

Toward Prosperity Cumberland County Roundtable

June 13th, 2000

Notes:

Assets in Cumberland County:

- Our people - they are unemployed, skilled and ready to work
- Our strong sense of community & values
- Some of our youth return and create opportunities for themselves here
- Nova Scotia Community College is a big asset
- The natural beauty of our surroundings
- The diversity in our tourism industry is an opportunity
- Our location - we can be a “gateway” and are at the “centre” of the Maritimes
- Our climate (moderate temperature)
- Energy resources (wind, gas, geothermal, tidal, methane, natural gas, etc.)
- Investment (hidden capital)

Obstacles in Cumberland County:

- Lack of money (support for partnership projects)
- Educated children, but our youth leave
- Lack of proximity to major markets
- Resources- limited (forestry, fishing, gas), limited value-added activity
- Are not taking advantage of marine shipping access
- Government (political) interference/control
- “Raw politics” get in the way
- Limited opportunities for youth - they leave and not many return.
- Lack of media coverage – no Nova Scotia CBC coverage
- Broad based cooperation is not always evident
- No tax breaks for businesses (note: discussion held that this is not an option)
- Are apathetic, not interested in local development
- Border (e.g. tourism signage barriers) – need cooperation between Nova Scotia/New Brunswick governments.
- Transportation system – accessibility to rural areas is limited if not non-existent.
- Many unskilled workers, those with skills do not necessarily have the skills that employers require.
- Low literacy levels
- Poor roads
- Lack of seed money
- Perceived duplication between government departments

- Lack of unity between Municipal Units , with the exception of the Cumberland Regional Economic Development Association (CREDA)

What should we do to promote economic growth?

- Create a “Made in Nova Scotia” program to promote our products.
- Make seed capital available for community economic development projects.
- Government must be accountable and responsible.
- Increased coordination and cooperation between government departments (e.g. Transportation and Tourism).
- Government needs to take more of a leadership role.
- Need to streamline government services.
- Need increased interprovincial cooperation (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island).

What should we NOT do?

- \$ Eliminate the debt in 2 years - would not be realistic given how long it took to accumulate it.

How can we improve the Vision? the Principles?

- There is a lack of emphasis on community in the vision - community must be there and it must be balanced (geographically, socially, culturally, etc.). Should also consider the community of Nova Scotia as a whole.
- The term, “opportunity” is good as a “collective” umbrella.
- Our communities need to be not only competitive but also cooperative.
- Need to ensure complete accessibility.
- Must emphasize the high quality of life we enjoy in Nova Scotia.
- Community economic development must be included.
- Education must also include health care education.
- Cooperation (partnerships) needs to be included.
- Should not refer to the Nova Scotia economy as “small” just because we are a small province - we have the highest fishery output in the country.
- Must bear in mind the quality of life we preserve for the future.
- Need to show the world that we are a “Land of World Class Opportunities”.
- We must encourage Nova Scotians to buy locally (support ourselves and each other).

How do we build on the community economic development work done to date?

- Need more field resource people and support money.
- Partnership development requires clearly articulated goals - government needs a plan.
- Media consolidation - need a single entity that will cover all of Cumberland County.
- Renewable energy (geothermal, wind, tidal, wood chip, solar power, methane).
- Need additional tourism support.
- Signage - improve visitor awareness as well as local awareness.
- Greater support for agriculture.
- Need to continue to support and enhance the business climate.
- Need to eliminate the debt.
- Minimize “red tape” in all government departments.

- Basic infrastructure amenities are necessary to encourage and support businesses.
- Need to develop community pride and a positive attitude.

How do we prepare workers for the jobs to come?

- Could perhaps develop an apprenticeship system and/or other opportunities for skills improvement.
- On-the-job training

How can we increase exports/replace imports?

- The province needs to provide expertise/coordination.
- Should create a “Buy Nova Scotia” program to promote our goods.
- Coordination among the Atlantic provinces.
- Need to consider our pricing and efficiency in comparison to imported goods.
- Must support electronic infrastructure.
- Develop all feasible renewable methods of energy in Cumberland County.

Further points:

- Nova Scotia provincial investment through the workplace - Nova Scotia pensioners should be encouraged to invest in the province.
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union and other government agencies - are they investing locally?
- Cumberland wants “due consideration” - this does not mean special treatment but our “fair share”.
- Need increased emphasis on rural Nova Scotia as opposed to metropolitan Halifax.
- \$ Increase government department presence throughout the province.
- Need to further develop our natural resources through more value-added activity and build upon underutilized resources.