



A community that grows together

Report To: Warden Horner and Members of County Council

Meeting Date: May 8, 2025

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**Subject: Tariff Response Update: Primary Data Collection**

**From: Rajbir Sian, Director of Community Development and Tourism**

### **Recommendation**

**THAT the report from the Director of Community Development and Tourism, Report #Planning and Development-2025-037, "Tariff Response Update: Primary Data Collection", dated May 8, 2025, be received.**

### **Executive Summary**

- Data collection and economic impact analysis is needed to inform decision-making related to investment attraction, future economic development projects and project tracking.
- A Request For Proposals (RFP) was issued seeking submissions from qualified consulting firms to embark on a primary economic data collection effort.
- Two submissions were received, and following a thorough review process, a proponent has been chosen for the project.

### **Background & Discussion**

Following Council's decision on February 13, 2025, to allocate additional funds for primary economic data collection, staff issued a request for proposals (RFP) seeking submissions from qualified consulting firms. The RFP communicated the primary objective of this effort, which is to collect economic data that will provide insights into Dufferin's opportunities as it relates to its local industries. This data will provide a comprehensive foundation for informed decision making as it relates to investment attraction, future economic development projects, and future performance tracking.

The scope of work in the RFP included provisions that the successful proponent will employ a range of methods, including one-on-one in-person interviews, to acquire granular, current economic data related to key industries in Dufferin County, along with a comprehensive analysis that includes supplementary secondary data to guide economic development initiatives and inform strategic planning. The primary economic data was categorized as phase 1 of the deliverables, with phase 2 and 3 involving an investment attractions strategy and ongoing data support respectively as provisional deliverables.

## **PHASE 1: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Data Collection (Primary)**

- **Business Surveys/Interviews:** Engage local businesses (including small, medium-sized enterprises, and major employers) to collect qualitative and quantitative data on their economic health, challenges, and outlook, especially in relation to a potential US-Canada trade war. This should include at least 5 in-person business surveys/interviews per identified key sector. These business visits will be supported by Dufferin County Economic Development staff.
- **Workforce Surveys:** Gather data on workforce demographics, skillsets, commuting patterns, and workforce needs. Include specific attention to skilled trades, industries such as transportation equipment manufacturing, educational services, and healthcare.
- **Sector-Specific Data:** Capture information on key sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and services, including the impact of external factors (e.g., supply chain disruptions, changes in consumer behavior due to trade issues).

### **Data Collection (Secondary):**

- **Government and Industry Reports:** Obtain current data from Statistics Canada, provincial sources, and industry associations that pertain to Dufferin County's economic landscape.
- **Local Economic Indicators:** Provide secondary data that includes economic metrics such as GDP growth, unemployment rates, business investment trends, and industry-specific performance.
- **Trade and Market Data:** Gather information on trade flows, import/export data, and market opportunities that are relevant to Dufferin County businesses, particularly in relation to US-Canada and inter-provincial trade dynamics.

### **Economic Impact Analysis**

- Trade Impact Assessment: Assess the potential impact of a US-Canada trade war on local businesses, identifying which sectors are most vulnerable, and the potential short-term and long-term effects on employment, wages, and business viability.
- Labor Market Analysis: Provide insights on labor shortages, skills gaps, and commuting patterns, with recommendations for workforce development and retention strategies.
- Supply Chain Vulnerabilities: Identify sectors most at risk from supply chain disruptions and recommend strategies for businesses to diversify or mitigate these risks.

### **Comprehensive Report**

- Economic Profile of Dufferin County: Provide a detailed report that includes a snapshot of the county's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis), with specific attention to local industries and workforce trends.
- Impact of External Factors: Analyze the county's exposure to global economic trends, particularly trade dynamics between Canada and the US, and provide forecasts for the short and medium term.
- Business Resilience Strategies: Recommend actionable steps that local businesses can take to adapt to uncertain economic conditions, including diversification, innovation, and new market development.

### **Final Engagement**

- Stakeholder Engagement: Present the findings and recommendations to Dufferin County economic development staff. Following this initial presentation, the successful proponent will spearhead a "Team Dufferin" seminar in July 2025 where findings will be presented and discussed by community members. The successful proponent may also be asked to present findings to Dufferin County Council.
- Interactive Dashboards: Provide an interactive, user-friendly dashboard that allows stakeholders to explore key data metrics, including industry trends, economic indicators, and investment opportunities.

Two submissions were received following the publication of the RFP containing the above deliverables. The submissions were reviewed, and a successful proponent of repute was chosen to spearhead the project. Staff are currently in the process of finalizing an agreement with the successful proponent, with an expected project start date the week of May 5.

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**Financial, Staffing, Legal, or IT Considerations**

None at this time.

**In Support of Strategic Plan Priorities and Objectives**

***Economy*** - advance County-wide economic development workforce development

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Respectfully Submitted By:

Rajbir Sian  
Director of Community Development and Tourism

Prepared by:

Yaw Ennin  
Manager of Economic Development

Reviewed by: Sonya Pritchard, Chief Administrative Officer