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PENETANGORE REGIONAL
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Press Release

PREDC JOINS REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC ALLIANCE (SWEA) GIVES OUR GAS PROJECT A LEG UP ON THE COMPETITION.

Jim Prenger, President of PREDC reports, “PREDC has been in discussions with the SWEA Executive Director, Serge Lavoie about membership. We found that membership in SWEA offers benefits to our local area and so PREDC recently applied. We have been informed that the SWEA Board approved our application. We are excited about this alliance and the benefits our participation can bring to the three municipalities who are part of the natural gas project. We also expect our membership to be helpful in proceeding with other initiatives that can strengthen our local economy in the future,” adds Mr. Prenger.

SWEA is an alliance of local players in economic development. SWEA’s membership extends across fifteen counties: Bruce; Huron; Essex; Chatham-Kent; Lambton; Elgin; Middlesex; Norfolk; Haldimand; Brant; Oxford; Perth; Dufferin; Wellington; and Grey. SWEA also includes the Waterloo Region.

“The size of SWEA and its focus on economic development at a regional level gives us a voice and more clout in attracting government and private investment, says Allan Ribbink, a PREDC Board member and local farmer. Mr. Ribbink adds, “We have sometimes forgotten our own vulnerability in relying on a single large employer such as Bruce Power. We are grateful for Bruce Power and respect them as a solid member of this community. They provide a lot of employment but we still need jobs here, especially for young people and families. That’s why PREDC exists, to work towards building our current local businesses and attracting new investment. Economic development demands ongoing attention. If we stop working to build our economy, investors will be attracted to other places and we will miss out,” adds Mr. Ribbink.

Ron Cristine, PREDC Executive Director, stresses, “Membership in SWEA ensures our point of view and our local needs are represented at this regional planning table. For example, SWEA is involved in supporting the province’s natural gas initiative and our three municipalities (Arran-Elderslie, Huron-Kinloss and Kincardine) are ready to proceed with next steps in bringing natural gas to the area. Our participation with SWEA will help at a regional level and help us locally.”

For Release November 20 2014

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One of the other initiatives in which SWEA is now active is the SWIFT Network Project. SWEA is working with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) through an exciting partnership on the [SouthWestern Integrated Fibre Technology](#) (SWIFT) project – to build an ultra high-speed fibre optic regional broadband network for everyone in Western Ontario. This broadband capacity will benefit business and agribusiness. As farms become larger and as farmers become more reliant on technology to manage, sufficient broadband capacity is a must.

Another SWEA initiative is focused on building a sustainable food cluster for the region. This initiative supports the growth, processing, harvesting and distribution of many different types of food for consumption within a local food shed. "PREDC is exploring the feasibility of establishing an export cooperative in our area," says Guy Anderson, a local honey producer. "This initiative is timely given the recent trade discussions between Canada and China and could pave the way for additional agriculture production to meet export requirements. The idea of a cooperative is to provide a means for smaller producers to get into the export market and together meet the demand for export quantities that they cannot meet on their own. We expect that some of SWEA's knowledge in the agriculture sector can help us as we proceed with our exploration," concludes Mr. Anderson.

For more information about PREDC check out the new web site at www.predc.ca. For information about SWEA visit www.swea.ca.