

TOWARD PROSPERITY

Hants County Roundtable (Windsor)

May 31, 2000

Notes:

Opportunities for Hants County:

- proximity to Halifax
- low crime rate
- country living
- availability of private & public schools
- hospital
- the friendliness of the people
- landscape i.e. the highest tides
- a dedicated labour force
- a good place to retire
- natural resources including peat moss, slate, gas, barite and titanium
- potential rail line from Halifax to Windsor/Kentville

Role of Government:

- Government has a role to play if it is prudent - much of what has been accomplished could not have been done without government assistance i.e. matching funds raised by volunteers etc.
- Government should listen to the people and react accordingly. They conduct surveys and studies, but then do not react the way people want them to.
- Government should be run like a business. Politics ruin a business.

Social Issues:

- There was a concern expressed over Nova Scotia having the second highest rate of child poverty as reported by the United Nations - economic growth is required to help eliminate child poverty.
- Welfare rates are the lowest in Canada.
- Incentives are required to encourage welfare recipients to work - currently their welfare checks are cut back by the amount of money they earn while working.

Tourism:

- We have to get better at promoting ourselves.
- Infrastructure - there are no motels from Truro to Windsor, or along the shore.
- We need to build our infrastructure with higher standards.
- Government should take responsibility for the existing infrastructure i.e. road improvements/maintenance.
- Need interpretation centres, geological centres - these show the beauty of the region. Also need fossils and walks on the beach.

- We need to carry out an asset mapping of the province. Government must work with RDAs and communities to develop a plan to attract investment, particularly to depressed areas with potential.
- There was a concern expressed that Halifax Visitor Information Centres are telling people not to come to our region (Hants) because there is nothing there.
- Should consider making all 100 series roads toll roads and using this money to upgrade secondary roads.
- We all need to broaden our vision and collectively promote ourselves as Hants County.
- Need to combine the tourist associations so that there is one voice.
- Garbage, old car bodies, etc. are a real blight upon the beauty of our landscape..

Other Issues:

- Government should do something about the clear cutting of trees. Perhaps a buffer zone would be a possibility.
- The capital gains tax on wood lots is a catalyst for clear cutting and government must change the relevant legislation.
- Concern was expressed over the loss of 55 agricultural specialists in Nova Scotia - this is impacting negatively on our agricultural industry.
- There should be some incentive provided for volunteerism i.e. government matching dollar for dollar the money raised by volunteer organizations. We should put a value on volunteerism.

Obstacles in Nova Scotia and Hants County:

- Government is too big.
- We are not buying locally. Greater support for local products is required.
- There is much work being done outside of the province unnecessarily i.e. deer hunting licenses are being printed in Quebec; a local herb grower lost a contract with Sobey's...
- Small business needs government because banks do not want to deal with them.
- Compensation rates for businesses are exorbitant - the second highest in Canada. This is a real issue to businesses considering locating in Nova Scotia.
- Training - an apprenticeship program is needed. Not everyone is suited to university and are not necessarily work-ready when first out of community college. Further training is an added cost to businesses.
- There is no post-secondary education available in Hants County. The closing of the Community College has had a negative impact - qualified workers are difficult to find i.e. stylists. Perhaps it would be possible to make off-campus programs available.
- There is a lack of communication between community colleges and the needs of employers. We must develop a process for talking to industries regarding their needs.