

# Deloitte.



## Navigating Toward Success

### 2024–2029 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN



Prescott  
*Russell*

**Funded by:**  
Federal Economic Development  
Agency for Southern Ontario

**Financé par :**  
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pour le Sud de l'Ontario

**Canada** 

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

BIA	Business Improvement Area
BR+E	Business Retention and Expansion
EOWC	Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FedDev	Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
OPRO	Opportunit�es Prescott and/et Russell Opportunities
PRDC	Prescott & Russell Development Corporation
PRESC	Prescott-Russell Employment Services Centre
RTO9	Regional Tourism Organization 9
SOARR	Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks, Results
UCPR	United Counties of Prescott and Russell

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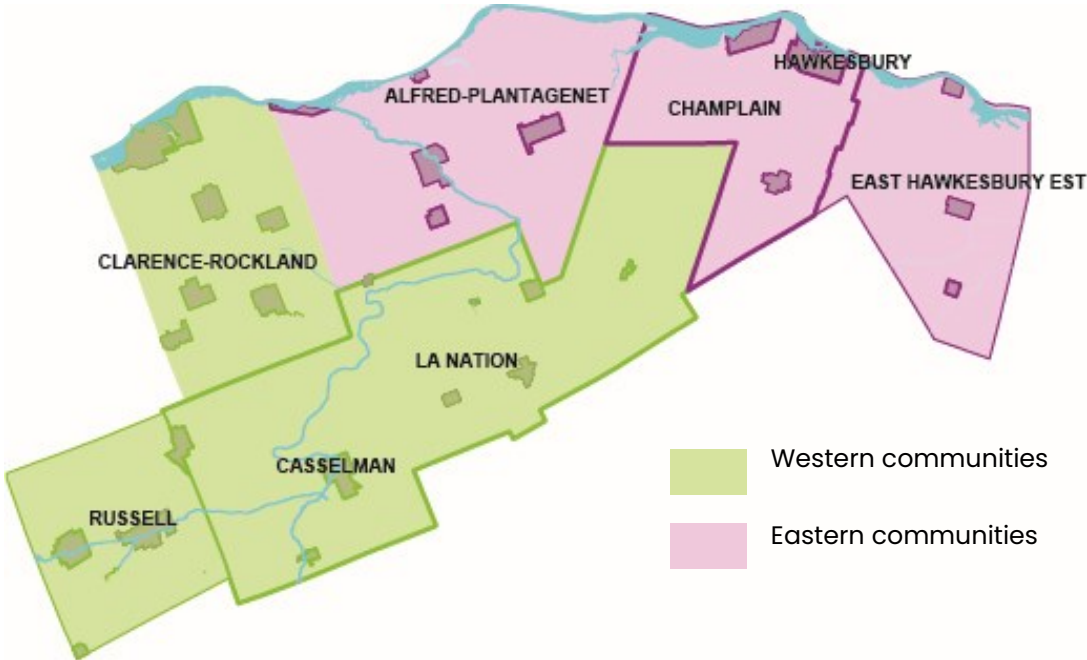
# Introduction

Prescott and Russell (‘the region’) is a culturally unique rural area located in Eastern Ontario between the major urban centres of Ottawa and Montreal. The region’s municipal governments include the upper-tier municipality of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell (the “UCPR”) and eight lower-tier municipalities:

- Russell Township
- City of Clarence–Rockland
- The Nation Municipality
- Municipality of Casselman
- Township of Alfred and Plantagenet
- Champlain Township
- Town of Hawkesbury
- Township of East Hawkesbury

The extensive network of economic development organizations and communities have a strong desire to work together to attract and retain new and diverse investments to create employment, increase tax assessment, and generate prosperity. With support from the UCPR and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev), the Prescott & Russell Development Corporation (PRDC) engaged Deloitte Economic Advisory to develop a five-year economic development strategy and implementation plan.

Figure 1: Core study area map

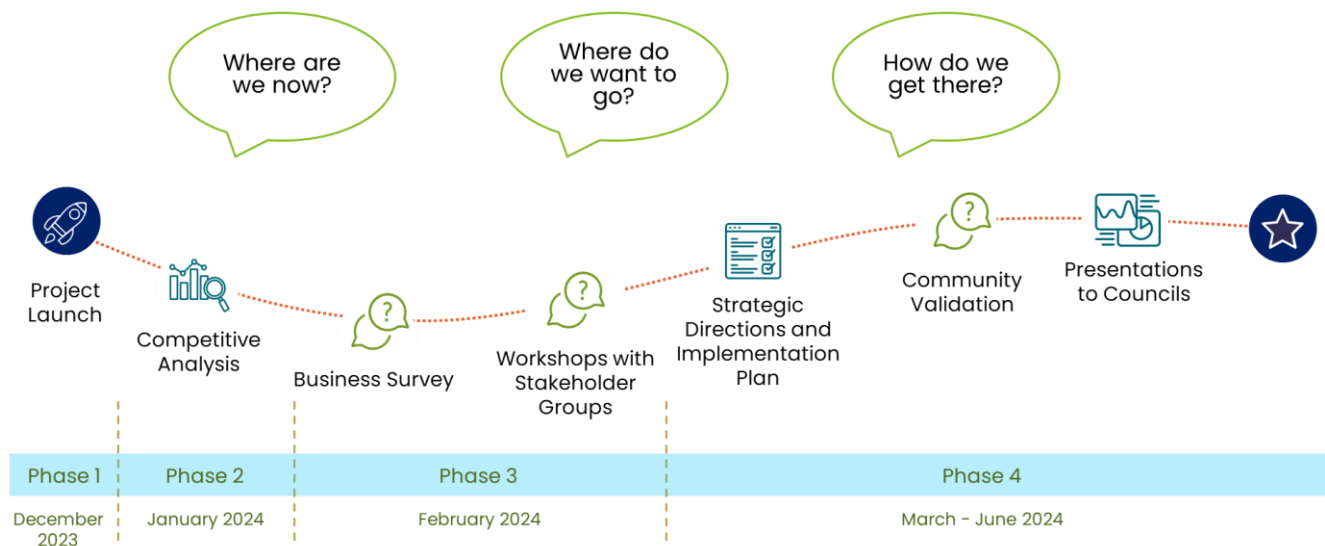


Source: [United Counties of Prescott and Russell](#)

## Approach and Methodology

The project was carried out through a four-phase approach that began with a competitive analysis and community engagement to identify the critical issues that need to be addressed to facilitate future economic development. Three priority areas were identified, along with desired outcomes and potential initiatives. A community validation session confirmed the policy framework proposed in this plan. This report provides a shared vision and a roadmap to guide economic development in the region.

Figure 2: Project approach and timeline



The project’s methodology included the following components:

- **Competitive analysis:** A competitive analysis was completed to build an economic profile that included demographic characteristics and an analysis of industry sector and employment trends. Interviews with municipal leaders and staff contributed to an assessment of the region’s investment readiness. To support the development of a resilient strategy, an analysis was prepared to identify potential local impacts of global trends and external forces.
- **Stakeholder consultations:** Input was received through a region-wide business survey, consultation workshops, and interviews with municipal leaders. Stakeholders included entrepreneurs and business leaders, service providers, municipal leaders and staff, and other community leaders. Stakeholders had the opportunity to participate in English or in French.
- **SOARR assessment:** A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, and results (SOARR) assessment consolidated key findings from previous phases into a framework to inform strategic directions.
- **Framework development:** Three priority areas were identified, along with desired outcomes and potential initiatives.
- **Community validation:** Stakeholders assembled once again to review the proposed framework and initiatives. They provided input and recommendations related to implementation and resource requirements and assisted with prioritization of initiatives.

- **Implementation plan:** An implementation plan was developed to identify the initiatives, leads and partners, timing, prioritization, and resources needed to achieve the strategy's objectives.

## Building on the Previous Strategy

The priorities, objectives, and initiatives detailed later in this report build on the priorities set forth in the 2019–2024 Prescott and Russell Economic Development Strategy. Through this alignment, the region aims to capitalize on past successes and find new ways to approach issues that continue to be important.

The previous strategy set five strategic objectives:

- Nurture a business climate that retains businesses and is encouraging of their growth and expansion.
- Advance a progressive agenda for investment readiness and attraction.
- Continue to build an entrepreneurial ecosystem that is supportive of new business growth and innovation.
- Build a talent pipeline and aggressively attract a workforce that is suited to existing and future business needs.
- Support the development of tourism assets and infrastructure to add to the tourism value proposition of Prescott and Russell.

Over the five years since the previous strategy was released, the region has achieved several notable successes in implementing many parts of the strategy's action plan. New initiatives and investments that supported the strategy's key objectives included an innovative workforce attraction relocation incentive that helped fill 125 vacant jobs,<sup>1</sup> a federal investment of \$1.7 million to support the delivery of women's entrepreneurship programs,<sup>2</sup> and funding to help Francophone businesses set up e-commerce sites.

The ability to achieve some goals was challenged by external forces such as infrastructure limitations and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by a lack of internal resources and stewardship particularly in the last two years. While the strategy identified the 2018 *Opportunités Prescott and/et Russell Opportunités* (OPRO) business retention and expansion survey report as a guiding document, momentum was lost along the way, and many of the 14 initiatives in the report's action plan have not been completed. Similarly, the investment readiness and attraction initiatives identified in the 2019–2024 economic development strategy have not progressed.

The previous two economic development strategies identified a series of innovation and entrepreneurship flagship projects, each of which might have had a significant impact in the region if they had been realized. These included a food hub to help small producers with product commercialization and expansion, a centre of excellence for biotechnology research and innovation, a conference and environmental interpretive centre, and an agri-food innovation centre. While economic impact assessments and business feasibility studies generated positive interest in these initiatives, progress on implementation was stalled. As the region looks to the future, a new approach to conceptualizing, planning, and executing major projects may be more effective than some past efforts have been.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thereview.ca/2021/11/21/organizations-offer-cash-incentive-to-attract-workers-to-prescott-and-russell/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.miragenews.com/ontarios-women-entrepreneurs-get-boost-from-962729/>



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

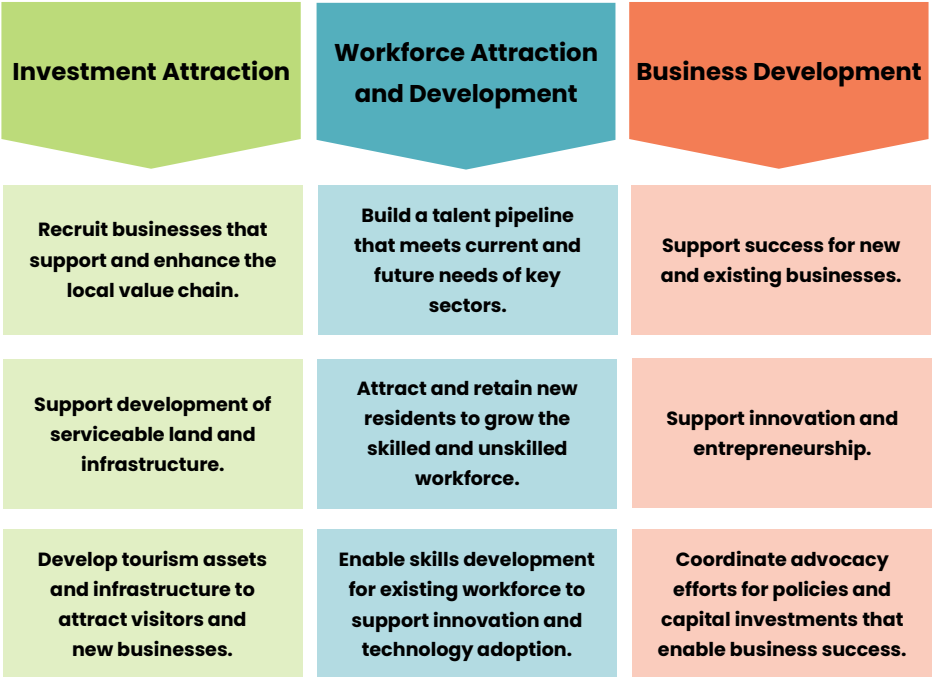


# Executive Summary

The 2024–2029 Prescott and Russell Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan is a roadmap to building prosperity in the short term and into the future through leadership and collaboration. Building on the foundation set by previous achievements, the strategy aims to strengthen economic prosperity by attracting new businesses, strengthening the workforce, and enabling business success.

The strategy was developed with inputs from a background review, statistical analysis, and extensive stakeholder engagement. The business community has a very positive outlook, with most anticipating continued success or growth over the next 12 months. There is a desire for improved infrastructure, education and skills development programs, regional promotion and increased government and industry investment in research, development and commercialization of new products and technologies.

The strategic priorities and objectives identified in this document are:



The implementation plan identifies initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives in each priority area over the short, medium, and long term, along with prioritization (urgent, high, medium priority) and the financial and human resources that will be required.

Investment in economic development varies widely across the municipalities in the region, so a coordinated approach makes sense. With financial backing from municipal, provincial, and federal governments, and in collaboration with partner organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce, the PRDC can take the lead on many of the regional economic development initiatives detailed in this section and serve a supporting role in others.



# CURRENT CONTEXT



# Current Context

Prescott and Russell's current economic context is outlined below and includes key insights from the data analysis and consultation provided under separate cover in the Background Report and Engagement Summary.

## **A Favourable Location to Enable Growth**

Prescott and Russell's location close to major markets such as Ottawa and Montreal allows for greater accessibility and convenience for businesses looking to expand their reach and capitalize on new opportunities. With a desirable quality of life thanks to natural assets connected to the Ottawa River and attractive rural landscape, the area also has a relatively affordable cost of living compared to Ottawa and Montreal.

## **Labour Market Dependence on Population Attraction and Retention**

Continued immigration has the potential to address the labour shortages that the Prescott and Russell region is currently facing due to low population growth and outmigration of youth. With a significantly high proportion of bilingual people, the area is well suited for French-speaking immigrants.

## **A Significant Concentration of Francophone Businesses and Residents**

The region has the highest concentration of Francophone residents in Ontario, effectively opening the door for economic activity from both the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, as well as for foreign direct investment and workforce attraction from more distant places.

## **Importance of Climate Action and Green Energy**

Climate change impacts such as extreme weather events and changing precipitation patterns may threaten major infrastructure and have an impact on agricultural production. The region's existing businesses are grasping opportunities for economic development in areas like AI and robotics, energy-efficient modular housing, agricultural clean technology, and grid-scale energy storage.

## **Positive Business Environment**

Eighty-eight percent of businesses surveyed would recommend Prescott and Russell to other businesses looking to expand or relocate. Businesses noted a supportive local economy, with 84% expecting to maintain or increase revenues over the next 12 months.

## Prescott and Russell’s Economic Development Ecosystem

Municipal partners work alongside neighbouring communities and regions, federal, provincial, and regional economic development organizations, and post-secondary institutions. The graphic below illustrates some of the many partners engaged in economic development.



## Mandate

The Prescott & Russell Development Corporation leads the development and implementation of initiatives aimed at building the region's economic prosperity, working in collaboration with United Counties of Prescott and Russell and in close partnership with community organizations and stakeholders.

## Mission

Our mission is to enable the continued success and growth of the Prescott and Russell economy by encouraging leadership among the business community, attracting new commercial and industrial development, and supporting workforce attraction, development, and retention.



A green combine harvester is shown in the distance, harvesting a field of tall, green and yellow crops. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The foreground is filled with the same crops, creating a sense of depth and scale.

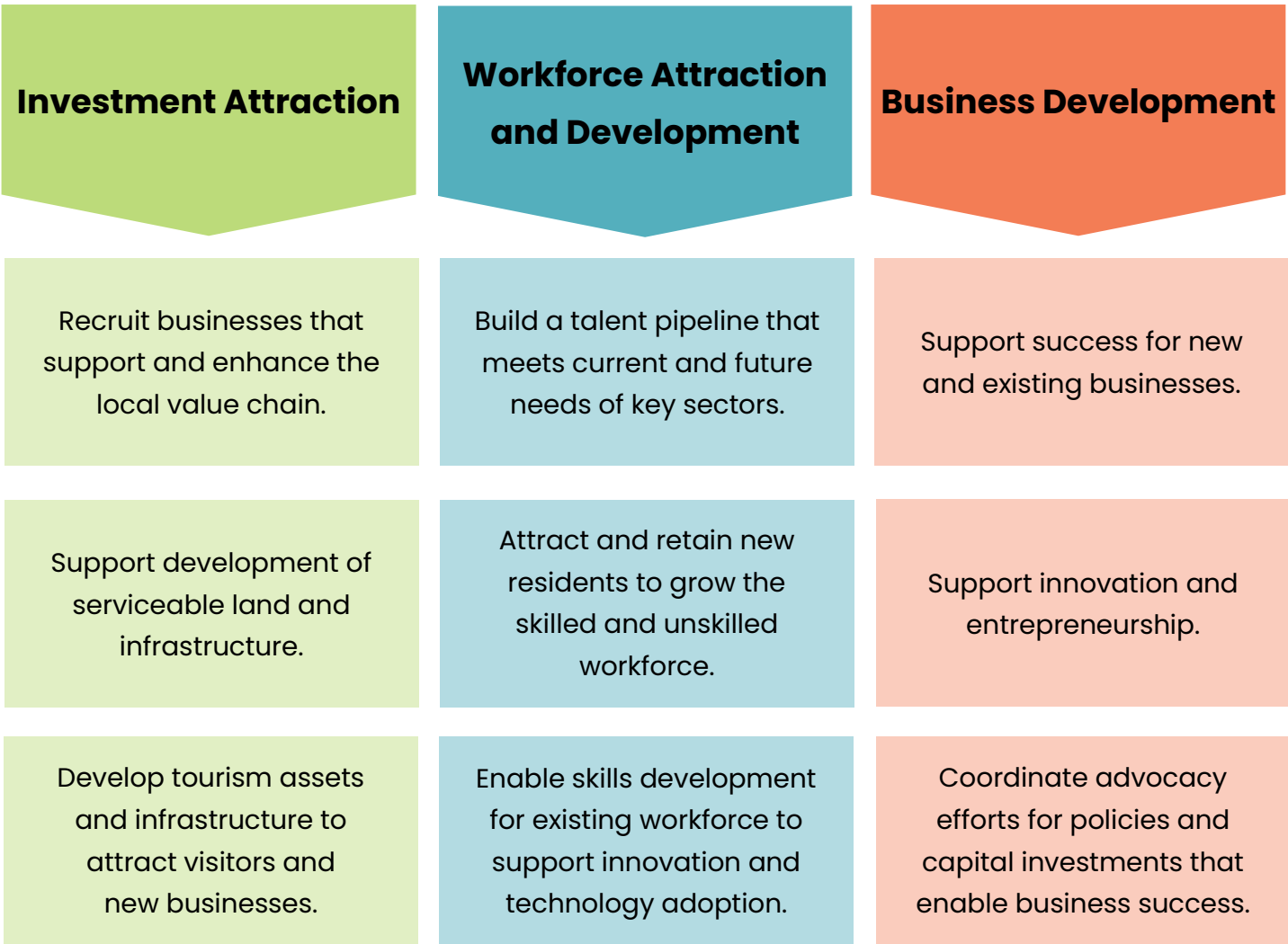
# **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**



# Strategic Directions

Key priorities and objectives for the region emerged through the analysis of the economic circumstances, background review, trends, stakeholder engagement and assessment of the region’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, risks, and desired results (SOARR).

To capitalize on the prospects available to the region today and in the future, these priorities present the most compelling opportunities for growth. This section of the document presents the rationale for each priority area and a description of how each objective can be achieved. Further details about the initiatives are included in the implementation plan. These are provided in the Background Report and Engagement Summary provided under separate cover.





## Strategic Priority 1: Investment Attraction

New businesses play a vital role in stimulating economic growth and development in a region, generating employment and incremental municipal tax revenue, while enhancing existing supply networks and resilience in the local economy.

The Prescott and Russell region is located near the large population centres of Ottawa and Montreal and is easily accessible by provincial highway routes. With relatively low costs of doing business compared to the GTA and other urban centres in Ontario and Quebec, and considered by many local businesses to have good 'quality of place,' the region offers some advantages to investors looking for a relocation or expansion site. However, competition for new business attraction is strong, with many comparable communities proactively pursuing companies.

An investment attraction readiness review found that some municipalities in Prescott and Russell are well positioned to respond to enquiries for potential commercial and industrial development, while others are less prepared to provide information or actively seek out potential investors. Investment attraction intake and outreach can be supported by developing a community profile and prospectus for each municipality, but the active generation of investment leads is essential.

With no clear plan for the types of businesses the region wishes to attract, municipalities are left to take a passive 'hope for the best' position. A regional investment attraction strategy can be used to identify and proactively pursue businesses that will complement and enhance the existing business mix.

Availability of property varies between municipalities, with some reporting a lack of any serviceable land and others screening potential investors for their high-demand industrial park lands. Intermunicipal agreements may present opportunities for neighbouring municipalities to share the benefits of development, with one partner providing land and the other providing services.

Tourism is often considered the purest form of economic development<sup>3</sup>, increasing local spending from outside sources, while serving as the 'front door' to workforce and investment attraction activities. As visitors experience an area's natural assets, vibrant downtown areas, and recreational activities, they gain a richer sense of the region than any brochure could convey. The UCPR Official Plan notes the importance of increased investment in cultural tourism as a priority economic development goal.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to its immediate benefits to local businesses, development and promotion of bilingual tourism assets and experiences will increase the appeal of the region as a place to live, work, and do business. With no local organization currently guiding tourism development and marketing in Prescott and Russell, there's a need for regional leadership to advance development of experiences like agri-food tours and activities highlighting the Ottawa River. The 5-Year Tourism Strategy<sup>5</sup> that was sponsored by Regional Tourism Organization 9 in early 2024 identified establishing leadership in destination management and supporting tourism product development and marketing as key initiatives for Prescott and Russell.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/three-reasons-tourism-purest-form-economic-roger-brooks/>

<sup>4</sup> United Counties of Prescott and Russell, Official Plan, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Building a Strong Tourism Economy Foundation for Prescott and Russell: 5-Year Tourism Strategy for the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, 2024.

## **Objective 1.1: Recruit Businesses That Support and Enhance the Local Value Chain.**

A **central point of contact** can facilitate connections between site selectors, property holders, municipal staff, and business resource organizations to support the investment attraction efforts of each municipality.

An effective approach that can be used as a model by Prescott and Russell is found in the Kootenay region of British Columbia, where eight municipalities collaborate on investment and workforce attraction by pooling information in a central online location. The website [www.imaginekootenay.com](http://www.imaginekootenay.com) is managed and administered by Community Futures Central Kootenay, with information about the area, investment resources, and current investment opportunities. Investors and opportunity holders register for access to create listings and to receive email alerts with opportunities that match investment preferences. This simplifies the process of ensuring that information is current while providing valuable insights for future development.

The Prescott and Russell region can also prepare an **investment attraction strategy** to optimize outreach to businesses that might not otherwise know about development opportunities. Clearly stated objectives will help the region identify the businesses that would complement the current business mix and support development of high-value sectors, such as precision agriculture, smart mobility, energy storage, and aeronautics. Once clear objectives are set, outreach opportunities and marketing tactics can be identified. Existing businesses can contribute to investment attraction by recommending potential businesses within their supply networks and actively participating in outreach efforts. The Ontario East Economic Development Commission is an important partner in investment attraction and foreign direct investment (FDI) promotion for key employment sectors, including food & beverage, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and transportation. Ontario East staff facilitate confidential investment enquiries and coordinate client calls for proposals, property, and other information.

**Attendance at trade shows and sector association events** is an effective way to connect with potential businesses in focus sectors. Exhibiting at trade shows can be costly, so attending as a registrant and walking the floor to meet with prospective businesses at their booths may be a better approach. With pre-show research and outreach, this method can yield excellent outcomes. However, some trade shows provide registrant lists to exhibitors, which can serve as valuable prospect lists for further outreach.

To support outreach and intake efforts, a user-friendly **investment attraction website** should be created, with a regional brand identity and all required investment attraction information. Each municipality would benefit from a detailed **community profile** and a **two-page prospectus** that clearly describes the community's economic landscape, demographics, quality of place characteristics, and location. While the detailed profiles will be useful to potential investors exploring opportunities in Prescott and Russell, the prospectus is a marketing tool for use at trade shows and sector association events and shared with partners at the Ontario East Economic Development Commission, Invest Ontario, and Invest in Canada for use in their international outreach efforts.

An **investment attraction working group**, made up of enthusiastic local champions, business leaders, municipal economic development staff, and business organizations, can meet a few times a year to revisit objectives, identify upcoming marketing opportunities, and plan outreach tactics.

## Objective 1.2: Support Development of Serviceable Land and Infrastructure.

As the region plans growth in key sectors, it's important to ensure that electrical, telecommunications, and municipal servicing infrastructure will meet future industry needs. An **infrastructure needs projection study** can compile recent infrastructure assessments and determine future requirements that will require major investment.

Success in securing infrastructure investment from provincial and federal governments will require an **advocacy working group** to determine priorities, develop a strategy, and commit to carrying out a long-term action plan. This group should include elected officials, municipal staff, economic development service providers, business leaders, and industry associations.

Future development will require additional serviceable land along key transportation routes. Working with property owners, municipal leaders, and staff, the investment attraction working group should identify **potential commercial/industrial development lands** that could allow for future municipal servicing.

## Objective 1.3: Develop Tourism Assets and Infrastructure to Attract Visitors and New Businesses.

To attract more visitors to the Prescott and Russell region, increase the amount that they spend, and extend the duration of their stay, investment is required in regional tourism development and marketing. Municipal partners and business organizations play an important role in tourism development by supporting **festivals, events, and activities**.

Tourism businesses can work together to develop **new activities and packages** building on existing strengths, while a sector-led **destination marketing plan** supported by professional **marketing assets** can ensure the region is promoted in provincial and national tourism marketing campaigns.

## Strategic Priority 2: Workforce Attraction and Development

With businesses in Prescott and Russell identifying a lack of skilled and unskilled labour as their number one priority, workforce attraction and development initiatives will be essential for the region's economic growth. Out-migration of youth is a concern for businesses in the area, as many who leave for post-secondary education never return to work. As a large portion of the country's workforce ages into retirement, future needs are expected to become even more urgent.

Sectors in Prescott and Russell that have a concentrated need for skilled workers include construction, health care, finance, and public administration. Currently accounting for two out of every five jobs held by the workforce, employment in these sectors is more prevalent in the region than in other parts of Ontario.

With no post-secondary institution to attract students to the region, creative solutions are required to increase the skilled workers needed for the region's growing labour force needs. An excellent example is the 22-week Personal Support Worker (PSW) training program that offers a guaranteed job with a \$24/hour starting salary. Developed by the Prescott and Russell Residence, owned and operated by the

UCPR, the \$280,000 program includes an online training component through the Prescott–Russell Employment Services Centre (PRESC) and on-the-job training at the facility.

While the population of mid-working age prime (35–44) people increased by 44% in Prescott and Russell between 2016 and 2021,<sup>6</sup> the region’s employers report difficulty finding skilled and unskilled labour as their top difficulty. Many of these workers (41%) are commuting to jobs outside of the region or working remotely (26%).

As workers become more mobile and willing to relocate for job opportunities, rural areas can attract skilled individuals who may bring new expertise, ideas, and perspectives to local businesses. Immigrants accounted for four fifths of Canada’s labour force growth between 2016 and 2021.<sup>7</sup> However, communities in Prescott and Russell have not benefitted from Canada’s immigration gains. While 23% of the Canadian population and 30% of Ontario’s population were landed immigrants or permanent residents in 2021, only 5.7% of the Prescott and Russell population were in this group.

Initiatives to attract and retain newcomers will be an important part of ensuring that employers have the workforce they need. Federal immigration programs, such as the recently announced Francophone Community Immigration Pilot,<sup>8</sup> and leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion can support attraction and retention of newcomers.

Workforce skills development programs will be needed to support innovation and technology adoption and to meet future needs in health care and skilled trades. Regional initiatives funded by programs like the provincial government’s Skills Development Fund can support workforce training programs and the development of a new skills development centre.

A **workforce development advisory group** made up of sector associations, business leaders, municipal economic development staff, and employment program providers can meet once or twice a year to identify training needs and make program recommendations.

## **Objective 2.1: Build a Talent Pipeline That Meets Current and Future Needs of Key Sectors.**

Linking high school students to employment and training opportunities in the area can help retain young workers in the region. Promotion of existing **work-integrated learning programs** to employers can increase engagement in co-operative education, dual credit options, and youth apprenticeship programs, giving youth the opportunity to experience working in industries that they might not have otherwise considered.

Support with recruitment and attraction through **regional hiring initiatives** may increase awareness of opportunities for some of the 40% of the region’s workforce who are currently commuting outside of the region for work.

With no local post-secondary institution available to deliver programs, creative approaches to education and development of workers in high-demand sectors will be required. The region can work with industry

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<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016 and 2021.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm>. Accessed March 22, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/03/canada-announces-new-immigration-pilots-to-support-rural-and-francophone-minority-communities-will-create-a-permanent-program.html>

associations and post-secondary institutions to provide alternative format **post-secondary programs** supported by local employers providing on-the-job training programs.

### **Objective 2.2: Attract and Retain New Residents to Grow the Skilled and Unskilled Workforce.**

The federal government announced two new **immigration pilot programs** in early March 2024.<sup>9</sup> The *Rural Community Immigration Pilot* will help rural communities address labour shortages and provide pathways to permanent residence for newcomers, while the *Francophone Community Immigration Pilot* will focus on increasing the number of French-speaking newcomers settling in Francophone minority communities outside of Quebec. Both programs might be well suited to Prescott and Russell's workforce attraction needs.

If the region pursues immigration to fill vacant jobs, fostering belonging and inclusion for newcomers will be important for population retention. The region's economic development partners can demonstrate leadership in **diversity, equity, and inclusion** by ensuring that committee members and guest speakers are diverse in representation and by profiling business owners and employees from LGBTQ+, BIPOC, Indigenous, and disability communities. Partner-led workplace diversity training, community dinners, and social gatherings can help newcomers connect to the community as well.

### **Objective 2.3: Enable Skills Development for Existing Workforce to Support Innovation and Technology Adoption.**

Businesses in Prescott and Russell have few available options for upskilling their workforce to support innovation and technology adoption, putting them at risk of falling behind their competitors. Programs like Ontario's Skills Development Fund offer **workforce training programs** designed to address skills gaps and labour shortages to stimulate growth in key sectors of Ontario's economy, while creating a sustainable and resilient workforce.

To meet long-term and emerging needs of high-employment sectors, the region can partner with a post-secondary institution to secure the major capital funding needed to build a **skills development centre** for health care or skilled trades workforce training and development.

## **Strategic Priority 3: Business Development**

When asked whether they knew where to find advice or support if they had a concern or business problem, 30% percent of businesses surveyed indicated that they were uncertain, and an additional 45% were only somewhat aware. With a network of service providers ready to help businesses at every stage of their growth, there's a need for navigation support with a single point of contact and a robust system to coordinate referrals and follow-up.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/03/canada-announces-new-immigration-pilots-to-support-rural-and-francophone-minority-communities-will-create-a-permanent-program.html>. Accessed March 22, 2024.

Understanding the needs of businesses, both individually and collectively, is important to supporting growth and intervening to prevent closures or outward relocations. While the region conducted an extensive and thorough business retention and expansion (BR+E) project in 2018, changes in local business conditions due to the impact of global forces might mean that the information collected is no longer current. There's a need for an ongoing way to check in with businesses and respond with timely interventions.

Prescott and Russell's location and business environment presents opportunities to develop specialization in advanced technology industries like smart agriculture, smart mobility, and advanced robotics. Pursuit of these opportunities requires programs that support innovation and entrepreneurship, and strong leadership to secure provincial and industry support in research, development, and commercialization of new products and technologies.

The most frequently mentioned barrier to business success during community engagements was insufficient infrastructure leading to frequent and extended power outages, gaps in high-speed Internet coverage, and housing shortages. Without addressing these issues, the region risks seeing stagnant economic growth or the loss of key employers to relocation.

### **Objective 3.1: Support Success for New and Existing Businesses.**

Connecting businesses to the services and opportunities they need to support them through each stage of their start-up and growth can be supported by a regional **business navigator service**. The single point of contact would link businesses to service providers through an integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

An **ongoing BR+E visitation program** can be used to identify opportunities to assist individual businesses and to produce summary reports that identify sector-level needs (workforce attraction, skills training, advocacy) that can be met through existing or new programs and services. With BR+E training and certification, economic development staff can develop skills in developing and delivering ongoing BR+E visitations.

### **Objective 3.2: Support Innovation and Entrepreneurship.**

Working in partnership with provincial and national industry networks, the region can secure commitment and major capital investments needed to establish a provincial **agricultural innovation centre**. This would serve as a collaborative workspace for agri-food and AgriTech companies, supporting research and development and commercialization of new products and technologies.

A good example is found in Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation, a Nova Scotia food development agency that was established in 2012. Perennia's Food and Beverage Innovation Centre is a product development, improvement, and small pilot processing facility. Food scientists and research associates work with companies throughout the product development commercialization cycle<sup>10</sup> to create new products or improve current products on the market. It has a provincially inspected pilot plant, a food

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<sup>10</sup> Perennia. 2020. Commercialization Cycle for New Product Development.



product development laboratory, analytical and microbiological labs, and spaces for business incubation.<sup>11</sup>

The region's innovation culture can be developed through a series of **networking events and mash-up labs**. Sharing updates on current projects can encourage cross-pollination of ideas and develop mentorship opportunities between established businesses and start-up companies.

Support for innovation and entrepreneurship for small and medium enterprises can be realized through a **business skills** workshop series that includes topics such as design thinking, adopting AI technologies, and workforce recruitment and retention.

### **Objective 3.3: Advocate for Policies and Capital Investments That Enable Business Success.**

Regular advocacy on behalf of the business community depends on building personal connections with government leaders at both elected and administrative levels. Regional collaboration is needed to identify issues and **policy decisions** that can remove barriers to success and can contribute to wider advocacy efforts of groups like the Eastern Ontario Leadership Council.

Through strategic and ongoing advocacy efforts, the region can pursue provincial and federal **major investments** in electricity distribution infrastructure, housing, health care, schools, etc., to enable business success and investment attraction.

Advocacy work is effective when informed by regular contact with businesses through an annual BR+E survey and ongoing BR+E activities (e.g., interviews, focus groups).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.perennia.ca/product-development>. Accessed March 22, 2024.





# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



# Implementation Plan

To achieve successful outcomes of the economic development strategies in this report, it is imperative to ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are in place. Investment in economic development varies widely across the municipalities in the region, so a coordinated approach makes sense. Regional coordination of some economic development functions – investment attraction, workforce development, and business development – can make it possible to pursue major projects, leverage program funding, and maximize existing resources.

Upper-tier municipalities contribute to economic development by providing the services within their mandate, including arterial roads, sewer and water systems, waste disposal and region-wide land use planning and development.<sup>12</sup> Many of Ontario's upper-tier municipalities also provide direct economic development services, but this can lead to misalignments and overlaps with the work of lower-tier municipalities. Furthermore, implementation of effective, viable, and sustainable economic development projects can be challenged by legislative requirements, low risk tolerance, lack of operating funding, and the ineligibility of municipalities for many grant programs. A supportive but less hands-on approach may be a more effective use of resources.

For more than 38 years, the Prescott and Russell Development Corporation (PRDC) has been a leader in the region's economic development, providing a platform for coordination, collaboration, and shared resources. With support from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev) and project funding from other government sources, PRDC serves as an arm's-length 'umbrella organization' to the region's communities, partner organizations, and businesses. Acting as a unifying force, the PRDC helps to streamline efforts, avoid duplication, and maximize resources by providing a centralized structure for coordination and communication.

With financial backing from municipal, provincial, and federal governments, and in collaboration with partner organizations such as the Chambers of commerce, the PRDC can work in close partnership with the UCPR to advance the regional economic development initiatives detailed in this section.

Moving major projects forward will require significant investment of time and financial resources. Where feasibility and economic impact have yet to be established, additional studies will need to be completed, as will identification of suitable locations, and designs and budgets for new capital projects. Engagement with industry network organizations, post-secondary institutions, and government leaders to secure financial commitments will require political acumen and negotiation skills. A professional project manager with experience in similar projects can ensure successful execution of this complex series of tasks.

Additional staff will be required to carry out these initiatives, with an annual operating budget to support ongoing activities. Project funding for many of the new initiatives can be secured through provincial and federal grant programs. Four new working groups are also proposed, leveraging the enthusiasm and skill of local champions to monitor progress and maintain the momentum needed to achieve objectives.

This implementation plan will serve as a roadmap to guide partners over the short, medium, and long term. Community validation input was used to mark initiatives as urgent, high, or medium priority. Lead and potential partner organizations are identified along with estimated financial and human resources.

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<sup>12</sup> Association of Municipalities of Ontario, [www.amo.on.ca/about-us/municipal101/ontario-municipalities](http://www.amo.on.ca/about-us/municipal101/ontario-municipalities), accessed April 5, 2024.

# Strategic Priority 1: Investment Attraction

Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>1 Establish a <b>concierge service to facilitate site selection</b> and lead handling. Collaborate with municipal staff and commercial realtors to create an up-to-date list of available lands. Develop a regional investment attraction brand and website as a central information resource.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: municipal staff, realtors, UCPR</p>	Short Term	Urgent	<p>\$100,000/yr – Business development officer</p> <p>\$100,000 – Brand and website development</p>
<p>2 Create a <b>regional investment attraction strategy</b> to actively recruit businesses in growing industries that build on the region’s strengths (e.g., precision agriculture, smart mobility, energy storage, aeronautics). Prepare a regional profile and help municipalities develop community profiles and marketing prospectuses. Attending trade shows in key sectors to network and recruit potential businesses.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: Ontario East Economic Development Commission, Invest Ontario, sector organizations, municipal staff</p>	Short Term	Medium Priority	<p>\$100,000/yr for marketing activities</p> <p>Staff time</p> <p>Investment attraction working group</p>
<p>3 <b>Identify needs for infrastructure</b> required to support business success and investment attraction over the next 10 years (e.g., broadband, electricity supply, transportation, housing).</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p>	Long Term	Urgent	<p>\$200,000 – Infrastructure needs projection study</p> <p>Advocacy working group</p>
<p>4 <b>Identify potential commercial/industrial development lands</b> along key transportation routes that could support future municipal servicing. Work with property owners, municipal leaders, and staff to ensure a sufficient supply of serviceable land is available to respond quickly to site selection enquiries.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: municipal staff, developers, realtors, Chambers of commerce, Hawkesbury Industrial Investment Association</p>	Medium Term	High Priority	<p>Business development officer (see Initiative 1)</p> <p>Investment attraction working group</p>

Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>5 <b>Regional tourism development and marketing projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a sector-led destination management plan.</li> <li>Develop new activities and packages to increase average spending and extend visitation duration.</li> <li>Bilingual marketing content development (professional photos/videos) that can be used in provincial and national marketing campaigns.</li> </ul> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: Chambers of commerce, RTO9, Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, Sentier Récréatif Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail</p>	Medium Term	Medium Priority	<p>\$100,000/yr – Director of Tourism Development</p> <p>\$150,000 – destination management plan</p> <p>\$75,000 – marketing content development</p>
<p>6 Work with municipal partners to develop and promote <b>festivals, events, and activities</b> to attract visitors and support new business development.</p> <p>Lead: CUPR Potential partners: municipal staff, Chambers of commerce, BIAs, cultural organizations</p>	Short Term	Medium Priority	Tourism working group

## Strategic Priority 2: Workforce Attraction and Development

Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>7 Promote <b>work-integrated learning programs</b> (e.g., co-op, dual credit, youth apprenticeship) to employers.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: Chambers of commerce, sector associations, boards of education</p>	Short Term	Urgent	Business development officer (see Initiative 1)
<p>8 Work with sector associations and educators to <b>develop post-secondary programs</b> that meet current and upcoming needs of employers in key sectors (construction, health care, finance, and public administration).</p> <p>Lead: PRDC Potential partners: sector associations, post-secondary institutions, FedDev, PRESC</p>	Medium Term	Urgent	Workforce development advisory group

Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>9 Organize <b>regional talent attraction initiatives</b> (e.g., job fairs, co-operative education programs, social media marketing campaigns) in collaboration with businesses, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and immigration services agencies.</p> <p>Lead: PRESC</p> <p>Potential partners: UCPR, Chambers of commerce</p>	Short Term	High Priority	\$10,000 – marketing budget
<p>10 Participate in <b>federal immigration programs</b> (e.g., Francophone Community Immigration Pilot) to attract skilled foreign workers to the region.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: PRESC</p>	Short Term	High Priority	Staff time
<p>11 Demonstrate leadership in <b>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</b>, such as in choices of committee members and guest speakers. Profile business owners and employees from LGBTQ+, BIPOC, Indigenous, and disability communities. Promote partner-led workplace diversity training, community dinners, and social gatherings for newcomers.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: Groupe Convex Prescott-Russell, PRESC, Réseau des femmes immigrantes francophones de Prescott-Russell, Leadership féminin Prescott-Russell</p>	Medium Term	Medium Priority	Staff time
<p>12 Partner with post-secondary institutions to secure project funding to <b>develop new workforce training</b> programs for skilled and unskilled labour.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: post-secondary institutions, sector associations, FedDev, the Government of Ontario, PRESC</p>	Long Term	High Priority	\$300,000 – Skills development fund – training stream
<p>13 Partner with a post-secondary institution to secure capital funding to <b>build a skills development centre</b> for health care or skilled trades workforce.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: post-secondary institutions, sector associations, FedDev, the Government of Ontario, PRESC</p>	Long Term	Medium Priority	TBD – Skills development fund – capital stream

### Strategic Priority 3: Business Development



Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>14 Create a <b>business navigator service</b> as the single point of contact for businesses and service providers. An integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system can be used to coordinate referrals and follow-up contact.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p>	Short Term	Urgent	<p>Business development officer (see Initiative 1)</p> <p>\$25,000/yr – software &amp; training</p>
<p>15 Coordinate <b>ongoing BR+E visitation program</b> to identify opportunities to assist individual businesses and identify sector-level needs that can be met through existing or new programs and services and advocacy efforts. Conduct an annual BR+E online/telephone survey. Provide <a href="#">BR+E training and certification</a> to economic development providers.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: Municipalities, economic development service providers</p>	Medium Term	Medium Priority	<p>\$8,000 – training fees for up to 10 people</p> <p>\$30,000/yr – annual BR+E survey</p>
<p>16 Establish a provincial <b>agricultural innovation centre</b> to provide a collaborative workspace for agri-food and AgriTech companies, research and development and commercialization of new products and technologies.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: FedDev, industry networks, Eastern Ontario Agri-Food Network, Union des cultivateurs franco-ontariens</p>	Long Term	High Priority	\$250,000 – project management consulting
<p>17 Coordinate <b>networking events and mash-up labs</b> to encourage cross-pollination of ideas and develop mentorship opportunities between established businesses and start-up companies.</p> <p>Lead: PRDC</p> <p>Potential partners: sector associations, Chambers of commerce, post-secondary schools</p>	Short Term	Medium Priority	<p>\$5,000 – program costs</p> <p>Business development officer (see Initiative 1)</p>
<p>18 Develop a <b>workshop series</b> to support innovation and entrepreneurship in small to medium enterprises.</p> <p>Lead: Prescott and Russell Entrepreneurship Centre</p> <p>Potential partners: PRDC, Chambers of commerce</p>	Short Term	High Priority	<p>Program funding</p> <p>Existing staff</p>
<p>19 Build personal connections with government leaders to <b>advocate on behalf of the business community</b> on issues</p>	Long Term	Medium Priority	Advocacy working group

Initiative	Timeline	Priority	Resources
<p>and policies of a political nature to remove barriers and support success.</p> <p>Lead: UCPR</p> <p>Potential partners: municipal leaders, Ontario East Leadership Council, Chambers of commerce, Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC)</p>			
<p>20 Pursue <b>provincial and federal major investments</b> in electricity distribution infrastructure, housing, health care, schools, etc., to enable business success and investment attraction.</p> <p>Lead: UCPR</p> <p>Potential partners: municipal leaders, EOWC</p>	<p>Long Term</p>	<p>High Priority</p>	<p>Advocacy working group</p>

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