



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
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Connectivity and technology highlight 11th Annual Summit

KEMPTVILLE –The 11th annual Leeds Grenville Economic Development Summit featuring area innovators, new technologies and funding supports has attracted another record crowd.

A total of 217 business leaders, municipal, provincial, and federal government officials, as well as not-for-profit and support service representatives, attended the day-long summit at the North Grenville Municipal Centre. This is the fourth consecutive year the event has sold out.

“Our attendance for the Summit continues to be strong,” said United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Warden Pat Sayeau. “It’s very encouraging as it brings political and business leaders together to create a positive environment for sharing best practices.”

The Warden referenced the new *Leeds Grenville Business Retention and Expansion Report*, which surveyed 300 company owners and top officials. It found 85% of businesses rate support from other local businesses as very important and 84% said municipal support is essential.

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.

A highlight of the day was a keynote address from the Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. The Minister revealed Ontario’s key initiatives to remove regulatory roadblocks to help small business reduce costs.

The second keynote address from Giant Tiger Distribution Centre officials Mike Quinn, John Hubbard and James Johnstone earned applause. The trio outlined how they meet challenges and adapted technologies when launching the state-of-the-art Johnstown facility.

“Today’s Summit was about sharing the technology advances in Leeds Grenville in both manufacturing and warehousing, transportation and logistics,” said Ann Weir, Manager of the Leeds Grenville Economic Development Office.

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

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

"While Industry 4.0 can be focused on manufacturing, it can apply to many other sectors such as food processing and even the smallest of businesses," she said.

"We are encouraging local businesses to be open to the adaptation of new technologies," Ms. Weir said, noting there are funding programs available to help.

Lisa Severson, of the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) provided an update on Eastern Ontario's regional digital strategy. She outlined how \$213-million in funding will improve cell service regionally by building on the new broadband infrastructure.

The Employment + Education Centre CareerLabsVR (Virtual Reality) session and simulation showed employers and job seekers how they can be better educated and empowered in making career choices that lead to higher employee retention rates. The day also featured an update from North Grenville's JAE Automation President Eric Martin. It ended with break-out sessions on available funding options for employers.

The Bill Thake Memorial Award for Economic Development Leadership was presented to Debbie Wilson, from the Municipality of North Grenville. Ms. Wilson, co-owner of Grahame's Bakery, was recognized for her decades of volunteerism in helping strengthen Kemptville's business community. Nominees Terri Dawson, from Leeds and the Thousand Islands, and Ken Davies, of Rideau Lakes, were also honoured for being community builders contributing to the strength and vitality of the Leeds Grenville economy.

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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