

TOWARD PROSPERITY

Hants County Roundtable (Elmsdale)

May 24, 2000

Notes:

- \$ Infrastructure improvements are needed, specifically in telecommunications availability and quality, as well as affordable three-phase power for rural areas.
- \$ Road maintenance/improvements are essential, especially as they relate to repeat tourism business.
- C Nova Scotia has the highest internet use, but the lowest e-commerce involvement.
- \$ E-commerce is equivalent to export.
- \$ We need to determine how to stop the "Brain Drain".
- C There is a concern for the loss of economic benefits to urban areas i.e. jobs.
- C The main economic drivers for Nova Scotia are small and medium-sized businesses and yet the necessary logistics and infrastructures are not available to them - once established, tend to operate from an urban area.
- C Must address the problem of competition within government departments. Each of these different departments has a different agenda. They need to work together.
- C Before you can have economic development, you need community development. In order for government to create better economies, they must first create better communities.
- C The availability and distribution of information to people and business is key i.e. Enterprise Centre of Hants County, Web-sites, etc.
- C Need to educate people regarding the reality of economics - flow of funds out of the community; flow of funds within the community; flow of funds into the community. Funds have to be kept in the community. Once that is established we can seek funds from outside the community i.e. exports.
- C Government should maybe regulate Hants County/Nova Scotia stores to provide a certain percentage of shelf space for local producers.

Vision:

- C Are concerned that people working outside the community no longer have time to build self-sufficient communities the way it used to be done. Those people working hard to do so within the community are aging.
- C Sustainability i.e. forestry is a going concern - how long will it last?
- C Legislation is a trade barrier - there is too much legislation at present. Ex: It is easier to build a house in Iceland than in New Brunswick.
- C Education is crucial.
- C There needs to be some consistency in provincial policy - we need a longer-term vision, not subject to political will.
- \$ Inconsistency has been an on-going problem - government derails Economic Development or Transportation by going off in a different direction or starting all over again, with each change of political parties.

Context:

- C The key assets in East Hants are the people, proximity to Halifax, values, quality of life.

- \$ We require a stronger commercial base - at present we are well below the provincial average.
- C Business must be willing to pay the price required to attract consumers i.e. longer hours, additional staff for banks, postal services - they should realize the negative impact they have on other businesses by not providing what consumers want.
- C Bureaucracy - Government should have enthusiasm for business success, rather than emphasizing the paper flow. Business perceives bureaucracy to be very difficult - a lot of red tape.
- \$ There is a necessity for a "navigator" to assist business in getting through some of the maze.
- C Information - Government can provide statistics on buying patterns.
- \$ There is also a need for incentives or a tax relief program to encourage alliances and cooperation.

Principles:

- C Determine what sustainable means.
- \$ What can the government do in promoting competitive advantages, encouraging the enterprising spirit and fostering innovation?
- C Maybe "improving the quality of all jobs" should be changed to "improving the quality of life".
- C Training people who already have skills may be misguided - at what point are we over-educated?
- C Must put pride back into jobs.
- C Funding cuts to tourism have affected the industry - there are fewer Visitor Information Centres.
- C There is a lot of heritage in our region and a lot of history.
- \$ Need to promote increased use of Information Technology (IT) by the agricultural community.
- C There needs to be a level playing field, whether import or home-grown product/service, so that business can compete.
- C The federal government's policy of reducing transfer payments to the provinces has resulted in increased burdens on municipalities, which are forced to increase taxes on the backs of the people. More cooperation is required between the three levels of government.
- C Harmonization of departments of the Atlantic Canadian governments could be helpful in promoting common interests and marketing Atlantic Canada as a whole.
- C Need to decrease government overhead by eliminating the duplication of services.
- C Native Canadians can work in the United States for Canadian companies because of their dual citizenship.
- C Economic development investment funds are an option.
- C The retirement market may be viable in Nova Scotia.