

Rural dynamics: Catalyst for a New Vision of Tweed, Ontario

Rural dynamics often center on a tension between old and new, between wanting to stay the same and wanting to change,

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between too much change and not enough. In Tweed, this tension surfaced during the November 2003 municipal elections. Through the local paper, *The Tweed News*, residents expressed their passion about the place in which they live - and about the place in which they want to live. It was a forum for negotiating a new vision for Tweed.

The electoral debates provoked and suppressed opinions, pushed and pulled loyalties, divided and united neighbours. In the opinion of one resident, the verbal battles ripped the social fabric of Tweed apart. But tension comes with an opportunity for resolution. As expressed in another letter to the editor: "never have we been in

such need of an 'educated' vision that points us upward." This writer was talking about the kind of education in which you learn from direct experience, the one in which every issue that comes to the table is an opportunity to learn.

To keep Tweed alive and viable, another resident wrote, a new vision must be based on a continuous process of change. The old dynamics of Tweed centred upon lumbering and farming. When the railway came, so too did light industry.



When the automobile came, so too did tourism. But as roads got bigger and faster, Tweed's function as a gateway to the 'land o'lakes' declined. The loss of the high school in the 1970s and the closure of government offices in the 1990s changed the local dynamics significantly.

Today, residents of Tweed are taking a hard look at themselves, asking what they can do with what they have. "The Municipality is blessed with a wealth of service organisations, churches, schools, a Chamber of Commerce and many, many very talented individuals." The goal is to use these talents to create an "educated vision." Tweed is learning how to keep the small town feeling while wanting the amenities of an urban lifestyle and how to preserve the heritage of Tweed while attracting new industrial development. "The point is that at times we as individuals have to not so much see immediate gain for ourselves, but to see the community as a whole." The "future of Tweed is in all our hands."

Note: All quotes are from Letters to the Editor, Tweed News, between October 29, 2003 and November 26, 2003.

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"To keep Tweed alive and viable, a new vision must be based on a continuous process of change."



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