



REPORT

GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

DATE: June 9, 2025

REPORT NO: LLS-05-2025

SUBJECT: **Economic Development Roundtable – Initial Engagement Sessions**

CONTACT: Justin Paylove, Manager, Legislative Services/Clerk

OVERVIEW:

- Strong Mayor Directive SMD-04-2025 initiates the formation of a staff-led Mayoral Task Force to explore the feasibility of launching an Economic Development initiative in the Township of West Lincoln.
- The directive reflects Council's ongoing interest in attracting and retaining businesses, creating local jobs, and strengthening the Township's economic base—while remaining mindful of West Lincoln's small-town and agricultural character.
- The Task Force will include staff from key departments and will examine best practices from other municipalities, identify potential program models, assess resource needs, and collaborate with local businesses/organizations.
- The goal of the initiative is to better position the Township for sustainable growth through proactive planning and research.
- Findings and recommendations will be reported back to Council for discussion by October 30, 2025, to support informed decision-making on potential next steps.

RECOMMENDATION:

That, Information Report LLS-05-2025 titled "Economic Development Roundtable –Initial Engagement Sessions" dated June 9, 2025 be received for Information.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #2, #3, #4

- **2 – Champion: Strategic and responsible growth**
- **3 – Enrich: Our Strong Agricultural Legacy**
- **4 – Advance: Organizational Capacity and Effectiveness**

BACKGROUND:

The Township of West Lincoln, like many rural communities, faces the dual challenge of encouraging economic growth while maintaining the rural and small-town character that defines the community. As identified through Council priorities and community input, there is strong interest in fostering economic development opportunities that align with the Township's agricultural roots, support local entrepreneurship, and attracting strategic investment.

The Legal and Legislative Services Department, in collaboration with the Growth and Sustainability Department, has initiated preliminary discussions on a structured approach to economic development planning. Recognizing the need for both long-term planning and stakeholder engagement, administration is currently looking to hold two facilitated roundtable sessions to support this early-stage research.

CURRENT SITUATION:

West Lincoln is home to a diverse and productive agricultural base, as well as a growing number of small, medium, and large scale businesses. However, the Township lacks a formalized economic development framework to guide investment attraction, business retention, and land-use alignment in support of these goals.

Council has consistently expressed interest in encouraging responsible growth and generating assessment dollars to support local services and infrastructure, while protecting the small-town and rural feel that residents value. On June 3, 2025 a Strong Mayor Directive was given to direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to establish a Mayoral Task Force composed of relevant municipal administration members. This taskforce intends to initiate dialogue that brings together Township goals of supporting growth that feels rooted in West Lincoln's identity.

In order to support this directive, Administration intends to hold two (2) Economic Development Roundtable Sessions, tentatively in Q3 2025, with the following goals:

- Engage key stakeholders including local agri-businesses, farmers, commercial landowners, business owners, and local business organizations;
- Identify priorities, challenges, and opportunities specific to agriculture, agri-business, and rural entrepreneurship;
- Explore policy, land-use, and servicing considerations that support economic activity in a way that complements rather than competes with the Township's rural charm;
- Build momentum and legitimacy for future planning work (e.g., economic development strategy or committee structure).

Sessions would be designed for meaningful, guided discussions to make concrete plans for the future. Invitations will target those who are both directly impacted and have potential to contribute to the Township's economic future. Each session will be focused on specific industry, with one entirely focused on Agriculture and Agri-business.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Costs related to hosting the roundtable sessions are expected to be minimal and can be accommodated within existing operational budgets for the Legal and Legislative Services and Growth and Sustainability departments.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This report was reviewed by the CAO, Director of Corporate Services/CFO, Director of Growth and Sustainability, and the Director of Legal and Legislative Services

CONCLUSION:

The proposed roundtable sessions represent a low-cost, potential high-impact opportunity to initiate meaningful economic development work in West Lincoln. By grounding the conversation in actionable business focused ideas, the Township will be poised to be able to position itself to not only meet opportunities when they arise, but be proactive in seeking out potential economic expansion within West Lincoln.

Administration will look to provide a follow-up report summarizing feedback and proposed next steps, including potential pathways for a formal Economic Development Strategy and/or committee.

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