Agenda

(subject to change)

Strength in Economic Diversity
2026 Economic Development Summit
Friday, November 20, 2026

8:30 am **Registration | Networking**

9:00 am **Welcome / Greetings**

- Michael Barrett, MP Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands - Rideau Lakes
- Steve Clark, MPP Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes
- Corinna Smith-Gatcke, Past Warden, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

9:15 am **Bill Thake Memorial Economic Development Leadership Award**

Recipient: Bill Dixie Jr., Owner of Dixie Electric Services

Presenters: Corinna Smith-Gatcke, Past Warden, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
Marlene Thake

9:30 am **What's Ahead for the U.S. – Canada Trade Relationship**

Early in 2025, the America First Trade Policy and tariffs impacted global commerce on an unprecedented scale. Today the U.S. - Canada trade war continues with retaliatory measures still in place. Both counties remain open to negotiations. Hear how the U.S. midterm election results may shape the next phase of bilateral trade discussions when it comes to tariffs and what is on the horizon for Canada-United States – Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

Presenter:
Rick Tachuk, President & CEO,
American Chamber of Commerce in Canada (AmCham Canada)

10:00 am **BREAK**

10:15 am **Defence Sector Growth in Leeds Grenville**

Federal defence spending is seeing significant increases from $41 billion in 2025 to a projection of $63 billion in 2026, and an estimate of $159 billion by 2036. HFI Pyrotechnics has positioned itself for future growth and opportunities. Learn about the company's journey and what Leeds Grenville businesses can do to explore opportunities in defence sector or indirectly supporting its supply chain.

Presenter:
Rhiannon Iles, President, HFI Pyrotechnics Inc.

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10:45 am **Healthcare: A Growing Sector in Leeds Grenville**

With 45 percent of Leeds Grenville residents aged 55 or older, health care is one of the region's fastest-growing sectors. As care needs become more complex and interconnected, regional partners are working together to address challenges across primary, emergency, surgical, and long-term care. Find out the latest data and updates from across the region.

Presenters:

Morgan Hawn, Executive Lead, Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Ontario Health Team
Julie Caffin, President & CEO, Brockville General Hospital
Alice Lacroix, Director of Care, G. Tackaberry and Family Home

Moderator:

Melanie Kirkby, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Gananoque

11:30 am **G.O.A.T. Animal Adventures**

Explore how agricultural businesses are incorporating tourism into their operations, creating new revenue opportunities and memorable visitor experiences. Hear directly from a local goat farm operator about their experience with agritourism.

Presenters:

Lindsay Hadcock, Owner, Goat Ridge Farm
Shelbi McFarlane, Business Development Officer
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

11:50 am **LUNCH | Networking**

12:50 pm **KEYNOTE: Protecting Ontario**

Amid unwarranted U.S. tariffs and global economic uncertainty, Ontario's Treasury Board is responding with a careful, thoughtful and strategic approach to the province's finances. The session will highlight the government's fiscal priorities and the plan to drive sustainable growth, protect jobs, strengthen economic resilience, and modernize procurement.

Presenter:

Hon. Kinga Surma, President
Ontario Treasury Board

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1:30 pm **Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre**

Ontario remains Canada's most visited province, and Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre is well positioned to benefit from strong domestic travel demand. The newly opened venue has transformed an 1854 farm property into a distinctive destination for corporate events and weddings, creating new tourism revenue for the region.

Presenter:

Sean McGrath, President
Thee Farm Event & Wellness Centre

2:00 pm **Leveraging Rideau 200 to Unlock the Canal's Full Potential**

For nearly two centuries, the Rideau Canal National Historic Site has served as the backbone of the communities it connects. As we approach the bicentennial in 2032, Rideau 200 represents more than a milestone. It is a generational catalyst to unlock sustainable economic growth, deepen municipal and regional partnerships, and modernize the way we steward the canal.

Presenters:

John Festarini, A/ Director, Ontario Waterways, Parks Canada
Marie White, Economic Development & Cultural Heritage Coordinator, Township of Rideau Lakes

2:30 pm **Leeds Grenville / 1000 Islands Rideau Canal Waterways**

A brief regional economic update, highlights from the 2026 business survey results and the advancement of the Counties Economic Development Strategic Areas of Focus.

Presenter:

Ann Weir, Economic Development Manager,
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

2:55 pm **Closing Remarks | Networking**

Community Futures Grenville

1000 Islands Community Development Corporation

Valley Heartland valleyefdc.com

Eastern Workforce Innovation Board
Nurturing a stronger workforce

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