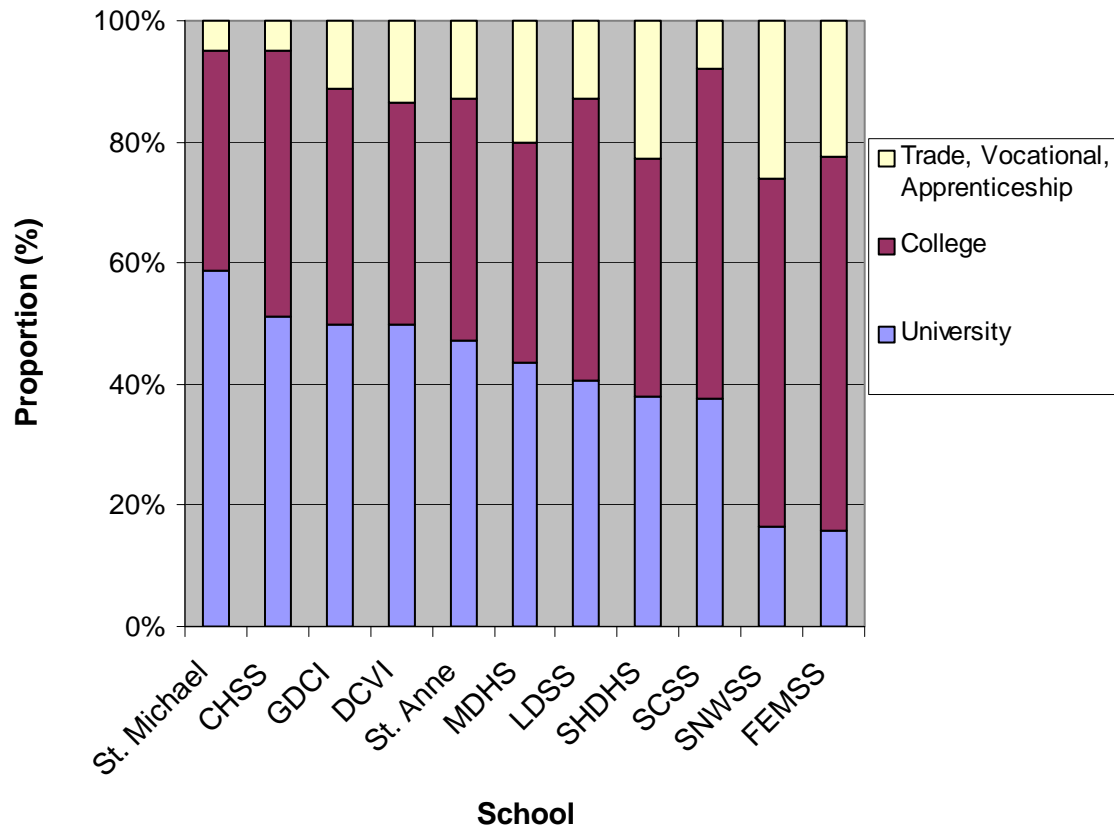
Trade programs do not escape that trend as not one male admitted to planning on completing a hairstylist course while the females mentioned little else other than hairstyling. There is however 4 females who want to do auto service

technician and dairy herds courses. They are notably moving away from the traditional female careers. Females may also be more willing to admit being interested in non-traditional occupations.

Table 4.26: Trade, Vocational, or Apprentice Program by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Auto Service Technician | 11 | 12.2% | 2 | 8.7% | 13 | 11.5% |
| Carpenter | 12 | 13.3% | 0 | .0% | 12 | 10.6% |
| Hairstylist | 0 | .0% | 11 | 47.8% | 11 | 9.7% |
| Machinist | 7 | 7.8% | 0 | .0% | 7 | 6.2% |
| Electrician, General | 5 | 5.6% | 1 | 4.3% | 6 | 5.3% |
| Tool and Die Maker | 5 | 5.6% | 1 | 4.3% | 6 | 5.3% |
| Millwright | 6 | 6.7% | 0 | .0% | 6 | 5.3% |
| Other | 3 | 3.3% | 3 | 13.0% | 6 | 5.3% |
| Chef, Cook | 3 | 3.3% | 2 | 8.7% | 5 | 4.4% |
| Welding, Fitting | 5 | 5.6% | 0 | .0% | 5 | 4.4% |
| Dairy Herds Person | 3 | 3.3% | 2 | 8.7% | 5 | 4.4% |
| Truck, Coach Technician | 5 | 5.6% | 0 | .0% | 5 | 4.4% |
| Electrician, Industrial | 4 | 4.4% | 0 | .0% | 4 | 3.5% |
| Plumber | 4 | 4.4% | 0 | .0% | 4 | 3.5% |
| Sheet Metal Worker | 4 | 4.4% | 0 | .0% | 4 | 3.5% |
| Auto Body Repair | 3 | 3.3% | 0 | .0% | 3 | 2.7% |
| Swine Herds Person | 3 | 3.3% | 0 | .0% | 3 | 2.7% |
| Air Conditioner, Refrigeration Repair | 2 | 2.2% | 0 | .0% | 2 | 1.8% |
| Drafting | 2 | 2.2% | 0 | .0% | 2 | 1.8% |
| Horticulture | 1 | 1.1% | 1 | 4.3% | 2 | 1.8% |
| Mould Maker | 1 | 1.1% | 0 | .0% | 1 | .9% |
| Drywall Applicator | 1 | 1.1% | 0 | .0% | 1 | .9% |
| Total | 90 | 100.0% | 23 | 100.0% | 113 | 100.0% |

Finally, one cannot just look at educational institution types without considering what the schools themselves are promoting. Some high schools have curriculums that are rather geared towards students pursuing university education while others cater to those aiming for college, trade, or vocational programs. For example, St. Michael Catholic Secondary School has the largest proportion (59%) of its students planning on going to university while Stratford Northwestern Secondary School has the smallest proportion of its students going to university (17%) but the largest proportion (26%) of all schools enrolling in a trade program.

Figure 4.2: Proportions of the Educational Institution Choices by High School

4.3.12 Future Employment Plans

Any study on the future labour force cannot only assume that once these students graduate that they will work in the area. Their plans for education, for the field they plan to study, for the industry in which they plan on working, and generally whether they expect to live and work in the area is relevant. If the students do not plan on staying then they are no longer really representing the future labour force of Huron and Perth counties.

The good news is that compared to Bruce and Grey County students, the respondents in this study are more likely to want to stay. However, it seems that if they are going to university there is less chance that they plan on coming back while those who will be doing trade or vocational school expect to come back and live in Huron or Perth County. Similarly, one possible reason for the increase in people planning on staying, especially in Perth County may be due to the fact that Perth has a relatively large city in Stratford, is relatively close to the 401, and is also relatively closer to major cities such as London and Kitchener/Waterloo and their respective universities.

Table 4.27: Plans to Stay by County

| | County | | | | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|
| | Huron | | Perth | | Bruce | | Grey | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Stay | 130 | 42.3% | 188 | 44.8% | 171 | 37.2% | 160 | 34.3% |
| Leave | 177 | 57.7% | 232 | 55.2% | 289 | 62.8% | 307 | 65.7% |
| Total | 307 | 100.0% | 420 | 100.0% | 460 | 100.0% | 467 | 100.0% |

Table 4.28: Plans to Stay by Post-Secondary Institution

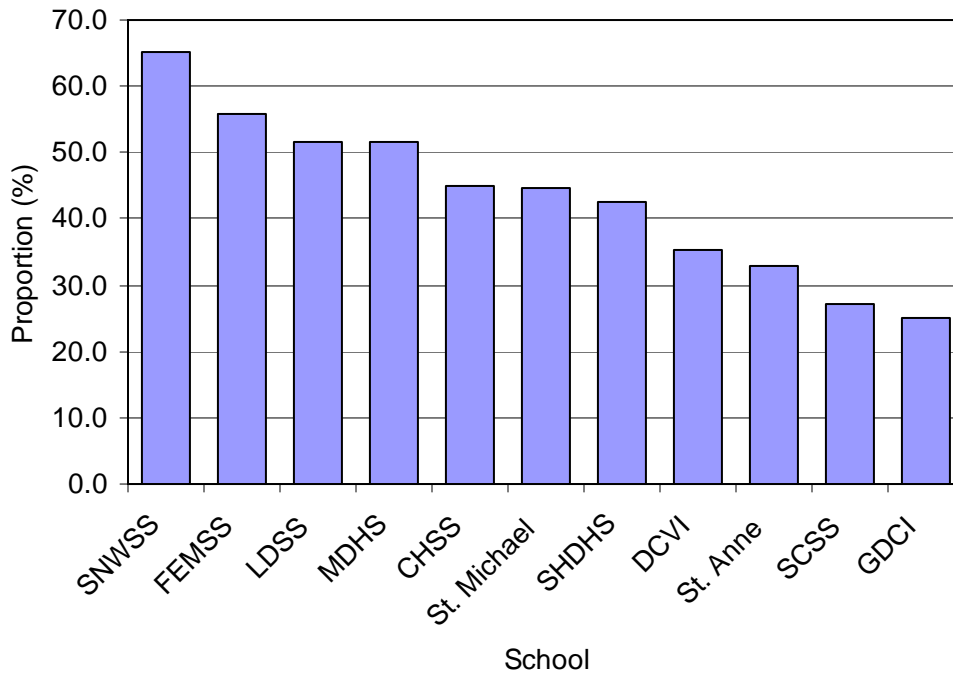
| | Institute Type | | | | | |
|-------|----------------|--------|---------|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| | University | | College | | Trade, Vocational, Apprenticeship | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Stay | 84 | 31.8% | 134 | 46.4% | 59 | 66.3% |
| Leave | 180 | 68.2% | 155 | 53.6% | 30 | 33.7% |
| Total | 264 | 100.0% | 289 | 100.0% | 89 | 100.0% |

There are differences between males and females in their desire to stay. The females are less inclined to stay and that could be for various reasons. As mentioned earlier, females tend to get fewer hours at work both during the summer and during the school year. That may weigh-in on their future plans and lead them towards leaving the county for better jobs. The fact that they also do not plan on enrolling in trade or vocational plans may also be part of the reason for leaving as those who do enroll in such programs do mostly plan on staying. The perception may be that jobs available in Huron and Perth are in trades and since females are not interested in working a trade, they do not see a future in the area.

Table 4.29: Plans to Stay by Gender

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Stay | 154 | 47.0% | 164 | 41.5% | 318 | 44.0% |
| Leave | 174 | 53.0% | 231 | 58.5% | 405 | 56.0% |
| Total | 328 | 100.0% | 395 | 100.0% | 723 | 100.0% |

Figure 3.3 outlines the differences in future plans between students from each school. Again, the schools where the most students plan on enrolling in trade or vocational programs are also the schools where most students plan on staying and living in Huron or Perth County.

Figure 4.3: Plans to Stay by School

Another way to look at the students' plans for the future is in the industry in which they plan on working as well as the occupation they plan on holding. In the following tables, expectations are displayed in relations to their plans to stay and live in Huron or Perth County.

The notable categories for occupation types are the 'Natural, Applied Science' and 'Art, Culture, and Recreation' where most students interested in those occupations plan on leaving. The other notable categories are that of the 'Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities' and 'Primary Industry' where the majority of those students plan on staying in the area. There are some categories, however, that do not display any clear-cut differences such as health and sales and service occupations.

Table 4.30: Plans to Stay by Future Occupation

| | Stay in Huron, Perth | | | | Total | |
|--|----------------------|-------|----|-------|-------|--------|
| | Yes | | No | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Art, Culture, Recreation, Sport | 17 | 16.8% | 84 | 83.2% | 101 | 100.0% |
| Natural, Applied Science | 14 | 26.4% | 39 | 73.6% | 53 | 100.0% |
| Management | 13 | 33.3% | 26 | 66.7% | 39 | 100.0% |
| Business, Finance, Administration | 16 | 34.0% | 31 | 66.0% | 47 | 100.0% |
| Social Science, Education, Government, Religion | 74 | 45.1% | 90 | 54.9% | 164 | 100.0% |
| Health | 45 | 47.9% | 49 | 52.1% | 94 | 100.0% |
| Sales and Service | 38 | 49.4% | 39 | 50.6% | 77 | 100.0% |
| Tradesperson, Transport, Equipment Operator | 60 | 65.9% | 31 | 34.1% | 91 | 100.0% |
| Processing, Manufacturing, Utilities | 6 | 75.0% | 2 | 25.0% | 8 | 100.0% |
| Primary Industry | 22 | 75.9% | 7 | 24.1% | 29 | 100.0% |
| Other | 3 | 75.0% | 1 | 25.0% | 4 | 100.0% |

In terms of industry, the students who plan on working in 'Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil, Gas' and in 'Construction' mostly plan on staying while those planning to work in 'Professional, Scientific, Technical Services' and in 'Information, Culture and Recreation' industries mostly plan on leaving. As you can see in Table 3.31, there are some industries where the percentage of students planning on staying or leaving is larger than the above-mentioned notable categories. Those industries may display a large percentage of students planning on staying however, that percentage is calculated out of a very small total number of students and is hence incomparable to most industries where more students plan on working.

Table 4.31: Plans to Stay by Future Industry

| | Stay in Huron, Perth | | | | Total | |
|--|----------------------|-------|----|-------|-------|--------|
| | Yes | | No | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing | 2 | 16.7% | 10 | 83.3% | 12 | 100.0% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 22 | 25.3% | 65 | 74.7% | 87 | 100.0% |
| Information, Culture, Recreation | 18 | 26.9% | 49 | 73.1% | 67 | 100.0% |
| Religious, Civic, Social Advocacy | 1 | 33.3% | 2 | 66.7% | 3 | 100.0% |
| Public Administration | 11 | 34.4% | 21 | 65.6% | 32 | 100.0% |
| Business, Building, Support Services | 16 | 37.2% | 27 | 62.8% | 43 | 100.0% |
| Accommodation, Food Services | 10 | 40.0% | 15 | 60.0% | 25 | 100.0% |
| Wholesale and Retail Trade | 10 | 43.5% | 13 | 56.5% | 23 | 100.0% |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 63 | 46.0% | 74 | 54.0% | 137 | 100.0% |
| Other Services | 19 | 46.3% | 22 | 53.7% | 41 | 100.0% |
| Educational Services | 44 | 48.4% | 47 | 51.6% | 91 | 100.0% |
| Other | 2 | 50.0% | 2 | 50.0% | 4 | 100.0% |
| Construction | 33 | 64.7% | 18 | 35.3% | 51 | 100.0% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Mining, Oil, Gas | 34 | 65.4% | 18 | 34.6% | 52 | 100.0% |
| Manufacturing | 14 | 66.7% | 7 | 33.3% | 21 | 100.0% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 8 | 80.0% | 2 | 20.0% | 10 | 100.0% |
| Utilities | 8 | 88.9% | 1 | 11.1% | 9 | 100.0% |

The reasons students gave for planning on leaving or staying however do not seem to be related as much with the labour market. The main reasons they plan on staying are rather focused around their social network and whether they have a positive outlook on the area. Similarly, their reasons for leaving are sometimes due to the job they plan on holding in the future, but their main reason is because they do not like the area and think life would be better elsewhere. This represents quite a challenge for local organizations because it entails not only trying to bring various services, business, programs, etc. to the area to make it enticing, they ultimately need to make the students *like* the area.

Table 4.32: Reasons for Leaving

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|------------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|-------|------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Life More Exciting Elsewhere | 107 | 39% | 164 | 42% | 271 | 41% |
| No Interesting Jobs | 68 | 25% | 99 | 26% | 167 | 25% |
| Other | 39 | 14% | 43 | 11% | 82 | 12% |
| No Well-paying Jobs | 35 | 13% | 38 | 10% | 73 | 11% |
| No Jobs | 25 | 9% | 43 | 11% | 68 | 10% |
| Total | 274 | 100% | 387 | 100% | 661 | 99%* |

*Due to rounding error

Table 4.33: Reasons for Staying

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|----------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|-------|------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Near Friends, Family | 100 | 33% | 118 | 45% | 218 | 39% |
| Like my Community | 84 | 28% | 93 | 35% | 177 | 31% |
| Plenty of Interesting Jobs | 56 | 19% | 31 | 12% | 87 | 15% |
| Plenty of Well Paid Jobs | 40 | 13% | 9 | 3% | 49 | 9% |
| Other | 19 | 6% | 14 | 5% | 33 | 6% |
| Total | 299 | 99%* | 265 | 100% | 564 | 100% |

*Due to rounding error

Similarly, one can look at the factors that have influenced such a decision and opinion. The result however can be taken as both good news and bad news for local organizations. The good side is that the respondents stated they made their mind on their own, based on their interests with little influence from peers. However, the bad side is just that; they decided on their own and were not so much influenced by adults, counsellors, etc. That leaves the local organization at a loss as to how to make contact with the students and give them guidance if that guidance only represents a fraction of what influences them.

Table 4.34: Factors Influencing Plans for Post-Secondary Education

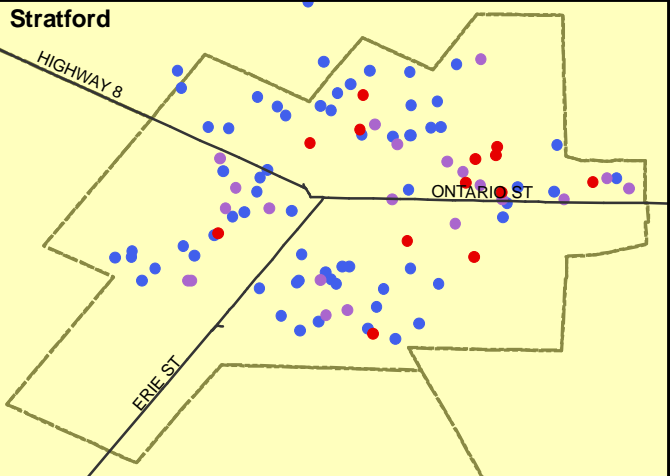
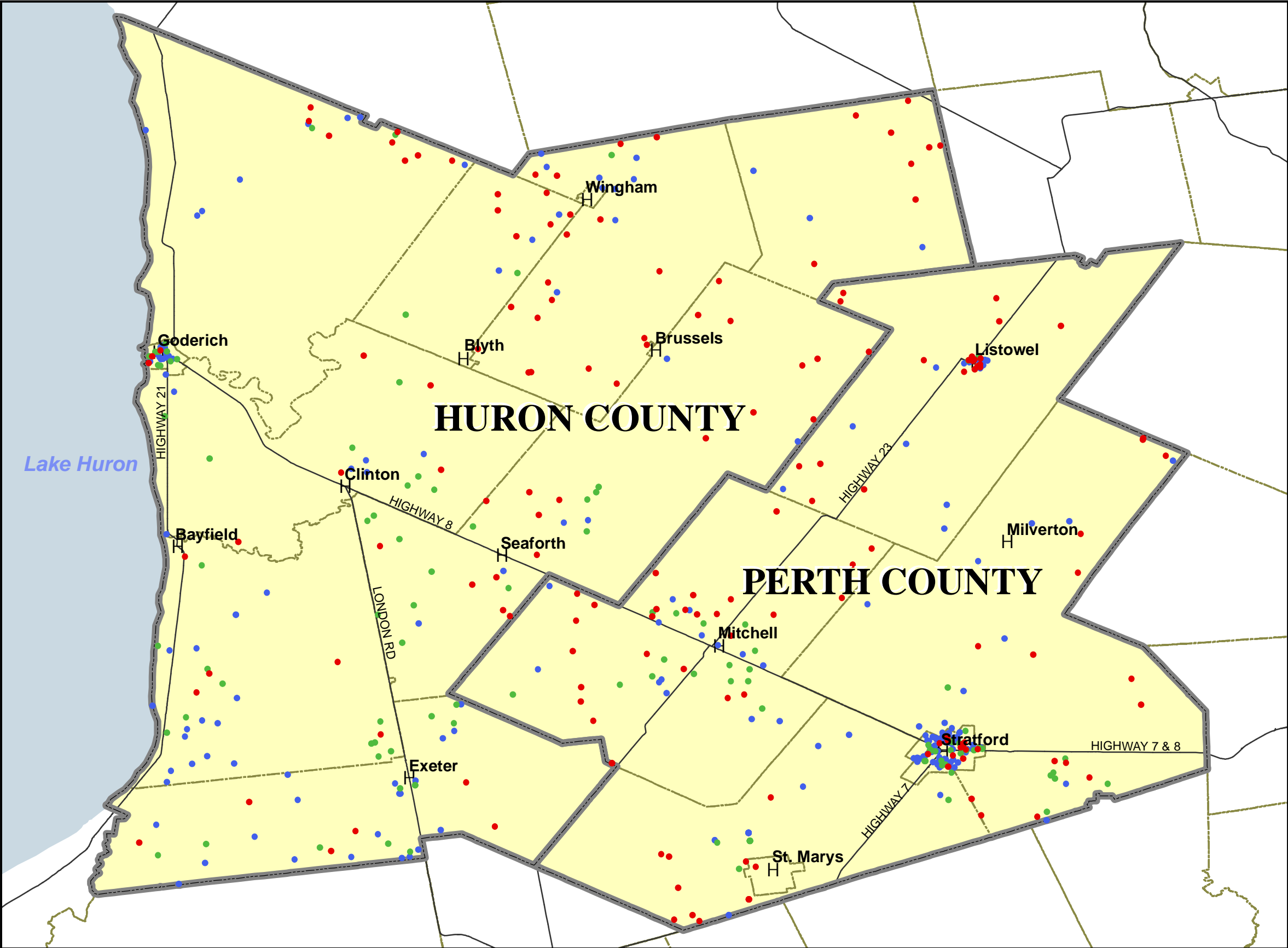
| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Own Thoughts, Interests | 116 | 43.9% | 196 | 53.6% | 312 | 49.5% |
| Desire for Good Job, High Income | 43 | 16.3% | 45 | 12.3% | 88 | 14.0% |
| Classes | 24 | 9.1% | 40 | 10.9% | 64 | 10.2% |
| Co-op Placement | 30 | 11.4% | 29 | 7.9% | 59 | 9.4% |
| Job Experiences | 26 | 9.8% | 19 | 5.2% | 45 | 7.1% |
| Parent's Opinion | 11 | 4.2% | 12 | 3.3% | 23 | 3.7% |
| Volunteer Experiences | 4 | 1.5% | 12 | 3.3% | 16 | 2.5% |
| Advice from Counsellor, Teacher, Mentor | 3 | 1.1% | 9 | 2.5% | 12 | 1.9% |
| Friend's Opinion | 4 | 1.5% | 2 | .5% | 6 | 1.0% |
| Career Education, Guidance Class | 1 | .4% | 2 | .5% | 3 | .5% |
| Other | 2 | .8% | 0 | 0% | 2 | .3% |
| Total | 264 | 100.0% | 366 | 100.0% | 630 | 100.0% |

4.3.13 Computer Skills

As part of our evolving world, technology is becoming more prevalent in every aspect of daily life, from cooking, to sleeping to working. That changing aspect of employment has not escaped the steering committee for this project and the evaluation of the computer and Internet skills of the grade 12 students as well as their opinion regarding on-line training is presented below.

In this sample, over 90% of the students stated that they had regular access to the Internet and that over 88% of the students accessed the Internet from home. The speed of such Internet connection however should be of concern as many are still only on dial-up, which is often too slow to desirably partake in on-line learning activities. Map 12 illustrates the distribution of students within their postal code boundary and the method of Internet access they use from home. The map shows a higher proportion of students in the northern parts of Huron and Perth who use dial up Internet access from home compared to DSL and Cable users. The majority of students who live in Stratford and Goderich access the Internet through high speed Internet or cable. There is a clustering of dial-up users southwest of Mitchell and east of Seaforth. The map also illustrates that very few students who live in Southern Huron access the Internet by dial-up. The following figure displays the proportion in percentages of students from each school according to the speed of their Internet connection where they most often access the Internet. The categorization by schools was used to provide more detail on the locations of the students since high speed Internet service is only available to certain regions and not others. The schools located in more rural settings reflect that service unavailability by having a greater proportion of student using dial-up connections.

Student's Home Internet Access Methods
Huron and Perth County: Map 12



LEGEND

University of Guelph

Internet Access

- Dial-Up Internet Access
- Cable Internet Access
- DSL Internet Access
- 1 Dot = 1 Student

H Town

— Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

Water

Source: DMTI Spatial

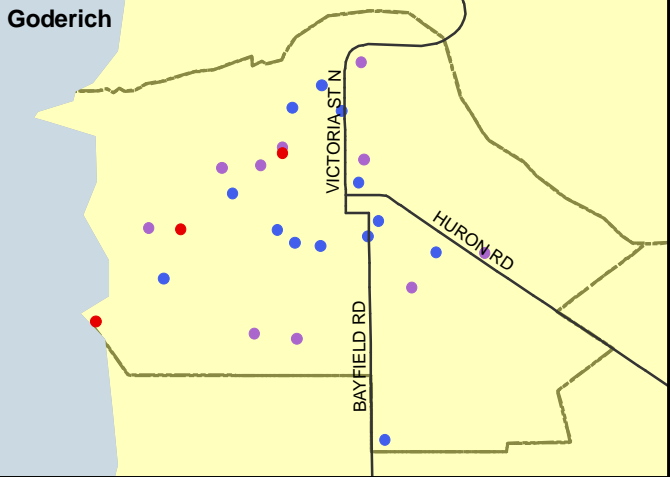
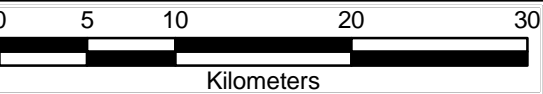
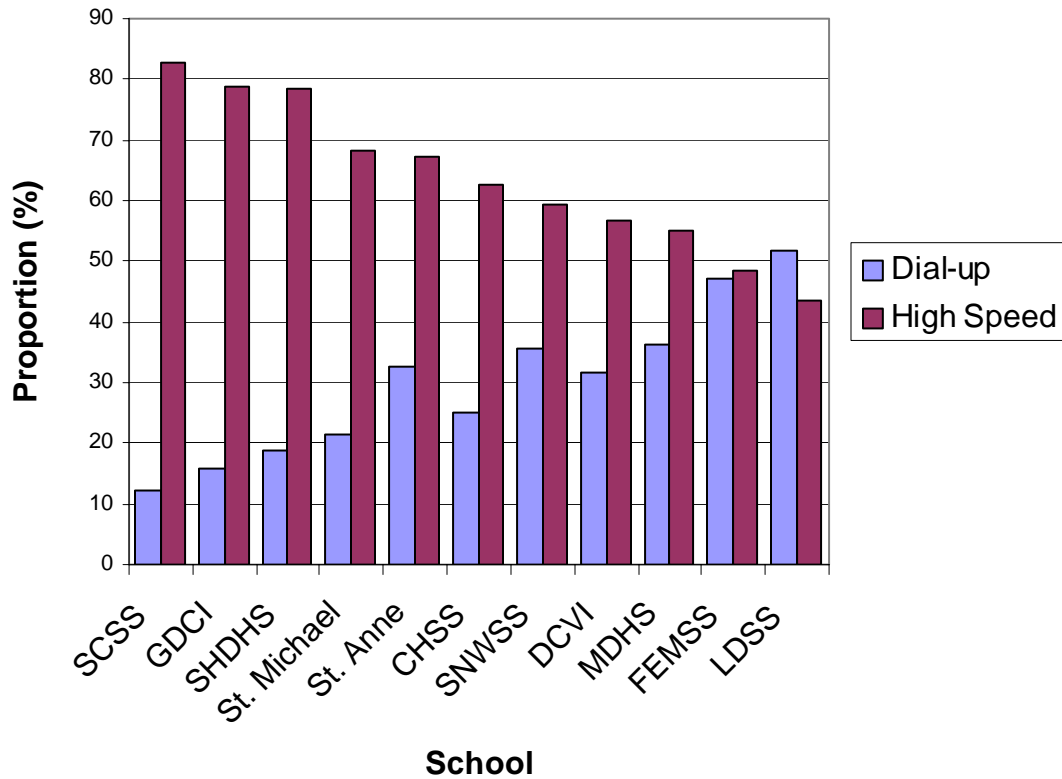


Figure 4.4: Internet Access Speed Proportions by School

Overall, the students rated their computer and Internet skills on the positive side as can be seen with the following tables. However, self-assessment questions can be biased because people like to think of themselves in a positive sense. Therefore, alternate questions were devised to gauge computer and Internet use. The logic for this is that the more activities people do and the more often they do them, the more skilled they should tend to be. While this is also not a perfect method of measuring skill level it assumes a connection between usage and skill, its use combined with the self-assessment questions provide us with a more reliable view of the students' skills. Each type of question compensates for the other's shortcomings since the self-assessment measure directly the respondents' skills and the usage questions do not give us the students' positively biased view of themselves.

The results are that the relationships between all the variables and the rankings suggest that the self-assessments are quite accurate. The best predictors of computer skills and Internet skills are the sum of programs used recently, the number of activities done recently and the recency of programs downloaded and installed. That is, when students used more programs, did more activities, more recently, they rated themselves higher.

Table 4.35: Computer Skill Self-Assessment

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Excellent | 67 | 20.3% | 49 | 12.3% | 116 | 15.9% |
| Very Good | 82 | 24.8% | 119 | 29.8% | 201 | 27.6% |
| Good | 111 | 33.6% | 167 | 41.9% | 278 | 38.1% |
| Fair | 48 | 14.5% | 49 | 12.3% | 97 | 13.3% |
| Poor | 17 | 5.2% | 12 | 3.0% | 29 | 4.0% |
| Non-Existent | 5 | 1.5% | 3 | .8% | 8 | 1.1% |
| Total | 330 | 100.0% | 399 | 100.0% | 729 | 100.0% |

Table 4.36: Internet Skill Self-Assessment

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Excellent | 76 | 23.1% | 58 | 14.5% | 134 | 18.4% |
| Very Good | 79 | 24.0% | 137 | 34.3% | 216 | 29.6% |
| Good | 101 | 30.7% | 156 | 39.0% | 257 | 35.3% |
| Fair | 49 | 14.9% | 44 | 11.0% | 93 | 12.8% |
| Poor | 19 | 5.8% | 4 | 1.0% | 23 | 3.2% |
| Non-Existent | 5 | 1.5% | 1 | .3% | 6 | .8% |
| Total | 329 | 100.0% | 400 | 100.0% | 729 | 100.0% |

And finally, the key questions asked regarding the specific Internet interests of this project reveal rather negative answers. Students, especially females agree that on-line learning approaches can be useful, however, they seem less interested in participating. The males were more negative than the females on this question. They tend more towards saying that it is not useful and that they were not interested in taking an on-line training course. Overall, very few said that they were 'Very Interested' in such courses.

This lack on interest can be due to various reasons. The fact that almost 10% of all respondents did not know of on-line learning approaches can provide parts of those reasons. Additionally, the high rate of students connecting through dial-up Internet connections in more rural areas can also provide some sense of an explanation. As web pages are increasingly designed with detailed graphics and large animations, the amount of information one computer needs to download to view the page increases. The relatively slow speed of dial-up connections increasingly makes viewing web pages a game of patience. Therefore, the idea of having to access course content via the Internet is not very enticing.

Table 4.37: Interest in On-line Learning

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Very Interested | 18 | 5.5% | 16 | 4.0% | 34 | 4.7% |
| Somewhat Interested | 101 | 30.7% | 180 | 45.5% | 281 | 38.8% |
| Not so Interested | 128 | 38.9% | 155 | 39.1% | 283 | 39.0% |
| Not Interested at All | 82 | 24.9% | 45 | 11.4% | 127 | 17.5% |
| Total | 329 | 100.0% | 396 | 100.0% | 725 | 100.0% |

Table 4.38: Thoughts on On-line Learning Approaches

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Is useful and plan to enroll | 28 | 8.5% | 37 | 9.3% | 65 | 9.0% |
| Is useful but do not plan to enroll. | 121 | 36.8% | 184 | 46.5% | 305 | 42.1% |
| Might be useful and might enroll. | 70 | 21.3% | 98 | 24.7% | 168 | 23.2% |
| Is not useful and will not enroll. | 70 | 21.3% | 45 | 11.4% | 115 | 15.9% |
| Do not know of it or how it can help. | 40 | 12.2% | 32 | 8.1% | 72 | 9.9% |
| Total | 329 | 100.0% | 396 | 100.0% | 725 | 100.0% |

4.4 Discussion

The students responded as expected and provided ample data for this project. Some interesting tendencies were revealed as well as some key differences with Bruce and Grey County.

Overall, the sample was representative of the general student population, however, there were a few more females from Perth County than expected. The average mark distribution was also normal overall however when broken down by gender and by course level, some differences emerged. The females tended to have higher overall averages and higher averages in English. Similarly, workplace math students had higher averages than their peers in English or science in Huron and Perth and all of their workplace counterparts in Bruce and Grey. Normally, workplace students have lower averages than university or college preparation students. However, here workplace preparation math students fared as well as the university preparation students. This marked difference warrants further consideration from the schools. Ideally, the factors that create such high averages should be replicated in English and in Science in order to bring them up to par with the math students.

The next point of interest is that the majority of the students took most of their extra credits in world studies, technological education and in arts courses. Few took business or computer courses. The lack of interest in that later

category is of special interest here since computer skills are of importance for the development of future on-line learning programs in the area. The only reason offered for such a low participation rate is that there are fewer courses offered in business or computer categories. With over 20% of students planning on working in business related occupations such as sales and service, management, and business administration, more courses should be offered on the subject. It is not surprising hence that the students who will do such business oriented jobs, do not plan on staying in Huron or Perth (except for the students planning on working in sales and service, they are split 50/50 on the issue).

The next group of variables looked at the students' employment record such as their volunteer work, their paid work, and their work through their family's business or farm paid or not. Most of them do volunteer and the great majority of them also work both during the school year and during the summer. However, the main point of interest is that women are not employed in the same manner as men. That is, females got fewer hours and were often restricted to jobs traditionally reserved for women. For example, most males worked in agriculture, construction, and repair jobs while the females dominated the health care category. This gendered division was held throughout all the various types of employment polled. It did not matter whether it was for a volunteer position, a paid position, or a position through the family business. Such an issue should be addressed as it also seems to affect the women's perception of their future in the area as well as what they plan on studying.

In terms of their future plans, the gendered division in choices in continued. Few females plan on attending a trade, vocational or apprenticeship program and those that do, greatly plan on becoming hairstylists. Similarly, a greater proportion of females plan on leaving the county and not coming back. The tendency is that those who will do trade programs plan on staying, but since the women are concentrating more on getting university and college degrees, they also plan on leaving. When asked for their reason for leaving, the women answered quite similarly to the men. Both think that life would be more exiting elsewhere and that there are no interesting jobs in the area. However, of those who plan on staying, the men, more than the women, will do so because they think there are interesting, well-paying jobs. The great majority of females (80%) who will stay will do so because they want to be near friends and family and because they like the area.

Such results present a clear picture of what the students perceive work in the area will be. The perception is that there is work in trades but that since women are not planning on doing trades, they will not want to work in there area. That difference in gender should be addressed however, doing so may prove to be quite a challenge.

The issue in reaching students and changing their perception is that they do not seem to respond to regular methods of information dissemination. To find volunteer opportunities, to find work, they did not respond to printed ads. Rather they responded to what friends, family, and neighbours told them. The same is true for the factors influencing their future. They mostly made their decision based on their own thoughts and interests. When they did consult someone regarding their future, they tended to speak to someone they knew such as their

parents or their friends. One gleam of hope here is found in the fact that females did tend to speak to guidance counselors and/or teachers more than the males.

Therefore, there is the possibility of reaching female youths through their teachers and counselors. However, the best method to reach all students would be to tap into their social networks. Talking to them, to their parents and neighbours is the most reliable way to reach them.

The challenge does not solely lie in reaching the students. It also lies in bringing forth the information that will make the students *want* to stay. That will also be a challenge because the students do not say that they are staying or leaving because of money or interesting jobs but rather because they like or dislike the area. They stay because they have a good social network they want to keep. On the other hand, they leave because they are bored and dislike the area.

Finally, their Internet and computer skills seem to be good enough to be able to partake in on-line learning opportunities. Whether they followed university or workplace preparation courses also did not matter. However, one problem is that one third of the population is still using dial-up Internet connection. That is especially emphasized in more rural areas such as Listowel and Wingham.

Another problem is that the students do not think they will use on-line learning programs. They understand that they might be useful but are rather negative on the idea of enrolling. Females did show more interest than males in on-line learning approaches. Of note also is that almost 10% did not know of on-line learning resources or how it could help them. More publicity and information should hence be made available. However, if they get their information on learning opportunities like they get their information for volunteer and work opportunities, it may be wise to try to spread the word rather than print out ads and pamphlets.

4.5 Conclusions

Overall, many demonstrated that their answers were well thought out by adding thorough comments and suggestions. Similarly, several students had a good grasp on what was happening around them that may affect their future as well as what needs to happen for them to have a better education and a better future.

The challenges for local organizations are hence clearly cut out. That is, innovative methods of reaching the students and transmitting information to them are necessary for various reasons. Mainly, the research shows that there is a lack of information regarding career and education options, especially regarding on-line learning. What makes the need for information a need for *innovative* information transmission is that the students tend to listen to people they know rather than formal avenues. Ultimately, their plans regarding life in Huron or Perth County revolve around their social network and their liking of the area.

5.0 Huron and Perth Employer Focus Groups

5.1 Introduction

An important component of the project was to gain the insight of local employers on issues associated with employee recruitment, training and retention, future skills demands, and employers' willingness to partner with local training institutions on the development and delivery of on-line learning initiatives. Connecting the labour market perceptions and experiences of employers with those of employees and the future labour force of grade 12 students will help to determine the feasibility of an on-line learning network for Huron and Perth counties as well as its potential benefit to the local labour market and economy.

5.2 Methodology

In total, four focus groups were conducted. Two focus groups were held in Huron County and two in Perth County. There were two components of the focus group which were used to collect information: the focus group questionnaire and the focus group discussion. Before the focus group discussion began each participant was given a short questionnaire of 16 questions to complete. See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire. The questions dealt with various issues related to employee recruitment, retention, skill upgrading and other challenges facing businesses. The purpose of the survey was to get the participants thinking about the topics of the focus group as well as provide individual answers, which we can associate with the employers industry. During the focus group discussion five open-ended questions were asked of the group. See Appendix C for a copy of the focus group guide. The information collected during the actual focus group discussions and the questionnaire helps to explain the labour force situation for Huron County and Perth County.

For privacy reasons the results from each participant are not provided but are all aggregated and presented together identifying themes, concern and point of view. Some results are categorized based on the represented industry of the employer.

5.3 Focus Group Questionnaire Results

5.3.1 Participants

Two focus groups were conducted in Huron County. One was conducted in Seaforth and the second was held in Goderich. Between both focus groups, 17 employers attended providing very passionate and detailed discussions. Table 2.1 displays the represented industries in attendance for both focus groups.

Table 5.1: Huron Industry Representation

| Industry | No. Employers | Employee Size |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Manufacturing | 7 | 5 - 700 |
| Health care and social assistance | 3 | 30 - 250 |
| Public Administration | 2 | 50 - 100 |
| Educational Services | 2 | *1700 |
| Retail Trade | 2 | 4 - 60 |
| Mining, oil, gas extraction | 1 | 515 |

*The number of Avon Maitland District School Board Employees

Although the manufacturing sector was well represented, there was a lack of representation from the agricultural sector. The lack of participation from the agricultural sector is directly related to the contacts that were made available to the researcher through local chambers of commerce, industry associations, and municipal business directories. However, of those employers who were in attendance, they did represent companies of various sizes, which provided both corporation and entrepreneurial points of view.

Two focus groups were also conducted in Perth County. Both focus groups were held in Stratford because of its central location to the rest of the county. Between both focus groups, 9 employers participated in two informative discussions. Table 2.2 displays the represented industries in attendance for both focus groups.

Table 5.2: Perth Industry Representation

| Industry | No. Employers | Employee Size |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Manufacturing | 3 | 50 - 55 |
| Accommodation and Food Service | 2 | 30 - 65 |
| Agriculture | 1 | 45 |
| Public Administration | 1 | 5 |
| Accounting and Finance | 1 | 13 |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation | 1 | N/A |

There was also low participation from the agricultural sector in the Perth County focus groups for similar reasons as outlined above. However, as explained in section 2.3, there is a strong interdependency between the agricultural and manufacturing sector in both Huron and Perth counties suggesting that improvements in one sector through skill upgrading could potentially benefit the other.

5.3.2 Issues and Challenges

The questionnaire asked what the most important issue or challenge is that the employer's business is currently facing. The results are categorized for each represented industry at the focus group. Table 2.3 provides responses from Huron County and Table 2.4 from Perth County.

Table 5.3: Issues or Challenges Facing Huron Businesses

| Industry | Issue or Challenge |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Manufacturing | Rising Canadian dollar Finding skilled employees Finding skilled trades people Machinist, Welders, Maintenance Upgrading employee's tech skills Retaining responsible employees |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | Recruitment of RN, RPN Finding non-registered staff Competition with urban areas |
| Public Administration | Finances Training Staff |
| Education | Awareness of programs |
| Retail Trade | Intense competition |
| Mining, Oil, Gas Extraction | Finding skilled trades people Electricians, Millwrights, Mechanics |

Table 5.4: Issues or Challenges Facing Perth Businesses

| Industry | Issue or Challenge |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Manufacturing | Price of steel Finding skilled employees Retaining skilled employees Up-grading employee's technical skills Increasing competition |
| Accommodation and Food Service | Seasonality Decrease in Tourism |
| Agriculture | Finding motivated employees Retaining skilled employees |
| Public Administration | Meeting demand of services |
| Accounting and Finance | Finding qualified employees |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation | Retaining skilled employees |

The recurring issues or challenges among all represented industries at both the Huron and Perth focus groups are employee recruitment and retention. The issue of employee recruitment includes finding specific trades people and other skilled and qualified employees. A couple of respondents mentioned that providing the necessary skill up-grading opportunities for their own employees is an important issue or challenge that they are currently facing. Details on both the recruitment and retention of employees are explored in more detail through the focus group discussion results.

Using a five point Likert scale, the participants were asked to rank the importance of a list of issues or challenges with regard to their business. The results are displayed in Table 5.5 and Table 5.6.

Table 5.5: Importance of Issues to Huron County Businesses*

| | Very Important | Important | Moderately Important | Of Little Importance | Unimportant |
|--|----------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Retaining valued employees | 13 | 2 | - | - | - |
| Recruiting new skilled employees | 11 | 3 | - | 1 | - |
| Training and skills development | 9 | 4 | 2 | - | - |
| Government regulations/ cost of compliance | 6 | 6 | 3 | - | - |
| Domestic/international competition | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Access to capital/financing | 3 | 3 | 7 | 2 | - |
| Development and use of e-business | 3 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Technology issues | 2 | 5 | 8 | - | - |

*Of the 17 focus group participants only 15 provided answers to this question.

Table 5.6 Importance of Issues to Perth County Businesses*

| | Very Important | Important | Moderately Important | Of Little Importance | Unimportant |
|--|----------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Retaining valued employees | 7 | 1 | - | - | - |
| Training and skills development | 4 | 4 | - | - | - |
| Government regulations/ cost of compliance | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Access to capital/financing | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - |
| Recruiting new skilled employees | 1 | 6 | 1 | - | - |
| Technology issues | 1 | 4 | 3 | - | - |
| Domestic/international competition | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Development and use of e-business | - | 3 | 2 | 3 | - |

*Of the 9 focus group participants only 8 provided answers to this question.

The issues that are of most importance for employers in both Huron and Perth counties are employee retention, recruitment of new skilled employees and training and skill development. Every employer who participated in the Huron County focus groups felt that retaining valued employees was either an important or very important issue to their business. The same results are true for the Perth County employers who were at the focus groups. Training and skills development was either an important or very important issue for 13 of the 15 Huron County employers. All of the Perth County employers also felt that

training was an important or very important issue facing their business. Of the employers at the Huron focus groups, 11 of 15 felt that recruiting new skilled employees was an important or very important issue to their business. Training and skills development was also considered to be important or very important by the majority of the Perth County focus groups. The three most important issues identified by the results of this question have a tremendous effect on the success of rural businesses and the local economy. The results from the focus group discussion explain these issues in more detail from the perspective of the employer.

The questionnaire also inquired about the employers' interest in helping develop and/or deliver on-line courses for an education network for Huron and Perth counties. The last question of the questionnaire addressed this interest and Table 5.7 shows the response rate for their given answers.

Table 5.7: Employer Interest in the Development and/or Delivery of On-line Initiatives

| Response | No. Employers | Percentage |
|----------|---------------|------------|
| Yes | 15 | 57.7 |
| Maybe | 6 | 23.1 |
| No | 3 | 11.5 |
| N/A | 2 | 7.7 |
| Total | 26 | 100.0 |

The remaining questions that were asked in the focus group questionnaire will be aggregated with the focus group discussion results since the questions dealt with similar topics.

5.4 Focus Group Discussion Results

The focus group discussions produced a wealth of information regarding local labour issues, key emerging skill needs of employers and suggested initiatives that should be taken to help employers meet their employment needs.

The results from the focus groups are presented according to county and some have been paraphrased or summarized. In some cases results have been kept as they were recorded to maintain the integrity of the response.

The following questions were asked of each focus group:

- 1 What are the most important issues or challenges facing your business at this time?
- 2 What are the current and future skills demanded of employees in your industry?
- 3 In what ways does your business provide their employees with training for job skill upgrading?
- 4 Do you feel there is potential for your employees to receive the skill upgrading they require through on-line learning courses? Why? Why not?
- 5 Identify the things "To Do" in the region for you to meet your needs for qualified employees.

5.4.1 Focus Group Question One

The first question asked what the most important issues or challenges are facing the employer's business. Responses were recorded on a flip chart for all participants to see. Once the responses to the question were exhausted, they were categorized and the group was asked to rank the importance of each issue or challenge to their business. All participants were provided with three blue circle stickers and asked to place them on the three issues they felt are the most important. Table 5.8 and 5.9 show the issues or challenges facing Huron and Perth employers and the importance of each to their business.

Table 5.8: Issues or Challenges Identified by Huron Employers and their Importance

| Issues or Challenges | Votes |
|--|-------|
| <i>Focus Group 1</i> | |
| Difficulties in finding skilled work force | 7 |
| Lack of technical training in schools | 4 |
| Training for skilled jobs is outside of the area/county | 4 |
| Competing salaries with larger centres | 2 |
| Appropriate wage level to retain the desired quality of labour | 2 |
| Recruiting people from outside the area to fill skilled jobs | 2 |
| Rate of turnover for lower end jobs | 2 |
| Increasing number of regulations to keep up with | 2 |
| "Bright Lights of the City" | 1 |
| Rural nature of the market and workplace | 1 |
| Different kind of work ethic | 0 |
| <i>Focus Group 2</i> | |
| Difficulties in finding skilled work force | 7 |
| Training current employees | 5 |
| Difficulties of recruitment and retention due to geographic location | 5 |
| Difficulties finding responsible, accountable, mature employees | 5 |
| Competing salaries with larger centres | 2 |
| Lack of computer knowledge among adults | 1 |
| Need to attract middle age group | 1 |
| Lack of apprenticeship or training in soft trades | 1 |

Both focus groups in Huron County produced very similar results. The most important issue among Huron County employers who attended the focus groups are the difficulties associated with finding skilled workers. Skilled workers are those who would meet the job requirements set out by the employer. Skills include both hard and soft as well as various trades.

Training employees was the second most important issue or challenge for both focus groups. One group felt that the lack of technical training being made available through the school board has resulted in lower numbers of skilled trades-people. Employers believe that if the youth are not given the opportunity

to enrol in technical classes in high school they are less likely to pursue trades training through a post secondary education program. The second group felt that training their current employees was the second most important issue or challenge that they were facing. On the job training provided by other employees requires many resources including the time and wages of both trainer and trainee. Although on the job training is much easier for larger businesses to provide it is a greater challenge for small businesses with limited resources. The issue of training was also identified by the first group but from the perspective of post-secondary education. They felt that the training required for skilled jobs was outside of Huron County, making it harder for their employees to access it. The geographic location of Huron County in relation to major urban centres in Southern Ontario was identified as the third most important issue or challenge for the second group. Huron County's proximity to major urban centres plays a significant role in employer's ability to recruit and retain skilled workers. Competitive salaries offered by urban-based business also make it hard to retain local workers and or attract workers from urban areas. The group felt that young adults are attracted by the "bright lights" of urban centres and leave their rural towns for a perceived higher quality of life.

Table 5.9: Issues or Challenges Identified by Perth Employers and their Importance

| Issues or Challenges | Votes |
|---|-------|
| <i>Focus Group 1</i> | |
| Difficulties in finding skilled work force | 4 |
| False expectations of young employees with regards to wage and qualifications | 3 |
| Retaining employees after trained and experienced | 2 |
| Seasonality of work. Trying to make business 4-seasons | 2 |
| Increasing Price of Materials | 1 |
| <i>Focus Group 2</i> | |
| Difficulties in finding skilled work force | 4 |
| Finding visible diversity in staff | 3 |
| Seasonality Work | 3 |
| Retention of front line staff | 3 |
| Out of province competition | 1 |

Like Huron County, Perth County employers also felt that the difficulties in finding skilled workers were considered one of the most important issues facing their business. Unlike the Huron focus groups, there were representatives from the accommodation and food services and the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors. Challenges voiced by the Perth focus group included the seasonality of their industry, finding visible diversity in their staff as well as retaining their front line staff. The seasonality of the tourism industry in Perth County was identified as a challenge because it affects employment patterns. Many employees are laid off during the winter months and may not necessarily return in the spring.

Constantly hiring new staff in the spring and summer months is very demanding on the resources of the business. However, most of the training for this industry is provided on the job and little is obtained from outside sources. The group also felt that they should have a frontline staff that is more visibly diverse because tourists are becoming more visibly diverse. Hiring employees who are visibly diverse is difficult for businesses in Perth County due to the demographics of the area.

5.4.2 Focus Group Question Two

The second question asked the group to discuss the current and future skills demanded of employees in their business or industry? Once a list of skills was identified by the participants they were asked to place three blue circle stickers beside the three skills they considered to be the most important for employees to have; then place three red circle stickers beside the three skills they consider the hardest to find in employees. If the employer felt that one skill in particular was most important or hard to find they could place all three stickers on that skill. Table 5.10 and 5.11 show the results of this participatory activity.

The skills of concern are those which have a high ranking in both the “Most Important” and “Hardest to Find” columns. Other skills that should be taken into consideration are those which have a high ranking in the “Hardest to Find” column but a low ranking in the most important column.

Table 5.10: Future Skills Demanded by Huron County Employers

| Skills | Most Important | Hardest to Find |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Focus Group 1</i> | | |
| Trade/Specific skills (Machinist, Welder, HCW) | 6 | 8 |
| Work independently, entrepreneurial, accept responsibility | 5 | 4 |
| Customer service/Public relation skills | 4 | 3 |
| Literacy | 3 | 0 |
| Business management (hard and soft skills) | 3 | 3 |
| Open minded/Good attitude/Continuous learning | 2 | 0 |
| Integrity, loyalty, accountable | 2 | 1 |
| Technical skills relating to computers | 2 | 1 |
| Problem solving skills | 1 | 3 |
| Goal oriented | 0 | 2 |
| Follow instructions and clarify instructions | 0 | 2 |
| <i>Focus Group 2</i> | | |
| Common Sense | 6 | 0 |
| Human Relations/Work Ethic/Business Management/Teamwork | 6 | 10 |
| Computer skills related to Microsoft programs | 4 | 0 |
| Trade skills | 4 | 3 |
| Problem Solving | 3 | 0 |
| Health and safety awareness | 2 | 0 |
| Willing to take the initiative | 1 | 0 |
| Appreciation/Understanding for Job requirements | 0 | 4 |
| Imaginative | 0 | 5 |

The following skills are those which Huron County employers have identified as being the most important for employees to have but yet are the hardest to find:

- 1 Trade/Specific Skills
- 2 Able to work independently
- 3 Entrepreneurial
- 4 Willing to accept responsibility
- 5 Good work ethic/attitude
- 6 Customer service skills
- 7 Public relation skills
- 8 Business management (hard and soft skills)
- 9 Able to work in a team environment

The following skills are those which Huron County employers have identified as being some of the hardest to find but are not the most important for their employees to have.

- 1 Problem solving skills
- 2 Goal oriented
- 3 Able to follow and clarify given instructions
- 4 Have an appreciation/understanding for job requirements
- 5 Imaginative

Table 5.11: Future Skills Demanded by Perth County Employers

| Skills | Most Important | Hardest to Find |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>Focus Group 1</i> | | |
| Customer service skills/Public relations and Professionalism | 3 | 6 |
| Trade/Specific Skills | 2 | 1 |
| Office Skills | 2 | 0 |
| Open minded/Good attitude/Continuous learning | 2 | 0 |
| Business Management | 2 | 3 |
| Basic food and wine knowledge | 1 | 1 |
| Teaching skills | 0 | 1 |
| <i>Focus Group 2</i> | | |
| Language and communication | 4 | 2 |
| Team work/Conflict management | 3 | 2 |
| Problem solving | 2 | 0 |
| Ambition for continuous learning | 1 | 2 |
| Computer skills | 0 | 1 |
| Technical trades | 0 | 3 |

Table 5.11 shows the skills identified by Perth employers as being the most important for their employees to have as well as those which they consider hard to find. In summary, the following skills are those which Perth County employers have identified as being the most important for employees to have but are yet the hardest to find:

- 1 Customer service skills
- 2 Public relation skills
- 3 Professionalism
- 4 Business management skills
- 5 Language and communication skills
- 6 Able to work in a team environment
- 7 Able to manage conflict

The following skills are those which Perth County employers have identified as being some of the hardest to find but are not the most important for their employees to have:

- 1 Trade/Specific Skills
- 2 Ambition for continuous learning

The results of this question varied depending on the represented industry at each focus group. Although the Huron employers felt that technical trade skills was considered a highly important skill which is hard to find, the Perth group felt that they were just hard to find and did not consider them as important to their business. The similarity is that members from all groups felt that required trade skills are relatively hard to find in new employees. Other similarities between both counties with regards to those skills, which are most important and hard to find, include: customer service and public relation skills, business management skills and the ability to work well in a team.

5.4.3 Focus Group Question Three

The purpose of question three was to create a list of the methods and incentives that businesses use to provide their employees with skill upgrading. The question asked: In what ways does your business provide your employees with training for job skill upgrading? The following is a list of responses provided by focus group participants.

Huron County

- Pay for continuing education tuition costs upon successful completion
- Pay for travel costs to location of training
- Skill up-grading even not when related to job
- Provide \$200 for a training course of the employees choice
- Provide fulltime pay while taking fulltime courses
- Provide preceptor training with Ontario Universities
- Regulatory Bodies provide funding for skill training (RNO, Ministry of Transport, ORCA, OLTCA)
- Orientation/Training for new employees
- Take advantage of current employees who have the ability to teach their skills to others.
- Take part in apprenticeship programs
- Pay for and support co-op programs with the local school board
- Cross train employees so they can fill different jobs when needed
- Use e-learning for product knowledge training
- Hard and soft training by third party institutions (e.g.: Dale Carnegie Training, Padgett Thompson Training)
- Use Perth County Centre for Employment & Learning
- Encourage all employees to continue with life long learning
- Health and Safety training (WHMIS)
- Provide industry training (trucking, welding, fork lift, WHMIS, food handling)

Perth County

- Training provided and job skill up-grading available by most employers
- Employee can apply to take a job related course and is paid in full upon successful completion. The course must be done during the employees' own time except occasionally a one or two day course.
- Employers pay for travel expenses to and from training and accommodation if required.
- Employers receive fliers advertising courses. Some on-line courses are taken, and employees suggest some courses.
- Higher management has training (sometimes in the US), seminars, and meetings during working hours.
- On-line courses through Conestoga College are used
- Although training is offered there is little interest from employees (ex. St. John's Training was offered free but little advantage was taken).
- Employees are not motivated to continue with education. Suggested reasons for not participating include recent completion of school, personal reasons, no time for extra learning, focus on what is strictly necessary for the job.
- Money set aside for each employee for "personal coaching"
- Some courses taken include: first aid, WHMIS, CFDelearn.ca
- As far as on-line learning is concerned, people are still more interested in hands on, interactive learning or textbook learning. Educational backgrounds of most employees reflect this.
- Provide Smart Serve training
- On job training is practical. Staff meetings are used to train. Small budget for training limits potential for employee to up-grade.
- Employers try to participate in training to stay on top of things and then in return train their own employees based on what they have learned.
- Participate in University/High School Co-op programs which often will lead to part-time work.
- Employers positively view apprenticeships.
- In house training for computer related skills.
- Encourage employees to take courses on their own
- Orientation/Training for new employees including a skill assessment
- Third party trainers come to business to provide employees with problem solving and business management skills
- Provide Communication training (telephone etiquette, customer service skills)
- Provide a special in house training program which is designed for employees who do not want to go to college but do want to stay in the desired industry. It is also for employees who do not feel comfortable with school.
- Provide training in an e-learning format for front line staff, which takes two days.
- Match a more experienced employee with a new one to provide mentoring on an ongoing basis.

The results of this question have outlined the many different types of training opportunities employers are providing for their employees. However, little was mentioned about on-line training as a means of providing skill upgrading for their employees. During the discussion about the types of training provided, several issues and concerns were made as follows:

- Some employers feel that hiring undergrads with less education but more work experience is better than hiring MBA graduates who expect a lot out of the job but have no experience and are not willing to work their way up. The younger work force feels that they have a right to be hired because of the education they have. They also feel that they should start higher up on the pay scale.
- Another point was made that the lack of employee loyalty is what stops employers from investing a lot of resources in training their employees. However, could it be that the lack of investment results in little loyalty?
- There are employers who are interested in having co-op students work at their business but because of their distance from the high schools and students' inaccessibility to automobiles or transit, it is not feasible.
- Students are receiving less and less exposure to business related courses in their high school, which is reducing business as an option for post-secondary education.
- Due to government regulations apprenticeship training is hard to provide.

The results of question three suggest that employers in Huron and Perth have and will continue to invest in their employees by offering them training opportunities. As long as employees are interested and value skill upgrading, they are being offered the opportunity for life long learning within their work place. An issue of training identified in question one was the problem of investing in training only to have employees leave once they have gained more experience and skills. Unless there is an agreement that the employee must provide the employer with a certain time commitment in return for training, there is no guarantee that young workers will stay.

5.4.4 Focus Group Question Four

The purpose of question four was to determine the perspectives of employers regarding on-line learning and its potential for providing training. The question asked: Do you feel there is potential for your employees to receive the skill upgrading they require through online learning courses? Why? Why not?

Huron County

- Potential for soft skill training for general labour people.
- Health and safety training provided on-line might be possible.
- On-line training for new legislation/regulations would be possible on-line
- On line learning in nursing is possible - at the masters level for example
- There is demand for on-line RPN to RN conversion courses.
- The theory part of technical training could be provided on-line.
- On-line training courses must provide academic and technical support for students as they require it.

- Students need to go to a given place at various times to meet fellow on-line learners who are enrolled in the same or similar classes.
- Health and safety (WHMIS) is provided on-line.
- A lot of senior staff is not comfortable with computers.
- The potential of on-line learning needs to be made public as well as the training resources that are available on-line.
- Better community advertising/marketing for on-line learning potential.
- If a course is from somewhere other than Ontario it is important to know if it is accredited.
- Need incentives for employees to take on-line learning.
- On-line learning needs to incorporate the hands-on/interactive aspect of the learning.
- Theory and practice are always very different.
- Employees find it hard to motivate themselves to take on-line learning.
- There is potential in the future for on-line learning to become much better.
- Personal preference and an individual's learning style influence learning potential.
- There is lack of interpersonal relations.
- On-line learning is just a tool and a medium through which information is communicated.

Perth County

- Some households still do not have Internet access.
- Not that much potential for the hospitality and tourism industry to use on-line learning.
- There needs to be a combination of interpersonal activity such as videoconferencing.
- Excellent potential for the basic technical skills like computer skills.
- On-line learning may only be effective for those who have the discipline and capability to learn on their own.
- On-line courses hinder students from learning "people skills".
- There is a challenge of policing how much your employees are actually learning and absorbing so that they can apply their skills.
- Stigma associated with online learning – (example "Mickey mouse" MBA).
- Perhaps on-line learning is the future of learning, but right now it is not generally as positively viewed as more interactive/traditional learning methods.
- E-learning may be invested in more if it was cost effective.
- Potential for hard skills (book keeping, accounting) but not for soft skills.
- On-line learning needs to be designed so it provides technical simulations as well as other interactive features. Courses need to allow students to work through problems. There has to be some basic form of artificial intelligence which provides "what if statements" leading students to different solutions or consequences based on their choices.
- Need connection with teacher or support staff, which provide accountability and deadlines.
- Students need to be very disciplined and motivated.

- Needs to be complemented with some face-to-face encouragement and motivation. Constant check ups and team work opportunities between people involved in the course.
- Training for employees needs to be part of the workday. Hard to do at night depending on the individuals circumstances.
- Employers find that it is hard to get employees to finish on-line courses they enrol in.
- One employer explained that he has experienced a 40% completion rate among employees who enrol in on-line learning.

The discussion produced a list of many factors that affect the success of on-line learning. Although most participants thought that on-line learning has some potential for training, the limitations, concerns, and barriers were the main focus of the discussion. Both Huron and Perth counties mentioned similar points. The main factors that affect the success of on-line learning from the perspective of employers included personal preference and learning style, practical verses theoretical curriculum, personal interaction and support, and technological limitations.

Learning styles and personal preferences are a major factor affecting the potential of on-line learning. Not everyone learns best using the same methods. An individual must be very motivated and dedicated to complete an on-line course and have the self-discipline to time manage and complete the courses by certain deadlines. An individual must believe that the overall benefit of taking an on-line course is greater than the personal costs they must sacrifice. According to the employers at the focus groups, financial costs are few because the majority is being supplemented by the business, suggesting that the only costs required of the employees is their personal time. However, several employers noted that a training course could be completed during work hours while being paid, yet few take advantage of such opportunities. In situations where no financial or personal costs are required of the employee but training is still not taken, it could be a rate of return issue. If an employee is not going to benefit from taking training then they may consider it a waste of time. Some of the employers feel that younger workers only do what is strictly necessary for the job and may require something in return to take training courses. Incentives for training are one way of encouraging employees to take training.

Employers feel that on-line learning has the potential to offer theoretical learning of particular trades training but cannot provide the practical hands on experience. Computer related training such as software knowledge could easily be offered on-line because it is being learned through the same medium in which it will be used. Other knowledge based training such as product knowledge or legislation and regulatory understanding can be successfully offered on-line.

Many of the important and hard to find skills identified in Table 5.10 and 5.11 are those which are developed through personal interaction with others. Employers emphasized the importance of personal interaction to develop teamwork skills and people skills. On-line learning courses must include a personal interaction component. Interaction could be accomplished via teleconferencing with an academic support person as well as other students.

The last factor identified by the focus group participants is technological limitations. The major barrier is the limited coverage of high-speed Internet service in both Huron and Perth counties. Even if the infrastructure is in place it is very important to provide on-line learning technology that can be effectively used by all potential students. Computer system requirements for an on-line course should be low enough to allow the majority of the population to participate. Education should remain equitable no matter what form it is being delivered in. However, for trades' skills to be effectively offered in an on-line format, employers stated that: technical simulations and many other interactive features need to be incorporated. In order to run these simulations there has to be some basic form of artificial intelligence which provides "what if statements" leading students to different solutions or consequences based on their choices. The more a course contains high demands on computer hardware (e.g.: requires more memory, more bandwidth, and/or more processing power/speed), the more people will be excluded from potentially taking it. Considering the lack of Internet infrastructure in Perth and Huron, on-line learning courses should remain simple.

5.4.5 Focus Group Question Five

The last question provided the focus group participants the opportunity to make suggestions on what they feel could or should be done in the county in order to help them meet their employment needs. The question asked: Identify the things "To Do" in the region for you to meet your needs for qualified employees. The following are the results from the focus groups in each county.

Huron County

- Need to advertise/sell the high quality of living in Goderich/Huron to more urban areas.
- The County government needs to take the initiative and promote the local job opportunities.
- There must be focus on retaining the people who are already here.
- Growth must be managed appropriately.
- Need more job fairs that are community based/focused.
- Education system needs to partner more with business.
- There needs to be more community economic development planning.
- Better infrastructure for computer technology.
- Need to attract those who may have left the county.
- Business needs to come into schools to let them know what is going on.
- Employers need to realize there is a valuable return for time invested educating students in their schools.
- Better communication between high schools, colleges, universities and employers.
- Unions create barriers for co-ops and other creative educational initiatives.

Perth County

- Need to start at the high school level by letting students know what hospitality business careers exist locally and that they are not just seasonal employment.

- Must better educate students about their community and the local economy. Provide place-based learning.
- Since tourism is viewed negatively by the local people this attitude influences students to think that was as well and hence will not consider it as a viable industry for employment opportunities.
- Stratford needs to be viewed as a place where money can be made year round.
- Professionals in urban areas need to be aware of the career opportunities in Perth County.
- The school system needs to provide more/better basic money management and language skills.
- Stratford needs to develop a housing program/student exchange (like Banff) to attract students to the area for seasonal employment.
- Need to inform future employees that there are other employment opportunities other than tourism.
- High school students need to be educated about the long-term careers that are available in Perth County.
- Physical placements, job shadowing, mentorship, etc. should complement career days.
- Human Resources Canada cutbacks have been detrimental to the employer/employee partnership and relationships. Few people are aware of the government programs that do exist like tax credits/incentives and those through Conestoga College programs.
- More money should be provided to the high schools to encourage students to go into the trades. Industries could donate money to develop specific trade programs in the schools.
- Kids need to know early (Grade 6-8) what career opportunities are available in their community.
- More initiatives to encourage and influence women to go into trades.
- Bring back technical classes in the formal education system.
- Youth need to see and understand what the “real” world is like. They need more exposure to the working world and the different jobs that are available.
- Integrating local employers into the classroom. Allow employers to provide in class education.
- More hands on and less education based on the textbooks. Learn by doing.
- Educators need to think outside of the box.
- More effort needs to be put into promoting the high school co-op program.
- Develop partnerships with local employers and schools
- Retain the people who are already here.
- Need to attract a younger cohort of people.

The focus group participants provided a substantial list of ideas that would help them meet their employment needs. Education related suggestions are a theme that is evident by representatives from both counties. Participants feel that more trades skills and other specific skills need to be encouraged and made available for high school students. Not only is it recommended that trades skills

be promoted to the general student population but specifically to women. Increasing women's representation in trade jobs would increase the job pool and reduce the problem of low numbers of rural trades' people. Not only do women need to see and learn from other women who are working in specific careers but so do men. Stronger and more integrated partnerships need to be created between the school board and local employers in order to help educate students. Students only know what they are taught and or discover on their own. Creating awareness of local career opportunities early and promoting them throughout high school ensures that students know about these opportunities and it is not left up to them to discover on their own, which they may never do.

More initiatives need to be taken by the county government including the economic development agencies to better promote Huron and Perth to the rest of the Province as a viable place to live, work and play. The quality of life needs to be communicated well using comparisons with urban areas. There are negative connotations associated with rural life and a marketing strategy needs to address them. In order to attract employees and businesses to the counties the coverage of high-speed Internet service must be increased. Better educating youth through the use of their community as a medium to do so could increase job awareness, instil a sense of place in youth, and provide them with more options to develop their own future aspirations. Coupled with strong individual marketing plans for both Huron and Perth counties, education initiatives could help to provide employers with the skilled employees they require.

5.5 Conclusions

The results from the focus groups have identified several linkages between issues, skill requirements and education and the role that on-line learning could have. There seems to be a connection between the lack of skills in new employees and education. Increasing education opportunities in the school system and/or through on-line learning programs for those skills identified by employers could begin to close the skills gap and help employers in meet their employment needs.

Access to post secondary education needs to be more readily available for residents of Huron and Perth counties. Currently, employers are paying for their employees to travel to London and other urban centres for training. Resources could be saved if those courses were offered in Huron and Perth or through on-line learning. Of those employers who participated in the focus groups, 80.8% of them said that they would possibly be interested in helping develop and/or deliver on-line training for Huron and Perth counties. Although the focus groups represent only a small number of employers, the amount of interest among the group is promising.

Employers know their industry and skill requirements better than anyone else and it is imperative that they become more involved in helping develop not only on-line training but also high school curriculum. Youth only know what they are taught or what they discover on their own. Teaching someone is more effective then letting them find out on their own. For this reason it is important that elementary and high school students become more aware of their local economy and the future jobs they have to offer. Increasing students' interaction

with employers will encourage them to develop knowledge and an interest in local business and possibly pursue a future career in a local industry.

6.0 Labour Force Survey

6.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this project is to determine the available skills of the labour force. There are numerous sources that can provide such information, however, none were specific to this area and to the needs of this project. Therefore, a survey of the people composing the local labour force was deemed to be the best method to gain such information.

More specifically, the research needed to gather information on the education levels and training experiences of the people living in the area, their current employment situation, their satisfaction with it and factors that would prompt them to change, as well as their skill level, namely with computers and the Internet. This variety of categories of inquiry is important because a wide range of local organizations are interested in utilizing the results of this research. The richer and more detailed the data is, the more likely it is that the local organizations can improve the situation in Huron and Perth counties economically, educationally, and otherwise.

6.2 Methodology

6.2.1 Survey Design

The survey was designed based on a questionnaire used for a similar project in the counties of Bruce and Grey the previous year (Cummings, Currie, Large, Whittaker, & Murray, 2005). In that project, the questionnaire and the method used to apply it were tested and found to be useful in providing valuable data. The questions were found not to be offensive and easily answerable with little need for clarification. Therefore, for this project, a very similar methodology was used with a few adjustments to apply the lessons from the first project and to adapt the survey to this project's needs and requirements.

The questionnaire was divided into various sections, namely: current employment, education, skills upgrading, skills, household activities, mobility, and personal profile. The first questions asked were filter-type questions. That is, these questions ensured that the person completing the questionnaire match the criteria set out by this project. Namely, the participants had to be 16 years or older, they had to live in Huron or Perth County and could not be retired. This ensured that the respondents were part of the labour force and that they were living in the research area.

The first section covered the respondents' current employment status. It covered a range of questions regarding the type of employment such as the industry sector, the hours per week, and the length of time at such employment. These questions were asked for all paying jobs a respondent might have held. The section not only covered the work people were doing but also their

satisfaction with their jobs, their feelings of underemployment as well as their future employment aspirations.

The next section focused on the levels of education and training of the participants. It is important to understand the type of education and the amount of training received since this directly affects the work the people can perform. In this section, questions related to formal education (high school, college, university) and to training or skills upgrading obtained within the last year. As a component of this project, specific questions were also centered solely on the respondents' experiences and opinions regarding on-line training.

Subsequent questions directly asked the respondents how they rated their various skills. They were to rate given skills on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant 'very poor' and 5 meant 'very good'. The respondents rated a variety of skills such as 'verbal communication skills', 'teamwork skills', 'organizational skills', 'creative skills', and 'Internet skills'. Again, computer and Internet skills were specifically targeted and hence extra questions were asked regarding the respondents' computer and Internet skills to get a more detailed picture.

The next section focused on life at home, specifically, the time spent doing housework, caring for children, and caring for seniors. Some questions also focused on the mobility of the household such as recent relocations and reasons why the household would move. A final section gathered general demographic information such as year of birth, gender, and total household income.

6.2.2 Sampling Strategy

The total labour force for Huron and Perth counties was 71,215 in 2001 according to Statistics Canada. Therefore, a sample of 382 would have been necessary to ensure representativeness at the 95% confidence level with 5% error. However, in the previous use of this methodology in Bruce and Grey counties, there were issues in maintaining a ratio of men to women comparable to that of the general population as described by Statistics Canada (Cummings et al, 2005). Hence, in this study it was decided that the sample was to be stratified by gender. In order to provide results that were more significant and representative at the level of the county (Huron and Perth separately) the sample size was increased to 250 per county. This provides us with a reliable estimate of the characteristics of the employees in each separate county such that 94.5% of the time the estimate will be accurate within 10% of the actual number.

Residents of the area were first advised of the survey via local newspaper media. The participants were contacted via telephone. Their numbers were randomly chosen through the local telephone books using a random number template. Numbers chosen were called up to three times. When there was no answer, messages were left to advise the household that the research team was trying to contact them for the study and to expect another call the following evening. Non-residential numbers such as organizations or businesses were not called.

6.2.3 Survey Process

The survey was conducted between the hours of 6 and 9 pm from Monday to Friday between August 12 and September 9, 2005. Seven students from the University of Guelph were hired to perform the interviews. They were introduced

to the goals of the project and informed on the purposes of every section of the questionnaire. The interviewers were clearly instructed to maintain the integrity of the questionnaire as much as possible to maintain consistency especially for questions where the respondents were to choose one of five specific answers. That is, for questions where a respondent had to choose between 'very interested', 'somewhat interested', 'undecided', 'not very interest', or 'not at all interested', the interviewers were to state each options equally every time. They were also asked not to interpret any varying answer but to ask the respondent to choose one of the available answers.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Response Rate

In total, 507 questionnaires were completed which is in accordance with the requirements for representativeness outlined above. The responses were obtained after 4,746 telephone calls were made. Of these, 2808 were personally answered. Of those who answered 976 were to people who did not qualify (retired, living outside Huron or Perth county). Therefore 1831 people answered and were qualified to participate however 1321 refused to do so. Hence, a response rate of 27.89% was achieved.

Such a response rate is expected for a number of reasons. The fact that people had little to no warning of the coming call, did not receive a direct benefit such as getting money in return, and did not know the researchers or the interviewers are all predominant reasons why few people agree to participate in a telephone survey. The response rate was also expected as it is comparable to the one obtained during the previous similar study conducted in Bruce and Grey County (Cummings et al, 2005).

6.3.2 Respondent Profile

As discussed earlier, the sample was stratified by gender to gain greater assurance of its validity. The idea is that since the census collects information on everyone in the region, its data hence is an accurate representation of the general population. By comparing similar variables between Statistics Canada's representation of the population and our sample's representation of the population, we can see how representative our sample is. The more representative it is, the more we can generalize from our sample to the population at large. Of note however, is that the variables need to be equally comparable. While this is easy for gender, as we only have two categories, later on, while comparing between age groups, the comparisons cannot be as reliable. That is, Statistics Canada's representation of the population includes those who are not active in the labour force. For the purposes of this research, those not part of the labour force were excluded. Hence, it is expected that in some respects, this sample will be different than the general population and hence will not be fully comparable to census data.

Here, restrictions were put on the sampling procedure to ensure that the proportion of males and females in the sample were the same as the proportions obtained by Statistics Canada in the 2001 Census. The obtained proportions outlined in Table 6.1 are within a tenth of a percent equal to the Statistics

Canada data for each county. Therefore, the sample can be considered as representative of the population.

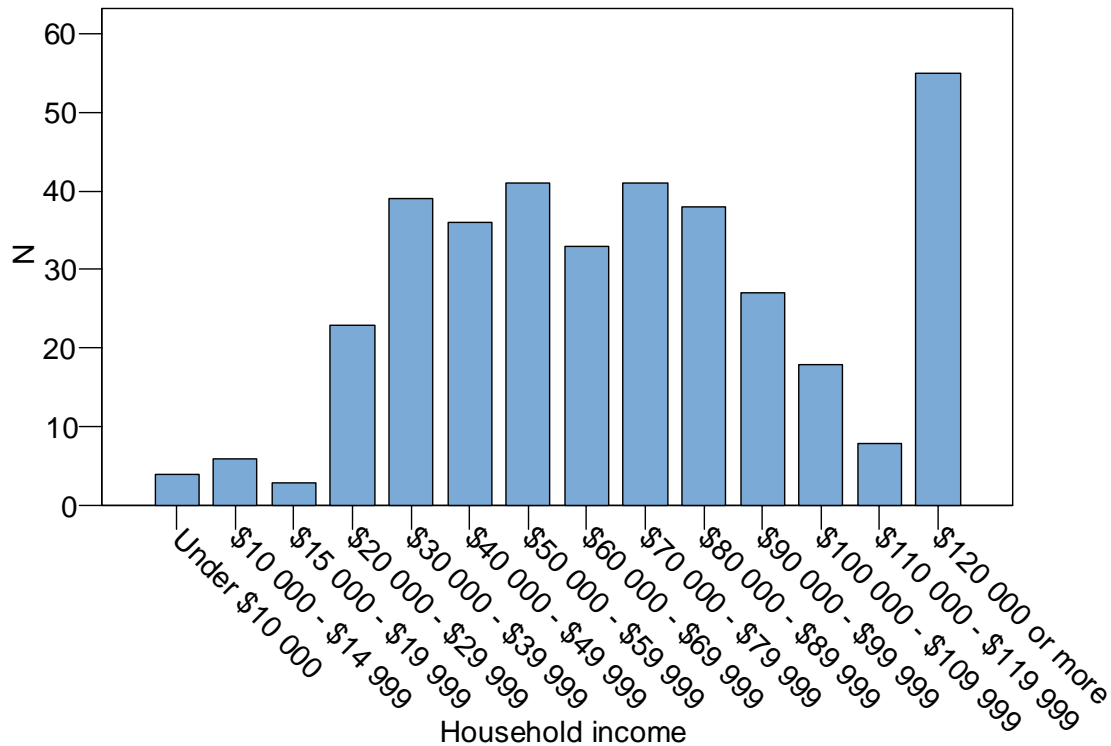
Table 6.1: Gender of Respondents by County

| | County | | | | Total | |
|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Huron | | Perth | | | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Male | 127 | 49.6% | 123 | 49.0% | 250 | 49.3% |
| Female | 129 | 50.4% | 128 | 51.0% | 257 | 50.7% |
| Total | 256 | 100.0% | 251 | 100.0% | 507 | 100.0% |

The majority (62.4%) of the respondents are legally married while 22.5% were single and were never legally married. The rest were either common law (6%), divorced (5.6%), separated (2%), or widowed (1.6%). Statistic Canada reported a similar distribution in 2001 where 59% were married, 25% were single, 6% were common law, 5% were divorced, and 3% were separated. The only difference is that we only received 1.6% of our sample that was widowed while Statistic Canada reports that 8% of the population is widowed. That difference is due to the fact that those who are retired were not surveyed, as they are not part of the work force anymore however, they are the most likely segment of the population to be widowed as they are over 65. Here is an example of how Statistics Canada data cannot fully be compared. Hence, the difference between sample and population, which lead one to think that the sample is not representative, need take into consideration those inherent differences in the data.

The respondents were on average 41.5 years old and were normally distributed between the legal ages for employment when compared to Census 2001 data. The only difference with Statistic Canada data is that there is 18.5% of the population that is 65 or older while the sample only has 1.2%. The lower percentage is due to the fact that most aged above 65 are no longer active in the labour and hence did not qualify to participate in this survey.

The average income reported in the 2001 Census was \$26 847 and \$29 979 for Huron and Perth County respectively. In the Census, women also reported on average earning \$12 500 per year less than men. Statistic Canada reports that the median household in Huron County earned \$45 885 and those in Perth County earned \$51 505. The following chart depicts the sample's (N=372) reported income for their household. To encourage responses on this rather sensitive question, respondents were only asked to classify their income into one of the categories displayed in Figure 6.1. Therefore, comparisons to Statistic Canada data are limited (i.e.: we cannot compare mean and median incomes). Map 5 does, however, provide details on the geographical locations of income earners.

Figure 6.1: Total Household Income of Respondents

As can be seen in the map, higher income earners tend to live closer to urban areas or near main roadways connecting urban areas. Those living in further removed areas tend to earn, on average, less income. Later on, we will discuss map 8 with its representation of the most often cited industry for each region and that will help further understand the income distribution across geographical regions.

6.3.3 Current Employment

The following section details the respondents' current employment situation as well as their plans for the future. In total, 466 respondents were currently employed while the rest were legally able to work, but currently without a job. We have hence an unemployment rate of 7% which is closer to Ontario's 6.1% than Huron or Perth's 4% rate reported by Statistic Canada in 2001. Such a high unemployment rate detracts from the representativeness of our sample somewhat. The rate obtained can be a function of the methods used in this research. That is, even though the calls were made during the evening when people were most likely to be home, it still assumes that people are not working in the evening. Therefore, we were more likely to catch people who were unemployed and at home than people who were employed and working during the evening. That is, the higher unemployment rate is due to the fact that some households have members working evenings while in another household a member is unemployed and at home able to answer the questionnaire.

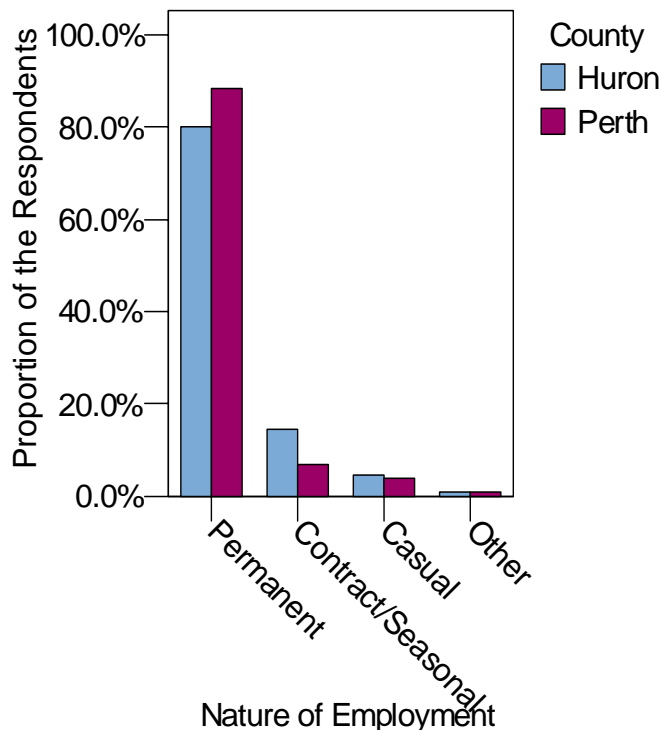
Of 466 employed, 65 have a second job and 3 have a third job. The jobs were ordered by the respondent as their first, second or third according to the income each provide. Of those without employment, 70% (N=29) are women.

In their main job, the majority of respondents (74.5% (N=350)) work for someone else, whereas those who have a second job, only 46% (N=30) of them are employed by someone else. Therefore, it seems that while people work for an employer in their main jobs, they tend to have their own little enterprise for a second income. When gender is considered however, that tendency is not maintained. For their first job, 69.3% of men are employed by someone else, while 79.7% of the women are employed by someone else. For their second job, 34.6% of men are employed by someone else while 53.8% of the women are. Therefore, women are significantly less likely to be self-employed than men. If Men have second jobs, they are more likely than women who have second jobs to be self-employed¹.

There is also a difference between counties as 49 of the 65 respondents (75%) who have second jobs are located in Huron County. Therefore, those living in Huron County were more likely to have a second job to supplement their first.

Focusing on the respondents' main employment and the nature of their employment situation, 84.1% of the respondents are employed on a permanent basis while 10.8% were on a contract/seasonal basis, and 4.2% were casual. The significant differences between counties are maintained here as Perth County has more of its respondents employed on a permanent basis than Huron. On the other hand, Huron County has proportionately twice as many people employed on a contract/seasonal basis than Perth County².

Figure 6.2: Nature of Employment by County^a



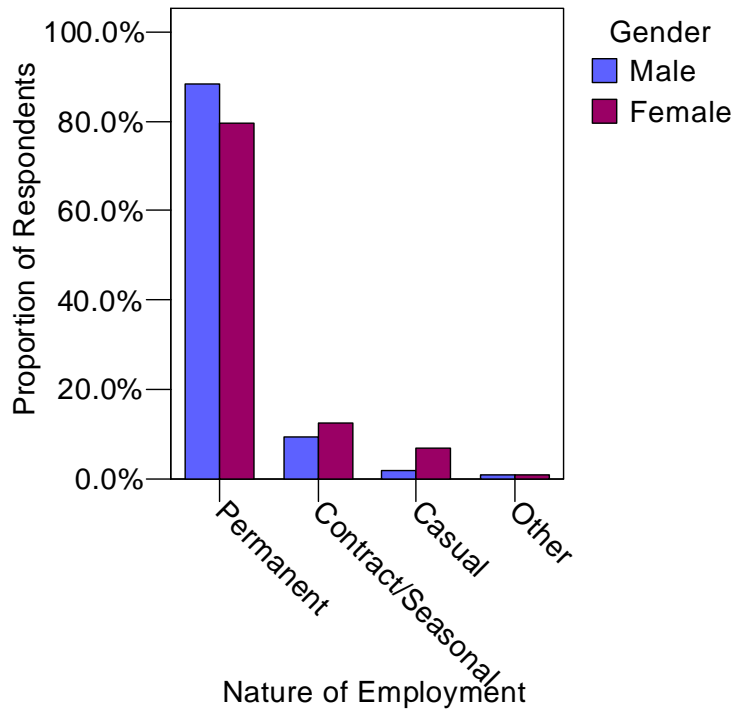
^aSignificant at the 95% confidence level, chi-square 7.276

¹ Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 6.701

² Significant at the 95% confidence level, chi-square 7.276

Gender-wise, there are also some points to notice, namely, 88.3% of men are working on permanent basis while 79.7% of the women are. Also, 80% of those who are working on a casual basis are women. Therefore, women work significantly more on a short-term basis than men³.

Figure 6.3: Nature of Employment by Gender^a



^aSignificant at the 99% confidence interval, chi-square 9.971

The difference in the nature of women's employment helps one understand why 63.2% of the women are employed full time while 89% of the men are. Permanent jobs are associated with full time hours. Women have on average fewer hours per week. They work an average of 34.5 hours while the men work 45.8 hours per week.

There are also differences in how long men and women have been working at their current main job. Men, on average, have had their current employment for 11.4 years while women have had theirs for an average of 9 years. Therefore, not only do women tend to work more on contracts/seasonal casual basis, they also work for less hours and have changed jobs more recently. The shorter time span spent at their current job also leads one to think that women tend to change jobs more often⁴.

Looking at the industries within which people are employed only serves to reinforce the differences between the sexes. The majority of the men are employed in agriculture (22.7%), construction and specialty trades (17.2%), and manufacturing (11.2%) while the women are employed in health care (20.4%), education (14.3%), finance, insurance and real estate (11.3%), and

³ Significant at the 99% confidence interval, chi-square 9.971

⁴ Significant at the 99% confidence interval, t 2.549

manufacturing (10%). The manufacturing and the retail sectors are the only two industries where men and women are working in relatively equal proportions.

Looking at the differences between counties and industry of employ, there is only the manufacturing sector where Perth County employs a significantly larger proportion (14.5%) than Huron County (6.8%). All other sectors employ relatively equal proportions of people in both counties.

Table 6.2: Work by Industrial Sector by Gender

| | Gender | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Health Care, Social Assistance | 9 | 3.9% | 47 | 20.4% |
| Educational Services | 5 | 2.1% | 33 | 14.3% |
| Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Leasing | 16 | 6.9% | 26 | 11.3% |
| Manufacturing | 26 | 11.2% | 23 | 10.0% |
| Wholesale/Retail | 17 | 7.3% | 20 | 8.7% |
| Accommodation, Food Services | 8 | 3.4% | 18 | 7.8% |
| Agriculture | 53 | 22.7% | 14 | 6.1% |
| Information, Culture, Recreation | 8 | 3.4% | 13 | 5.7% |
| Other Services | 9 | 3.9% | 7 | 3.0% |
| Business, Building Support Services | 9 | 3.9% | 6 | 2.6% |
| Public Administration | 5 | 2.1% | 6 | 2.6% |
| Construction/Specialty Trade | 40 | 17.2% | 4 | 1.7% |
| Transportation/Warehousing | 16 | 6.9% | 4 | 1.7% |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical Services | 7 | 3.0% | 4 | 1.7% |
| Religious, Civic, Social Advocacy Organizations | 2 | .9% | 4 | 1.7% |
| Utilities | 3 | 1.3% | 1 | .4% |
| Total | 233 | 100.0% | 230 | 100.0% |

Map 8 displays the dominant employment sector for each local region according to the 2001 census. In it, one can see that the manufacturing industry is leading in the Stratford and St. Marys regions, which is also related to our higher proportion of people working in manufacturing in Perth County. Agriculture is also predominantly leading in most rural areas with the exception of a few regions along major highways and near small towns and villages.

One can also compare Map 8 with Map 5 to better understand the income distribution across geographical locations as discussed earlier. One can see that those employed in agriculture and manufacturing, leading industries in both counties, are also those who tend to earn less. The regions where people mostly work in the accommodation and food services sector and the health and social assistance sector tend to be in the higher income categories. When asked regarding their satisfaction with their employment, most said they were satisfied, regardless of gender. Regarding location however, the Huron County residents

tend to be more on the positive side as none said they were ‘very dissatisfied’ and only 5% said they were ‘dissatisfied’ compared to 1.3% and 9% respectively in Perth County.

Table 6.3: Satisfaction with Employment^a

| | County | | | |
|-------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Huron | | Perth | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Very satisfied | 112 | 46.5% | 100 | 44.8% |
| Satisfied | 103 | 42.7% | 94 | 42.2% |
| Undecided | 14 | 5.8% | 6 | 2.7% |
| Dissatisfied | 12 | 5.0% | 20 | 9.0% |
| Very dissatisfied | 0 | 0.0% | 3 | 1.3% |
| Total | 241 | 100.0% | 223 | 100.0% |

^aSignificant at the 95% confidence level, chi-square 7.048, with 3-point satisfaction scale

The distribution of employees by postal code and their reported job satisfaction is illustrated in Map 13. Although the majority of employees were satisfied with their current employment, there is a cluster of employees between Mitchell and Listowel that are not satisfied.

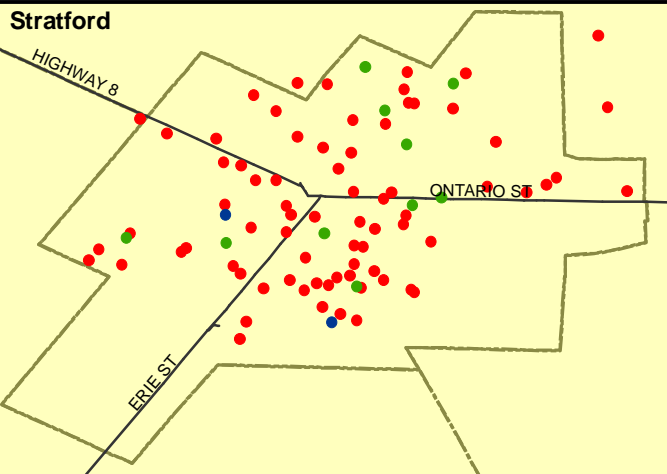
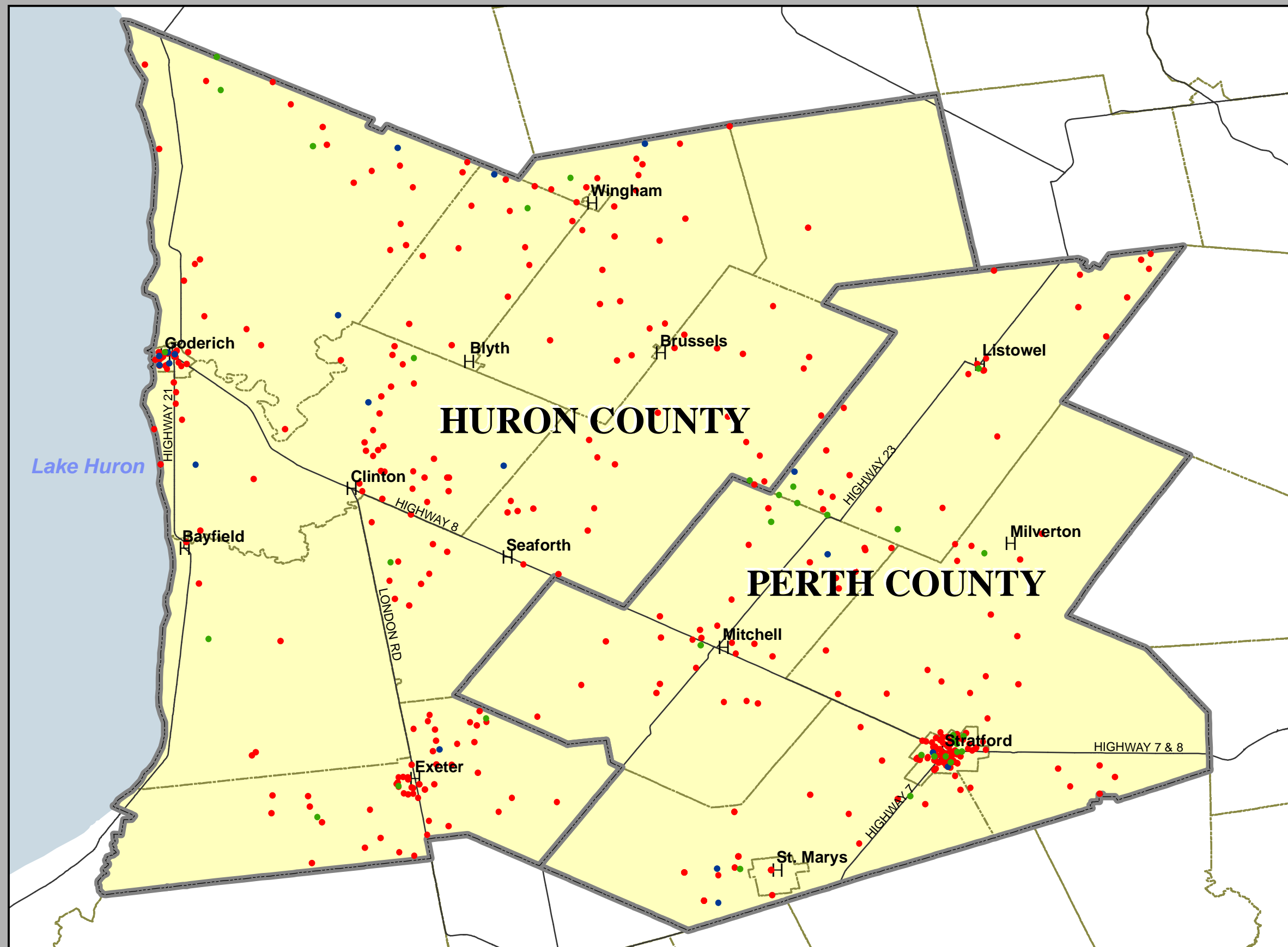
When asked whether they felt underemployed, the majority (82.2%) said no. The interesting part is that 87.6% of men do not feel underemployed while a smaller 76.6% of women feel that way⁵. Overall, the reasons they gave for their underemployment were underused skills/experience (63%), the shortage of hours/work (19.1%), and low income (17.8%).

Finally, the respondents were asked regarding their future expectations in their employment situation as well as what would prompt them to change or move from that situation. When asked about their plans for the next year, most (76.4%) expected to be in the same job. However, when asked about five years from now rather than a year from now, the proportions of respondents expecting to be in a higher position and those expecting to be retired went from 8.7% to 24.1% and from 3.7% to 13.8% respectively. They seem to have higher expectations for the future. The women especially tend to expect to be in higher positions in different industries more so than men do.

When asked what employment-related factor would compel them to move outside of the county, men stated that better wages and more job opportunities would be most important. While the woman did state that to some extent, personal/family reasons are the prime motives. Overall, however, only 54% were willing to say that employment would force them to relocate. Forty-six percent stated that nothing employment-related would influence them to move outside of Huron or Perth County.

⁵ Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 9.564

Employee Job Satisfaction
Huron and Perth County: Map 13



LEGEND

University of Guelph

Satisfaction Level

- Very Satisfied or Satisfied
 - Undecided
 - Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied
- 1 Dot = 1 Employee

H Town

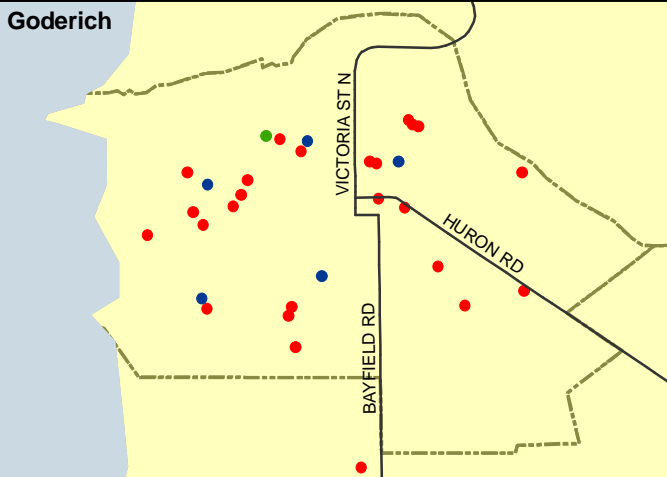
— Major Road

County Boundary

CSD Boundary

Water

Source: DMTI Spatial



6.3.4 Education

This section focused on the participants' education and training. The following table shows the distribution of respondents by gender and their formal education attainments. It is important to note here that the sample obtained is more educated than the general population as reported by Statistic Canada's 2001 Census. For example, in 2001, the percentage of people not having obtained a high school diploma was between 20.5% and 35.1% depending on age and region. Here only 9% do not. The higher education level of the sample has implications for all generalizations to be made from the results of this study. The views of those without a high school diploma are underrepresented therefore any further discussion comparing education level should take this into consideration. That can be done by inflating the weight of their responses of those less represented so that they hold proportionately the same weight as in the 2001 Census.

Table 6.4: Formal Education Obtained by Age Group

| | Age group | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 16-34 | | 35-44 | | 45-99 | |
| | Sample | Census | Sample | Census | Sample | Census |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Not completed high school | 11.2% | 21.7% | 8.8% | 25.1% | 8.5% | 35.1% |
| High school | 41.3% | 34.4% | 30.7% | 26.8% | 35.8% | 22.3% |
| Trade school | 5.6% | 10.6% | 10.9% | 16.8% | 8.0% | 14.3% |
| College | 23.8% | 22.1% | 27.7% | 21.3% | 25.5% | 18.2% |
| University | 18.2% | 11.3% | 21.9% | 9.9% | 22.2% | 10.1% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Another point of interest is the gender differences in formal educational attainment. Women, more so than men, tend to graduate from high school, but do not go on to complete a trade program.

Table 6.5: Education Obtained by Gender^a

| | Gender | | | | Total | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | N | % |
| | N | % | N | % | | |
| Not completed high school | 29 | 11.6% | 17 | 6.7% | 46 | 9.1% |
| High school | 85 | 34.1% | 95 | 37.3% | 180 | 35.7% |
| Trade school | 35 | 14.1% | 7 | 2.7% | 42 | 8.3% |
| College | 49 | 19.7% | 81 | 31.8% | 130 | 25.8% |
| University | 51 | 20.5% | 55 | 21.6% | 106 | 21.0% |
| Total | 249 | 100.0% | 255 | 100.0% | 504 | 100.0% |

^aSignificant differences between gender and education levels at a 99% confidence level, chi-square 30.313

Similar tendencies are visible when comparing educational attainments between counties. Perth County has a significantly higher rate of completion of high school, however, that does not translate into more people completing post secondary programs. The counties have significantly different proportions of people completing a trade, college or a university degree⁶.

Table 6.6: Education Obtained by County^a

| | County | | | |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Huron | | Perth | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Not completed high school | 35 | 13.8% | 11 | 4.4% |
| High school | 77 | 30.3% | 103 | 41.2% |
| Trade school | 22 | 8.7% | 20 | 8.0% |
| College | 73 | 28.7% | 57 | 22.8% |
| University | 47 | 18.5% | 59 | 23.6% |
| Total | 254 | 100.0% | 250 | 100.0% |

^aSignificant differences between counties and education levels at a 99% confidence level, chi-square 19.67

Still, there is overall a large proportion of people with a high school education or else. Therefore, their skill set is limited to what was learned in school or on the job. These are the people that can benefit the most from training programs offered by their employers and by the community. In fact, 36% of the respondents stated they had recently completed a skills-upgrading course such as the ones mentioned in the following table.

The courses taken were related to their current job and were from a variety of sources such as a college, university or government program, but they mainly (40.8%) were from their employer.

Table 6.7: Skills-upgrading Course Topic

| Course Topic | N | % |
|------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Industry/occupation specific | 88 | 58.3% |
| Computer/technology | 14 | 9.3% |
| Workplace safety/first aid | 8 | 5.3% |
| Teamwork/conflict resolution | 4 | 2.6% |
| Small business management | 3 | 2.0% |
| Accounting/bookkeeping | 3 | 2.0% |
| Other | 31 | 20.5% |
| Total | 151 | 100.0% |

The respondents (N=180) also agree that their training experience was positive as 86.1% (N=155) of them rated the courses as either 'good' or

⁶ Significant differences from expected normal distribution values between counties at a 99% confidence level, chi-square 19.67

‘excellent’ and only 3.9% (N=7) stated ‘fair’ or ‘poor’. When asked more specifically about on-line training courses, the responses were still on the positive side, but they were more tempered as fewer respondents rated the training good and more of them rated the training average, fair and poor. However, the differences are not statistically different.

Figure 6.4: Rating of Training Experiences



The participants were then asked to elaborate on their opinion of their on-line training experience. The following table demonstrates their responses; the positive comments are in the top half and the negative comments are in the bottom half.

Table 6.8: Reactions to On-line Rating

| | Gender | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | |
| | N | % | N | % |
| Interactive | 3 | 12.0% | 6 | 13.6% |
| Easy | 3 | 12.0% | 5 | 11.4% |
| Convenient | 3 | 12.0% | 4 | 9.1% |
| Appropriate | 1 | 4.0% | 3 | 6.8% |
| Could go at own pace | 1 | 4.0% | 2 | 4.5% |
| No social interaction | 4 | 16.0% | 8 | 18.2% |
| Poor design | 2 | 8.0% | 1 | 2.3% |
| Frustrating | 1 | 4.0% | 1 | 2.3% |
| Too much work | 1 | 4.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Didn't get the support I needed | 1 | 4.0% | 0 | 0.0% |
| Other (positive & negative) | 5 | 20.0% | 14 | 31.8% |
| Total | 25 | 100.0% | 44 | 100.0% |

The respondents seem to have had opposing experiences with on-line training. Of those who had a negative experience, their main concern was the

lack of social interaction while those who enjoyed their experience stated that it was interactive. They also stated equally that they like it because it was easy and convenient. Therefore, on-line courses can be successfully developed so that people are pleased with their experience.

In the end, respondents were asked whether they were interested in completing an on-line course. Overall, the responses were divided between those who are not interested at all and those who are somewhat to very interested with those not interested 8% greater than those interested. Men tended to be more negative than women while few are sitting on the fence on the issue. Still the 40.8% of people stating interest is larger than the 15.5% of respondents who took an on-line course. Therefore, there are more people in the market interested in the medium than there are currently people completing courses.

Of those who were interested, the topics they would like to pursue were mostly specific to their work (See Appendix E for a list of stated course topics of interest). The most often cited specific topics were business administration, language development (written and oral), finances and accounting, and education.

Table 6.9: Interest in On-line Training

| | Gender | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Male | | Female | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Very interested | 27 | 11.1% | 49 | 19.9% | 76 | 15.5% |
| Somewhat interested | 59 | 24.2% | 65 | 26.4% | 124 | 25.3% |
| Undecided | 26 | 10.7% | 24 | 9.8% | 50 | 10.2% |
| Not very interested | 18 | 7.4% | 15 | 6.1% | 33 | 6.7% |
| Not at all interested | 114 | 46.7% | 93 | 37.8% | 207 | 42.2% |
| Total | 244 | 100.0% | 246 | 100.0% | 490 | 100.0% |

6.3.5 Skills

The next section focused on the specific skills of the participants. The main method by which this was assessed was by asking the respondents to rate themselves on how good they were at a skill on a scale from 1 to 5. Another set of questions focused on experience with farm machinery and operations, as farming is an important industry in Huron and Perth counties.

Regarding farming experience, the men are more often than women to have dealt with farming machinery and operations within the last 5 years. That is, 53.6% of men versus 16.4% of women reported having operated heavy farm machinery in the last five years. Similarly, 44.1% of men versus 6.6% of women reported having maintained farm machinery. The same is true for managing farm operations where 41.8% of men have done so recently compared to 17.2% of women. When it comes to marketing farm products however, 22.7% of men and 13.3% of women have done so recently.

Next, the respondents were asked to rate themselves on a variety of skills on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 meant 'very poor' and 5 meant 'very good'.

Overall, the respondents were honest enough in the self-rating questions to give themselves lower scores on some items, however, as with any self-rating question, people tend to have a positive bias towards themselves. That is, people will tend to give themselves higher ratings and will not really use the full range of the rating scale. Therefore, the average ratings reported in the following table should be interpreted with this in mind.

Overall, the women tended to rate their skills higher than the men except for the mechanical/hands-on, the math and the database skills set. The respondents rated themselves highest in the reading, teamwork and verbal communication skills while they rated themselves the lowest in spreadsheet, word processing and database skills. Namely, 40.1% of the respondents said they were 'very poor' with databases such as MS Access and MySQL while 28.1% said the same regarding spreadsheets. Internet skills were also among the lowest rated skills.

Table 6.10: Mean Self-rating of Skills^a

| | Gender | | Total |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| | Male | Female | |
| Reading skills ^b | 4.11 | 4.50 | 4.31 |
| Teamwork skills ^c | 4.14 | 4.37 | 4.26 |
| Verbal communication skills ⁱ | 4.16 | 4.30 | 4.23 |
| Social/interpersonal skills ^d | 4.04 | 4.35 | 4.20 |
| Organizational skills ^e | 3.83 | 4.24 | 4.04 |
| Written communication skills ^f | 3.71 | 4.13 | 3.93 |
| Physical, mechanical, hands-on skill ^g | 4.10 | 3.50 | 3.79 |
| Math skills ^h | 3.84 | 3.45 | 3.64 |
| Internet ⁱ | 3.18 | 3.49 | 3.34 |
| Artistic, creative skills ^j | 3.14 | 3.44 | 3.29 |
| Word processing ^k | 2.88 | 3.40 | 3.14 |
| Spreadsheets ^l | 2.48 | 3.06 | 2.77 |
| Database skills ⁱ | 2.52 | 2.34 | 2.43 |

^a Some variables were recoded to a 3-point scale because there were too many cells with too few cases to produce a reliable chi-square test.

^b Significant difference between expected and observed differences across genders at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 20.632, on a 3-point scale

^c Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 12.207, on a 3-point scale

^d Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 25.18, on a 3-point scale

^e Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 27.197, on a 3-point scale

^f Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 28.925, on a 3-point scale

^g Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 39.604

^h Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 23.432

ⁱ Non-significant difference between gender on chi-square test with 95% confidence limit

^j Significant at the 95% confidence level, chi-square 11.484

^k Significant at the 99% confidence level, chi-square 24.095

^l Significant at the 95% confidence level, chi-square 9.873

For the purposes of developing an on-line curriculum, at first glance here it seems people feel they are not very skilled and hence may lack confidence in completing a course on their own. However, this is still only a somewhat superficial way to see the respondents' computer and Internet skill. The following section in the questionnaire was designed to bring more depth and clarify the issue.

6.3.6 Computer and Internet Skills

To better understand the extent of the respondents' computer and Internet skills a group of questions were asked related to the frequency and type of use. For example, direct questions such as 'How often do you access the Internet' to more indirect questions such as 'When was the last time that you...' were posed to the respondents.

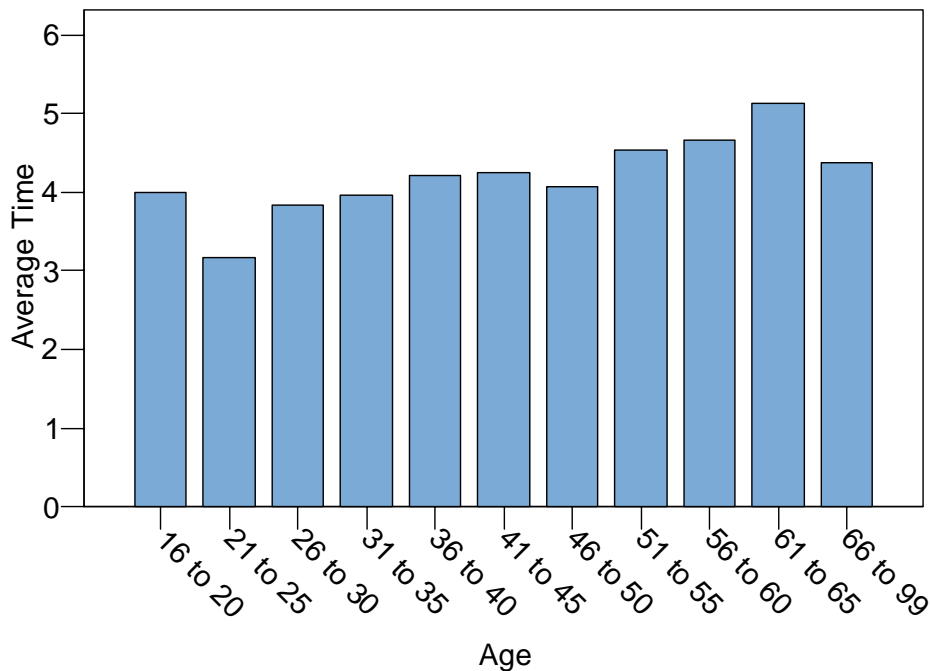
Firstly, respondents mainly access the Internet from home (67.3%) and from work (28.9%). Few stated they access the Internet regularly at a friends/neighbour's house or at a public access site. Similarly, most (56.8%) access the Internet several times a week, while some (23.4%) access it only a few times a week and while 19.8% say they never or rarely access the Internet. This, however, is still an incomplete picture.

Grouping the respondents by their age provides a clearer picture of the respondents' skills. Overall, the older the respondent, the less often s/he accesses the Internet. Similarly, the older the respondent, the more likely s/he will state never having downloaded or installed software, made a purchase on-line, or done their banking on-line. This is true with one exception: those under 20 did not tend to have recently or ever done their banking or purchased a product on-line. That can be due to the fact that those under 20 do not yet have credit cards to make purchases on-line nor do they yet have the need to perform banking operations such as transfers, payments and investments. Hence, those between 20 and 50 years of age or so are the ones most active in front of their computer screen⁷.

Figure 6.5 demonstrates that relationship between age and computer use. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked how recently they had performed various computer related tasks such as installing a program and doing on-line banking. In the graph, the mean represents each tasks combined and averaged. The higher the mean, the longer, on average, since the last time the person had performed the task, if ever.

We can see that those aged from 21 to 25 have, on average, most recently performed the computer related tasks while those aged 61 to 65 reported longer time spans since they last performed the tasks. Relatively speaking, that is, those aged 21 to 25 have done the tasks not so long ago, while the 61 to 65 year-olds have done them quite some time ago.

⁷ Significant at the 99% confidence level, pearson correlation .241

Figure 6.5: Mean Recency of Combined Computer Activities^a

^a NB: The higher the mean, the longer since the tasks were performed, the lower the mean, the shorter the time since. The mean does not represent a specific unit of time like 3 days or 4 weeks. It represents a shorter or longer time span. See text for explanation and interpretation of the graphic.

6.3.7 Home and Community Life

As a last section, the questionnaire attempted to obtain a clearer picture of the overall home situation of the participants. The reasoning behind this is that with just a snapshot of skills or employment without a fuller picture of life at home, it is difficult to correctly and fully understand the labour force. The labour force is more than just people working, it is also people with families, with likes and dislikes, etc. These are all factors that make the labour force what it is and that can be influenced to improve it. The results mentioned earlier regarding the feelings of underemployment touched on this already, what follows is more on the overall situation of Huron and Perth County workers.

Firstly, the participants were asked to report how much time per week they spent performing household chores, caring for children without pay and caring for seniors without pay. In total, the participants reported that they spent on average 19.75 hours per week doing unpaid work at home, 24.44 hours in unpaid child care and 1.54 hours in unpaid care for seniors. Women, on average, reported twice as many hours as men doing work at home and three times as many hours as men caring for children. Women hence, have responsibilities outside of work that consume a significant amount of hours. That can be understood in two ways: One, women spend more hours doing those things because they tend to work fewer hours at paid jobs, or two, women do less paid work because they have to be home for the responsibilities they have there. Either way you choose to look at it, women's time is spent differently than men and that needs to be kept in mind when targeting them in future employment and training initiatives.

Next the respondents were asked to report on their address changes over the last year and over the last 5 years. The results significantly show that the older the respondent, the more likely it was that s/he had not moved recently: those younger than 35 tended to have moved more recently than those who were older⁸. Of those aged between 16 and 25, 19.4% of them reported living in a different municipality 5 years ago while 24.2% of those aged 26 to 35 reported living in a different municipality. .

Similarly, the participants travel an average of 14 minutes to work and most (69.2%) use their own car or truck. Another 10.5% stated that they walked to work and 11.4% said that they work from home.

Finally, the participants were asked what they liked about their community. Most stated that the community and rural living was the reason they liked living in Huron or Perth County. The quiet, and the friends and neighbours are also main reasons.

Table 6.11: Reason for liking the community

| | N | % |
|---------------------------|-----|--------|
| Community/rural living | 105 | 23.8% |
| Quiet | 86 | 19.5% |
| Family/friends/neighbours | 85 | 19.3% |
| Convenience | 38 | 8.6% |
| Quality of life | 32 | 7.3% |
| Safety | 22 | 5.0% |
| Natural environment | 18 | 4.1% |
| Affordable | 5 | 1.1% |
| Other | 50 | 11.3% |
| Total | 441 | 100.0% |

The same question was asked regarding why they do not like their community, and some interesting results came up. Mainly, they stated they disliked nothing, but those were mostly men as only 25.4% of the women said they dislike nothing versus 43.9% of the men saying so. The women mainly had issue with the lack of services and access to urban centres and stores. Also, those who stated they dislike nothing tended to be older. Of those under 25 years of age, only 13.8% of them said they dislike nothing. The younger generations rather tended to state that they disliked the lack of services and access to urban centre and shopping as well as disliking the small town mentality of their area.

⁸ Significant at the 99% confidence level, correlation -.293

Table 6.12: Reason for disliking the community

| | Dislike of community | |
|---|----------------------|--------|
| | N | % |
| Dislike nothing | 155 | 34.5% |
| Lack of services/shopping/centre | 85 | 18.9% |
| Small town mentality | 43 | 9.6% |
| Nothing to do, no entertainment, social life, activities for children/teenagers | 31 | 6.9% |
| High costs (housing, gas, taxes) | 25 | 5.6% |
| No jobs | 11 | 2.4% |
| Weather | 10 | 2.2% |
| Lack of public transit | 10 | 2.2% |
| Other ⁹ | 79 | 17.6% |
| Total | 449 | 100.0% |

6.4 Discussion

In the end, completing this phone survey was done knowing that there would be difficulties in finding participants and in obtaining a representative sample. People do not normally want to spend 15 minutes on the phone answering questions for very limited and indirect benefits to them. Understanding this, however, led the research team to develop better methods to minimize those issues. Methods such as stratifying the sample so that representative proportions of men and women were surveyed proved to provide improvements on results from previous similar survey work. Hence, the sample obtained was representative of the population as represented by Statistic Canada's Census 2001 data. The male to female ratio, the age and the income distribution were comparable to census data. The only exception to this is that our sample was, in some respect, more educated than expected. That difference, however, can be partially explained by the fact that we interviewed people aged 16 and over who were part of the labour force while the available data from Statistics Canada included those 15 and over and included all who are not part of the labour force. Therefore, in the end, the profiles of the sample are similar in enough respects to be deemed representative of the overall labour force in Huron and Perth counties.

The first section of the interview focused on the participants' employment situation. As expected, most were employed, and some had second and even third jobs. What is of notice is that those living in Huron County were more likely to have a second job and that men were more likely to be their own boss in this second job than women. Women tend to work for an employer in their main employment or their second. Additionally, women tended more than men to work on a casual or a part-time basis. Men were more likely to be employed on a full-time permanent basis. Therefore, men tended to stay in their jobs longer as

⁹ See Appendix F for a list of stated reasons for disliking the community

women had more recently changed jobs. Hence, women in Huron and Perth counties are employed in a more fragmented fashion.

When asked whether they felt underemployed, or whether they were unsatisfied, most of the respondents said no, they were satisfied. Of those who did feel underemployed, their main concern was that their skills and experience were not used to their full potential. Low income and small number of hours were secondary reasons to their feelings of underemployment.

Consequently, they were asked what employment factor would force them to move outside of the county and the responses again were different for men and women. The men mainly stated that they would leave for a better income or for better opportunities. While the women did tend to agree with the men, they also stated that they would move for family or personal reasons. Therefore, money is not the only thing driving people's decisions.

The next section focused on the education and training of the respondents. Of the 36% of them who reported having recently done a skills-upgrading course, most said that the course was specific to their job offered through a university, college or through their employer. They also felt positive about their experience. When asked more specifically about on-line training courses, however, their experiences were slightly more negative, especially for the men. The men being more negative however can be due to the fact that men are more often assertive in their everyday behaviour and hence can afford to be clearly negative about an experience. The reasons for stating that their experience was negative mainly focused on the lack of social interaction in the course. That, however, seems to be related to the course itself rather than the format since those who had a positive experience stated that their experience was an appropriately interactive one. The competing opinions may be due to the course itself but they can also be due to the person taking the course as some people may need more direct interaction to come away with a positive feeling. In the end, however, the results show that the potential is there for people to have positive experiences and that there is a proportion of the population, especially women, that are interested in upgrading their skills via an on-line course.

The larger female interest can partially be explained by another section of the interview. This section focused on the hours spent doing unpaid work such as doing housework, caring for children or caring for seniors. The female respondents spent more time doing those things than men which leads one to think that they are more often at home. Therefore, the convenience of on-line training is of special interest to those women. Marketing of any future product can hence be specifically targeted to their situation.

However, there is more to consider regarding the development of on-line training. The questionnaire also attempted to measure the level of Internet and computer skills of the respondents. The results show that while most respondents regularly access the Internet from home numerous times a week, they state that their computer and Internet skills are limited as they rate them among the lowest of all skills. Those aged 20 to 45 are the ones who perform the greatest variety of operations on the Internet regularly such as doing banking and installing programs. Older respondents just did not utilize computers as much while the younger respondents were limited by their lifestyle and present situation.

In the end, there is an opportunity for people to complete an on-line course as they do regularly access the Internet, there is a significant portion of them who are interested and they do have some knowledge of how to use their computers but their more specific technical knowledge may be limited beyond the basics.

7.0 Conclusion

The completion of this comprehensive research project has enabled all interested parties to have access to information regarding the skills of the present and future labour force, as well as the opportunities offered by the training organizations and the skill-related needs of employers. That information can be used to assist employers in their search for employees, to develop training programs addressing the skills gaps, and to help employees successfully participate in the labour force.

There were a variety of lessons from this exercise regarding employment, skills and training; what follows are some of the notable ones.

7.1 Training Organization Survey

This survey provided information regarding the skills training available in Huron and Perth County. Namely, it addressed the presence of, and interest in, an on-line learning network for the area. Eighteen organizations were surveyed, four of which were for-profit. The survey was performed over the phone and based on pre-determined questions (See Appendix A). The main concerns of training organizations are as follows:

- Stable funding is unavailable. Currently, the government funds many programs and hence the programs are threatened by funding cutbacks.
- The rural nature of the area challenges the profitability of providing training locally. More urban areas are preferred as more clients are close and hence more profits are possible.
- The location of the training organizations in urban centres means higher costs associated with training for rural area residents. Those living in rural areas need to travel to obtain training. They hence lose time at work and have to pay for their travel expenses (gas, food, etc.). Similarly, training organizations encounter higher expenses when trying to reach rural clients.
- On-line learning is a possible solution to those rural barriers however it comes with its own set of obstacles.
- It is difficult to transfer a classroom-based course to an on-line format.
- On-line programs are limited due to the presence of dial-up Internet connections.
- Training organizations are interested in further developing the on-line medium. However, they would like to obtain more information (i.e. cost-benefits, technical support, etc.)

7.2 High School Survey

This survey obtained information regarding the future labour force of the area. It was administered during grade 12 English classes by their teacher in all nine public high schools and in both Catholic high schools located in Huron and Perth County. In total, 939 questionnaires were delivered and 750 were completed in late March and early April 2005.

- Marks in all courses represented a normal distribution overall. Women tended to have higher marks overall and in English. Workplace math students had higher marks than their counterparts in science and English.
- Extra credits were mostly taken in world studies, technological education and in arts. Fewer credits were taken in business and in computer related courses.
- Over 90% of the students have jobs both during the school year and during the summer. Women worked in different industries than men and worked for fewer hours. They tended to work in traditional female employment.
- With respect to future plans, 41% plan on going to university, while 45% plan on going to college and 14% plan on completing trade, vocational or apprenticeship program. Few of those headed towards a trade program are women.
- When asked whether they planned on living and working in Huron and Perth County, 43% stated that they planned to do so. Those headed for trades programs tend to want to stay while those interested in University courses do not plan on living and working in the area in the future. Since few women plan to do trades, fewer women plan on staying.
- Those who plan on leaving think that life would be more exciting elsewhere and that there are no interesting jobs in the region.
- Men who plan on living and working in the area think that there are interesting and well-paying jobs. Women want to stay because they want to be near friends and family and because they like the area.
- Desire to stay or leave is also related to the degree to which the respondents like the area. Those who want to stay, state it is because they have a good social network.
- Students stated that they base their decision and get their information regarding the future from family, friends and their interest rather than from formal mediums such as counsellors and ads. This has implications for initiatives that would address the gendered career choices as reaching them to educate them will require innovative approaches.
- The students regularly access the Internet and perform routine tasks. They are hence able to partake in on-line learning opportunities; however, one third of them only have dial-up Internet access.
- The students' interest in on-line learning programs is low. They understand their usefulness but do not plan on enrolling. Women did show more interest than men however.
- Information regarding on-line learning programs seems to be missing as 10% of the students did not know of them or how they could help.

7.3 Employer Focus Groups

Here, four focus groups were conducted with various employers in the two counties. Each employer was asked to identify concerns regarding their issues with employees' skills and regarding skills upgrading, specifically on-line training.

- Access to post-secondary education was cited as an issue. Currently, employers have to pay for the travel costs associated with their employees who obtain training in urban centres.
- Training can be taken during work hours without penalty and that will continue to be offered, however few employees take advantage of the offer unless it is necessary. Employers value life-long skills upgrading. Further incentives and a better understanding of the value of training are necessary.
- An issue with training is the danger that the employee leaves after completing the program. That investment in training is then lost to the employer who is left to start over with a new employee.
- On-line training is considered a viable and useful opportunity and is of interest to the employers. They are willing to help with the development and delivery of such a program. Their in-depth knowledge of the skills requirement for employment in the region would be useful.
- Employers listed a variety of factors affecting on-line learning such as personal preferences, learning styles, practical versus theoretical approaches, personal interaction levels, access to support, and technological limitations such as high-speed access and computer system requirements.
- For on-line training to be effective, employers state that technical simulations and other interactive features need to be incorporated. Students need to be able to see the consequences for choosing one solution over another.
- Employers are also interested in the high school curriculum as a way to train future employees. They see a need for more awareness in high schools regarding the local economy, local industries and local businesses. More interaction with employers and better knowledge of the area would help the students decide on a future career in the area.
- Trades skills and other specific skills are lacking and hence need to be encouraged and made available to high school students. Women especially need to be targeted to increase the skilled labour pool.
- Upgrading courses should address the need for soft skills such as people skills, customer service, public relations, business management and teamwork skills.

7.4 Employee Survey

In total, 507 employees were surveyed over the phone regarding their employment situation, their skills, and their knowledge and interest in on-line training. This was done in late August and early September 2005 between the hours of 6 and 9pm.

- Regarding their employment situation, most were employed, some even had second jobs, especially in Huron County; however, the women are less often employed on a permanent full-time basis than men. Men also tended to have had their current jobs for longer than women.

- Most respondents are satisfied with their job. Those who did feel underemployed were concerned that their skills and experience were underused.
- When asked whether they would leave the area because of employment, the men stated they would leave for a better income while the women tended to state family or personal reasons would drive their decision.
- Respondents rated themselves highest on reading, teamwork and verbal communication skills among others, and lowest on writing, math, artistic and computer skills. Women also rated themselves low on physical hands-on skills.
- Respondents feel positive about their recent upgrading experience although they are somewhat less positive about their on-line training experience specifically.
- Comments regarding on-line training varied from stating that it was appropriately interactive, to practical, to lacking in social interaction, and lacking in support. Learning preferences affect one's opinion of the experience. Comments do show that on-line training can and does provide a positive and successful experience.
- On-line training is especially practical to women as they work more on a part-time basis and take care of children, seniors and housework.
- Respondents regularly access the Internet from home however, their self-rating of their computer skills are among the lowest rated skills. Also, the older the respondent, the less often s/he stated having performed certain chosen tasks on their computer.

7.5 General Conclusions

Hence, the employers make clear the need for a more educated labour force, especially regarding soft skills. High school students also state that their planning and self-management skills are low. However, the students and the employees rate their teamwork and social/interpersonal skills highest among other skills. Hence, it is not enough to say that more soft skills such as social and teamwork skills are needed. The indication is rather towards a more complex need.

Basic social/interpersonal skills are not enough; rather, what seems to be missing is knowledge on how to deal with difficult customers, or with conflict situations, an understanding of business administration, a self-motivation and a dedication to work. The employee alone should not complete these improvements. Understanding a business, learning to deal with conflict, developing motivation and dedication are things that need to be encouraged and fostered by both the employer and the employee. Hence, comprehensive initiatives guided by this research will help further develop and strengthen the local economy and the community overall.

There is an interest in on-line training but it will need to be marketed to trainees and trainers alike. Employers have identified skills needed in the work force and the training and education providers need to respond to the needs identified. Existing and future employees will increasingly consider OLT as a

mechanism for advancement. Rural regions like Huron and Perth will need to be on the forefront in this regard.

8.0 Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the steering committee as well as other groups representing employers, such as the Huron Manufacturers Association, the local Chamber of Commerce, etc., work in partnership with educational institutions such as the Avon Maitland District School Board (AMDSB) and post-secondary institutions to improve the provision of workplace experience to learners.

This can be achieved through various methods, namely, the further development of co-op programs by strengthening the relationships with local employers and by increasing communication with them, facilitating the process to participate in co-op, and by creating more opportunities for them to participate. Co-op programs are a great opportunity to provide the soft-skills demanded by employers during focus groups; however, they are not used to their full extent.

Furthermore, the development of co-op programs should take into account women's low level of interest in trade occupations. Therefore, co-op opportunities should be further developed in occupations and industries of interest to women such as health care. These co-op opportunities should also be marketed as an opportunity for *all* to get into great careers, and counter the perception that these courses are easy alternatives to other courses.

2. It is recommended that the steering committee take gender differences into consideration while marketing and providing on-line training opportunities.

Women have shown more positive interest in on-line upgrading as they are less frequently employed in a full-time permanent position. On-line training is especially practical to them as they can complete the course on their own terms while working part-time and tending to their families. Women also have different career interests than men. The occupations and industries men and women work in are distinctly different. Therefore, their topics of interest will differ and marketing strategies, which take that into account, will be more effective.

3. It is recommended that the steering committee, in partnership with various employers associations, promote on-line training in the workplace.

The data show that the men are more likely than women to work full-time impermanent jobs and hence to not have the time to pursue on-line training outside of work hours. Providing more opportunities to training during work time without penalty would help increase men's interest in on-line training. It would help to emphasize the fact that on-line training saves one from traveling and all the lost time and money associated with having to travel to a training institution to complete the course.

4. It is recommended that the steering committee and partners take into consideration the low level of computer skill and lack of high speed Internet access when developing on-line training programs.

Courses designed especially for older groups will need to reduce the complexity of their programs, as older groups are less active, familiar and comfortable with the use of a computer. It is necessary to simplify and clarify the process of completing an on-line course from the point of obtaining information regarding the course all the way to the end when the course is complete and feedback is gathered.

5. It is recommended that the steering committee, in partnership with the AMDSB and post-secondary institutions with local employers associations, local employers and other local employment organizations, develop a communication strategy to educate men and women on the more diverse and emerging career opportunities in the area.

The research shows that career choices are segregated by gender. This may be a product of not knowing or seeing anyone doing anything different than what is traditionally seen in a rural community. Such a communication strategy would provide information on little known careers where local people are and could be successful. The direct link between the career and a clear local opportunity for that career is important to ensure the belief in the potential of that career. The data shows that the job search is done through social connections, not through career counselors, information bulletins, or postings. People tend to respond to people they know, people they see and can meet. Hence, meeting a person succeeding in a little known career would be the best way to communicate new career opportunities.

6. It is recommended that the steering committee in partnership with educational institutions develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to make high school students, employers and employees aware of the opportunities and advantages of on-line training as well as the importance of life-long skills upgrading.

The students should be made aware of on-line learning as an alternative to relocating for post-secondary education. On-line learning needs to be understood as a method by which an accredited degree can be earned and be used. Similarly, employers need to know how on-line learning can help them upgrade the skill level of their employees as well as help them improve their business with many convenient advantages. Employees also should understand how continuous skills upgrading is beneficial for them.

Similarly, the marketing strategy would need to address the perceived negatives of on-line learning such as the low-level of social interaction and direct personal support. Hence avenues for social interaction such as live phone support need to be integrated and promoted. The promotion of group-enrollment would also help those who need the social support see that they can enroll and complete the course alongside others and hence have the ability to talk things over with them as they are all going through the same course at the same time.

7. It is recommended that the steering committee develop and promote a “one-stop” source for all employment opportunities in the region.

This source would be a comprehensive list of all job and career opportunities. Presently, various types of jobs are available through various mediums in various locations. The promotion of this source is important to ensure that all types of qualified individuals visit it so that employers are successful in recruiting valuable employees and thereby encourage employers to post their opportunities. There are several organizations available that could play this role. The challenge is to agree on the agencies and then to get employers and people to use them.

8. It is recommended that the steering committee, the AMDSB and post-secondary institutions develop a soft skills training component for all on-line courses.

According to the results of the focus groups, employers are not just looking for employees with a specific hard or technical skills used to complete a set of tasks. They are looking for employees who also have the soft or transferable skills. Hard skills in general are easier to provide for because they require on the job or short-term training, but soft skills are usually much harder to teach independently. In each of the focus groups, employers expressed the need to find employees, who possess soft skills such as customer service, teamwork, problem solving, organization, the ability to work independently, and many others. Employers not only identified their demand for such skills in employees but also their difficulty in finding them.

Similar results were found in the Bruce and Grey Skills Inventory Study. A survey of 368 employers was conducted in Bruce and Grey counties finding that soft skills such as teamwork, problem solving and decision-making were on average more difficult to find than the hard skills such as reading, math and written skills. Among all the skills assessed for importance teamwork was on average the skill that was considered most important by employers. Although customer service skills were considered an important skill to employers it was the least difficult to find among all the soft skills assessed (Cummings, et al., 2005)

The soft skills identified by employers in Huron, Perth, Bruce and Grey counties are hard to teach within a short period of time and independent from other curriculum. The dynamics of teams, and the skills that are best suited for a team environment, are best taught and experienced when actually working on a team. Problem solving skills are valuable to almost any career but each problem is unique to each situation. Professionalism, politeness and good communication are all aspects of customer services skills, which are more difficult to teach on their own. The creation of on-line curriculum whether it is for a technical trade, business management, or hospitality and tourism needs to include and emphasize the importance of soft skills in the work place.

9. It is recommended that the steering committee and the AMDSB develop a skills assessment tool for people with low level computer skills and formal education who wish to enroll in an on-line course. Skills assessments could be made available at The Centres for Employment & Learning.

On-line learning is a method of education that may not be suitable for every individual based on their own skills and preferred learning styles. To provide guidance and support for new students who wish to enroll in an on-line course a personal skills assessment could be completed. Of the training organizations surveyed, 13 of 18 (72%) have or do conducted client needs assessments. The most popular method used by 7 of 18 (39%), is a client orientation assessment. The needs and skills of incoming students could be assessed and matched with the appropriate on-line course or an alternative means of gaining the training they desire. An assessment of the student could help to determine if an on-line course is right for them and potentially increase their success rate of the course.

10. It is recommended that the AMDSB give business related courses a greater emphasis in the high school curriculum.

In all phases of this research, business management skills have been shown to be lacking. The high school students have fewer business credits than any other subject. Business management upgrading courses are among the most recently completed course topics listed by employees and employers also cited the need for employees to have business management skills. Hence, there is a need for more training in all aspects of business management skills from soft skills such as human resource management to other skills such as financial and accounting related skills.

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Appendix A - Training Organization Survey

1. Is your organization public or private?
2. How many years has your organization been in service?
3. What is the number of paid employees at your organization?
4. How many volunteers do you use?
5. Please provide a list of partners or agencies that your organization works with.
6. What are your major sources of funding?
7. Do you conduct program evaluations?
If YES:
 - a) Please provide the evaluation method and the frequency that they are conducted.
8. Have you ever completed a client needs assessment?
If YES:
 - a) What method(s) of assessment do you use?
 - b) What is the frequency of your assessments?
9. How do you promote your services to your target market?
10. On average how many people enrol in your programs per year?
11. What are the following demographics of the people who enrol in your programs/courses?
 - a) Age Range?
 - b) Percent Male and Female?
 - c) Level of Education?
12. What are the main reasons your clients take your programs/courses?
(Examples: skill upgrading, unemployed, obtaining credits for their OSSD, counselling, etc.)
13. Are any of your programs offered through an on-line learning format?
If YES:
 - a) Which programs/courses?
14. What are the barriers to transferring your classroom based programs/courses to an on-line learning format?

15. What percentages of your clients complete the programs or courses they enrol in?
- a) Classroom programs?
 - b) On-line programs (if offered)?
16. In what ways does your organization plan to grow in the next 5 years?
17. Would your organization be willing to participate as a training partner in a community internet-based learning network for Huron and Perth counties?

Appendix B - Training Organizations that Responded to the Survey

| Training Organization | Sector | Years in Service | Main Reasons for Client Enrolment | Interested in Participating in an On-line Learning Network |
|--|----------------|------------------|---|--|
| Achievement Solutions | For-profit | 4 | To recover from an injury and get back to work. | Maybe |
| Business Growth Training | For-profit | 5 | Skill upgrading, and Post secondary education | Maybe |
| Conestoga College | Not-for-profit | 42 | Skill upgrading, post secondary education | Maybe |
| Employment Resource Centre - Clinton | Not-for-profit | 16 | Job search assistance | Yes |
| | | | Literacy, Basic Skills - Academic upgrading, preparation for GED and entry to postsecondary programming | |
| Fanshawe College | Not-for-profit | 35 | Continuing Education - 70% obtaining advanced credentials for employment purposes. 30 % special interest courses for personal development or social engagement purposes | Yes |
| | | | Post Secondary - Career and Employment | |
| Huron Business Development Corporation | Not-for-profit | 12 | Business start up | Yes |
| Job Finding Centre/Time Training Services | Not-for-profit | 8 | Job search assistance | Maybe |
| Ministry of Consumer and Business Services | Not-for-profit | 6 | Business start up, Job search assistance | Yes |
| Myers Hamilton and Associates | For-profit | 2 | Training, Skills up grading | Maybe |
| Partners in Employment | Not-for-profit | 11 | Job search assistance | Yes |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------|----|---|-------|
| Perth Community Futures Development Corporation | Not-for-profit | 3 | Business start up | Yes |
| St. Marys Adult Learning Program | Not-for-profit | 20 | Job search assistance, skill upgrading in reading, writing, math, prepare for college courses and apprenticeship. | Maybe |
| Sterling Transportation Academy | For-profit | 2 | Truck Transportation driving instruction | Maybe |
| Stratford Chefs School | Not-for-profit | 21 | Chef Training | No |
| Stratford Festival Education Department | Not-for-profit | 54 | Personal Interest | Maybe |
| The Centre for Employment & Learning | Not-for-profit | 8 | Skill upgrading, obtaining grade 12 credits and post-secondary education. | Yes |
| Women Today Of Huron | Not-for-profit | 25 | Social aid and personal interest | Maybe |

Appendix C - Huron and Perth Counties Employer Focus Group Guide

As the participants arrive, the facilitators will introduce themselves and provide each participant with a nametag, pen and coloured circle stickers and ask each participant to complete the small questionnaire.

Introduction by focus group facilitators

- 1 Provide overview/purpose of the Focus Group.
- 2 Introduce the agenda for the session (i.e. start with meal and then a focused discussion after the meal on a few topics).
- 3 Address issue of confidentiality of information – indicate that the discussion will be recorded by a note taker and that the data will be sited in aggregate form with no personal identifiers.
- 4 Indicate that all opinions are welcome and that there are no wrong answers – we are looking for frank and honest opinions.
- 5 Request/remind participants to complete the participant background questionnaire before leaving at the end of the session.

Start with the meal and as an icebreaker, ask each participant to introduce themselves, the name of their business or the business they work for and what they do and describe:

- How they spent their summer holidays?

Formal Exercises and Themes for Discussion

In addition to determining the key emerging skill needs of employers in Huron and Perth, focus groups will be used to assess the attitudes, willingness and preferences of local employers to partner with local training partners on the delivery of on-line learning initiatives.

1. *What are the top 3 most important issues or challenges facing your business at this time?*

The objective of this activity is to generate a list of issues or challenges facing local businesses which will be ranked through a dotmocracy exercise. It will also serve to validate findings from the literature on this topic.

Begin by asking the participants the question creating a list of their responses on the flip chart paper. Once a substantial list of responses has been created using several sheets of flip chart paper, they will be taped to the wall. All the participants will then be asked to approach the list and place their 3 (provided) coloured circle stickers on the issues they feel are the most important. They can place all three of their stickers on one issue if they feel that it is more important than any other.

2. *What are the future skills demanded of employees in your industry?*

The objective of this activity is to generate a list of the skills demanded of employees by their employers and rank them according to their difficulty in acquiring employees with them.

Once a list of skills has been created the participants are going to be asked which of the identified skills are the most important and which are the hardest to find in employees. The flip chart paper will then be posted on the walls and the participants will be asked to place their 3 blue coloured circle stickers beside the 3 skills they consider the most important to have and their red coloured circle stickers beside the skills they consider the hardest to find in employees.

3. *a) In what ways does your business provide their employees with training for job skill upgrading?*

This question will create a list of the methods and incentives that businesses use to provide their employees with skill upgrading

b) Does your business have links to the high school or college internship/coop or apprenticeship system? Why? Why not?

This question will create a list of reasons for or against businesses getting involved in the internship/coop or apprenticeship system.

3. *Do you feel there is potential for your employees to receive the skill upgrading they require through online learning courses? Why? Why not?*

This question will bring out the perspectives of employers with regards to online learning and its potential for providing their employees with skill upgrading opportunities and its effectiveness in doing so.

4. *Identify three things “To Do” in the region for you to meet your needs for qualified employees.*

The last question will give the participants the opportunity to make suggestions on what they feel could or should be done in order to help meet their employment needs. If time permits, dotmocracy will be used to establish the most popular things “to do” in the region in order to help meet employers needs of qualified employers.

Appendix D - Huron Perth Counties Employer Focus Group Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to complete this background information questionnaire. Please use reverse side if additional space is needed.

Note – the information provided will remain confidential – the information will be compiled with other responses for the purposes of analysis. No personal identifiers will be used in the report.

1. Your Name?
2. Type of Industry?
2. Year business started? for private sector only)
3. Number of Employees (approximate)
Full time?
Part time?
4. List up to 5 goods and services you provide
5. What is the most important issue or challenge facing your business at this time?
6. Using a 5 point scale, where 1 = unimportant, 5 = very important, please rate the following issues or challenges facing Canadian businesses in terms of their importance to your business.

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Very Important | Important | Moderately Important | Of Little Importance | Unimportant |
| Retaining valued employees | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Training and skills development | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gov't regulations/cost of compliance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Recruiting new skilled employees | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Access to capital/financing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Technology issues | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Domestic/international competition | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Development and use of e-business | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Source: COMPAS Inc. (2001).

7. What are the future skills demanded of employees in your business?
8. Does your business take part in an apprenticeship program with an education/training institution?
 - a) If so, which one and why?
 - b) If not, what are your reasons for not doing so?

9. If you do not take part in an apprenticeship program with an education/training institution would you be willing to do so?
10. Does your business have links to the high school or college internship/coop system?
 - a) If so, why?
 - b) If not, why?
11. Do you participate in career days with the school board?
12. Does your business provide either on the job skill upgrade training for your employees or financial aid for them to do so through an education/training institution? (Please specify
13. Do you feel there is potential for your employees to receive the skill upgrading they require through online learning courses?
 - a) If so, why?
 - b) If not, why?
14. Would you be interested in being a training partner with local training institutions in order to develop and or deliver on-line learning initiatives for Huron and Perth Counties?

Appendix E - List of course topics respondents would like for on-line training

* Numbers in parentheses denote how many times the comment was stated

(18) Business, administration & management

(11) Languages

(11) For a degree (High school, college, or university)

(10) Finances and accounting

(10) Education

(9) Health care

(7) Electrician, Mechanic, trades course

(6) Work related upgrading

(4) Marketing

(3) Real estate

(2) Insurance

Anthropology

Arts and design interior design

Arts, photography writing

Astronomy

Computer club

Counselling

Culinary skills

Downtown revitalization certificate program

Drafting, auto cad

Environment

Environment auditing

Exercise science

Fire safety and BMS medical training

Forestry

Gas fitting

Geography

Hands on labour

Home inspection cert.

Human relations

Interior design

Labour college/collective bargaining

Leadership, be the boss of your business

Legal, ethical

Life improvement

Ministry

Mortgage broker

Palliative care/gerontology

Paralegal

Photography

Private Investigation

Psychology

Religious, pastoral counselling

Renewable energies and engineering

Sales

Smart serve

Social services
Social work upgrading (masters)
Social worker courses
Software
Soil science
Superintendence
Theatre
Upgrade her education
Upgrade my food processing and handling skills

Appendix F - List of other reasons why respondents do not like their community

* Numbers in parentheses denote how many times the comment was stated

- (2) Amalgamation
- (3) Traffic
- (4) Isolation
- (5) Tourists
- (6) Smell from farm & manure, flies
- (7) Distance from relatives/work/services
- (10) Crime
- (15) Local and provincial politics
- (15) No privacy
- A lot of people on welfare
- Accidents on the road
- Bad neighbour
- Bugs
- Casino
- Cater to the tourists and festival
- Climate
- Cliqueness of people, no welcome for new people
- Competitiveness
- Conservative politics
- Don't like the country
- Drug problems with students
- Drunken teenagers on the weekends
- Environmental issues
- Fewer people
- Flooding
- Friends from childhood moved away
- Gravel pit near by
- Gravel roads and dust
- Increased car traffic
- Infrastructure
- Invasion of urbanites
- It is a close community and it is hard to break into. If you live here for a long time then people are close to you and then know you otherwise it is difficult.
- It is too close to town/city, doesn't like cities and towns
- Lack of culture
- Lack of facilities like school
- Lack of medical care
- Lack of police services
- Lack of variety not much to see and do small mindedness and sense of confinement
- a little secluded and isolated
- Losing businesses downtown
- Major drug problem, (crack house next door) and traffic noise problem
- More crystal meth labs than anywhere in Canada
- Need a satellite campus in Clinton or Goderich -Clinton is ideal, no transit between towns (public) literacy training opportunities, funding for apprenticeships (trades), need to attract more industry and employers, need subsidized daycare, if online,

need ph # help
Neighbours
Neighbours are older
Neighbours
Newcomers, old passing away
No doctor, hospital, not drug store
No DSL internet access
No friends here
No money
No recycling pick up
No sewers
No single women
Noisy
Not enough access to adult education
Old stores are dying down
Outside country, nothing much
Pollution
Roads not paved
School boundaries
Sewage system does not work properly
Shops close early
Small and narrow streets
Small circle of friends
Small lots in the town
Smaller lots
Smaller pool for volunteer recruiting
The people are snobs
The town officials care more about "festival" than everyday workings and people of
Stratford
Too cliquey if not one of the main stays in the town your are not involved socially too
high taxes
Too close to family is not always good always
Too many empty stores
Too much lower income housing
Too much snow
Town cliques
Vacant lots
Weather
Well system is causing taxes to increase
Winter driving
Wish there was more team work in the community, commercial residential facilities
going down

SKILLS



INTERNET



TRAINING