



United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

Economic Development

32 Wall Street, Suite 300

Brockville, ON K6V 4R9

T 613-342-3840

800-770-2170

TTY 800-539-8685

F 613-342-3298

www.investleedsgrenville.com

www.discoverleedsgrenville.com

**MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 19, 2021**

Leeds Grenville Economic Development Summit highlights Regional Strengths and Challenges

Housing affordability, labour challenges and local companies stepping up to help fight the pandemic were the top highlights at the 13th annual Leeds Grenville Economic Development Summit.

More than 165 business leaders, municipal, provincial, and federal government officials, as well as not-for-profit and support service representatives, viewed the day-long virtual summit via live webcam.

A highlight was the joint presentation by 3M Canada Brockville and Greenfield Global Johnstown on their multi-million dollar investments locally in the past year to increase N95 respirators and medical grade alcohol production in the continued fight against COVID-19.

"We're extremely proud of our part in this effort," said Rich Muir, Plant Director at 3M Canada Brockville. The new N95 respirator facility was built ahead of schedule. It has produced more than a million respirators since production began seven months ago.

Greenfield Global Plant Manager Brendan Bland said the Johnstown site was the first plant in Canada to receive approval to produce technical grade alcohol.

"We produced more than four million litres in the first month," Mr. Bland said. The facility is currently undergoing a major expansion to be finished next year. Once completed, the Johnstown site will be able to produce a 100-million litres per year.

"I can attest to the strength this region has exhibited," Warden Roger Haley said in welcoming attendees to the Summit from throughout eastern Ontario and upper New York State.

where **lifestyle**
grows good **business**

synonyme de **qualité de vie**
et de **réussite en affaires**



"Maintaining a strong local economy is critical, and I thank businesses of all sizes and sectors for your resiliency. I encourage both residents and businesses to source products locally. Take a few extra minutes to seek our local producers and retailers during this holiday season and let's support a vibrant local economy," he said. The Warden also noted this area's high vaccination rate has assisted in keeping the economy strong.

The Counties Economic Development Office hosts the event in partnership with Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MP Michael Barrett, MPP Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the 1000 Islands, Valley Heartland and Grenville Community Futures Development Corporations, and the Eastern Workforce Innovation Board.

"We've had a strong turnout again this year and we hope to be back to an in-person summit in 2022," said Ann Weir, Economic Development Manager for the Counties.

The live webcast featured a keynote address "Ontario's Housing – Bringing Affordability home" by Tim Hudak, CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association. Mr. Hudak was joined by local Rideau-St. Lawrence President-Elect Dana Pearce to provide a local perspective.

While there were more home starts in 2020 in Ontario than there has been in the past two decades, Mr. Hudak said there is still a need to increase supply across the province. In Leeds Grenville, the lack of supply and rise in demand translates into a home that sold for \$273,000 two years ago now selling for more than \$500,000, Ms. Pearce said.

A panel of local education and training leaders discussed initiatives underway to address workforce challenges. Panelists included Superintendent of Schools Susan Rutters, of the Upper Canada District School Board Eastern Region Education Centre, Glenn Vollebregt, President and CEO of St. Lawrence College, and Shannon Liscumb, Director of CSE Consulting.

The afternoon portion of the agenda was interactive chat room sessions focused on the Regional Economic Development Priorities of:

- Available Funding Programs

- Employees –Where are They and How Can I Attract Them
- Small Business – Survival and Moving Forward
- Funding for Revitalization and Growth
- Digital Main Street
- Economic Development Regional Brainstorming

The Bill Thake Memorial Award for Economic Development Leadership was presented to two deserving volunteers: Cathy Sheppard, from the Municipality of North Grenville, and Ken Watson, from the Township of Rideau Lakes. They were recognized for their decades of community building and volunteerism contributing to the strength and vitality of the Leeds Grenville economy.

Also honoured were nominees David Cybulski, from the Township of Augusta, and brothers Silvan and Yulrick Fernetich, of the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands.

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Media inquiries:

Ann Weir, Economic Development Manager,
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
32 Wall Street, Suite 300, Brockville, ON, K6V 4R9
613-342-3840, ext. 5365 or ann.weir@uclg.on.ca
Cell: 613-803-0248