

DISCUSSIONS AFTER THE CREATIVE ECONOMY SEMINAR

The creative economy in Ontario: A Prince Edward County case example

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Seminar Abstract

The Creative Economy is primarily seen as an urban phenomenon. However, its principles – talent, tolerance, technology and now territory – involving quality of place, public space, community amenities, culture, etc. are hardly unique to cities. Prince Edward County has branded itself as Canada's First Creative Rural Economy. In this seminar, the county's Rural Renaissance will be described. The practical application of creative economy theories in a real and rural place will be discussed.

Rural does not exclude urban. This presentation will touch on regional and rural-urban interdependencies, and the importance of trading relationships in developing a creative rural economy. It will outline Prince Edward County's journey of creative economy discovery and realization via case studies about real people, real businesses and real economic development. The focus will be on real-life examples of how a community is capitalizing on, and excelling at developing, its creative rural economy and how benefits are rippling throughout the broader economy. As dramatic socio-economic change unfolds in what was once a somewhat forgotten static community in decline, the "Good, Bad and Ugly" will be described.

Key Discussion Points

- Was the Prince Edward County (PEC) creative economy planned? PEC growth in the 1970's was organic.
 - For example, artists were looking for an inexpensive place to live and work
- Branding of PEC began in 2004 as a destination location.
 - The emergence of the winery industry was a big catalyst.
 - PEC decided to build on its strengths – become the "best Prince Edward County" it could be.
- Possible development brings challenges
 - Example is wind power.
 - Means money for farmers but it is there a conflict when PEC Economic Development is trying to sell the beauty of the county?
 - Wind power is a short-term source of income. Once the wind farm is build, money starts leaving the area.
 - PEC Economic Development has spent the last 9 years building "quality of place".
 - A plan with zones (e.g., where wind farms can be established) must be put in place.
 - Do "green" initiatives conflict with or complement creative economy plans? Generally, they are complementary. However, the province (not the municipality) has the final say in what green investments are made.
 - In the PEC creative economy plan, green energy is a cluster.

- In PEC, gastronomy is a cluster.
 - Not courting restaurants because meals cannot be exported.
 - Restaurants tend to be seasonal.
- PEC retailers are advised to build relationships with tourists.
 - Encourage tourists to buy online.
 - The artisan cheese industry is a 365-day-a-year business.
 - Sells to wholesalers and retailers.
 - Networking is key to success.
- Transportation systems are also important.
 - PEC still has a car culture so road infrastructure is important.
 - Air access is growing.
- Broadband is critical. You can do business in Toronto or you can do business in Picton with high speed access.
- PEC Economic Development is selling the “aura of Prince Edward County”
 - This builds on what has already been successful.
 - Municipal government have to be aware of challenges of growth.
 - In the 1970’s, a home could be purchased for \$20,000. Now it costs \$30,000 simply to hook up services. As the creative class move in, housing prices rise.
 - Gentrification is causing some challenges with long-term residents and that has to be acknowledged and managed The power is within the community to solve emerging problems.
- Key is to decide who you are and then do something with what you have.
- Be passionate!