

Towards Prosperity

Inverness County Roundtable (Port Hawkesbury)

June 21st, 2000

Discussion:

Look beyond Metro:

- Strategy must have policy directions that redirect interest outside of the urban center. We are not losing our best and brightest to the United States or to other parts of Canada but to Halifax.
- \$ Province works to benefit Halifax. Strait area development – i.e. Sable gas – creates jobs that end up in Halifax. Build soft infrastructure here to keep benefits local.
- Halifax already has the wealth. Power creates power. Province should direct its efforts outside Metro where communities really need it.
- Why single out Halifax as the getting the focus of immediate attention for a post-Panamex container terminal – What about the Strait as a developing port?
- Where is community focus? Attempts to urbanize services to one place – i.e. justice, education – erodes communities.
- Government seems to work by thinking managing people in a large area is most efficient. However, it is not effective. As long as decisions are made in Halifax by people who make their lives in the city, there will be little consideration for the rural dwellers of the province. We need to have our voices heard.

Strategy must be broadened to include social values:

- No reference to values in a document that essentially is about people. Strategy must take into account the social implications of an economic strategy and consider people who are falling through the cracks of poverty.
- Development must be in a more holistic sense than strictly economic otherwise it shows no commitment. Include social, education and health values into the plan so it can achieve the importance it should. All departments should understand the human factor.
- \$ Language is important: province should consider itself community focused not client driven.
- Women and children come under three percent of provincial funding as a minority group - this should increase as women alone represent 51 per cent of the population.
- Government should not use ogre of deficit to hurt the people who can least afford to be hurt. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives sees 60 percent of Nova Scotia deficit as non-reoccurring i.e. SYSCO and Y2K expenses.

Infrastructure, consistency and investment:

- Need for investment – there is no way that economic development will happen without investment.
- Detriment to economic development is switching ministers around. One comes in with a plan and then a cabinet shuffle changes everything and nothing is accomplished: it begins all over again. Follow Ireland's example. Should an elected official even be charged with a position that he or she knows nothing about. Hire someone who knows something about the issue.
- Infrastructure in rural areas is deplorable. Telephone lines will not allow e-commerce and roads are in terrible shape. Government is responsible to correct these problems if interested in economic development.
- Young people who would start businesses and have children in school are leaving. 10,000 gone between ages 24 to 40 from Antigonish to Glace Bay. Government offers only lip service to this problem – must start encouraging them to stay here – follow the example of similar strategy in Ireland.
- Investment in infrastructure would open doors for export of technology products/services.
- Tourism – Province holds out culture as a tourist draw but does little to support it. In order to bring performing artists to the stage, groups have to seek out private sector sponsorship. Province backs off.
- Community investment funds – great idea to keep money in community but the process of getting there is quite complicated.
- Little start up capital for new business at present.
- Support local initiatives – i.e. government P3 schools are being built locally but do not purchase locally made wallboard. Government should make this part of tendering process.
- For port to develop, government needs to help invest in air, highway and marine infrastructure.
- Change education funding formula – at present it erodes schools.

- **Differentiate between Cape Breton and Cape Breton Regional Municipality:** Document is very flawed in its references to Cape Breton. The Sydney area does not represent the rest of Cape Breton.
- Also flawed in describing Port Hawkesbury as prosperous in the same breath as Halifax. It is not an area of similar prosperity.
- Communities are dying in Cape Breton and the government is downloading responsibilities. Rural areas are working hard to develop but do not see the

province responding. Document mentions Halifax, Port Hawkesbury and Sydney: it seems the rest of us are in Never Never Land.

Taxation:

- Taxation methodology can be detrimental to creating development. Landowners, i.e., are better off keeping forest to maturity or over-maturity and then cutting. Plenty of work can be had in silviculture but taxation is a major disincentive.
- Why can we not have input into where our tax money is going? Would be more interested in paying taxes if knew what was happening to it instead of it going into a pot.

Forming the strategy:

- Document should not lump numbers of employment income together from prosperous areas and those from less prosperous areas in order to present a rosy picture.
- Learn from other input sessions – there have been many consultations over the years but where are the tangible results? Lots of recommendations in many federal, provincial and municipal documents that should establish a strategy. Make use of these.
- Many times we have these sessions and nobody listens to a word we say. Create a report reflecting what you have heard.