

Toward Prosperity Kings County Roundtable

June 14, 2000

Notes:

What are the opportunities facing Kings County?

- Tourism product development e.g. Bay of Fundy product club, interpretative centres, Evangeline Trail Tourism Association (ETTA) is promoting Kings County at an international level.
- food processing
- educational software development
- bio-technology development
- Greenwood airport is open to commercial traffic.
- Acadia and Nova Scotia Community College Kingstech Campus
- Enrollment in Kingstech Campus is always good.
- Agriculture is the largest employer.
- We have a large variety of people, lots of retired military with technical skills, possible small aviation assembly plants.
- Retired military make good mentors. If businesses hire retired military they require little or no training.
- attractive environment

What are the obstacles facing Kings County?

- Our road system, education, health and harbours all need investment.
- Need better communication.
- It is hard to develop a Bed and Breakfast - there is too much red tape involved. Losses cannot be recouped, regulations make it hard to expand.
- We have a capacity problem in Nova Scotia although it does not always seem that way.
- There is a lack of training. People graduate from high school functioning at less than a grade 12 level.
- Inadequate dollars and available seats particularly for adults needing educational upgrading.
- You can no longer do farmwork if you do not have an education.
- There is a shortage of skilled trades-people e.g. machinists.
- Parochialism - this meeting is missing the unemployed and the illiterate.
- The local research station lost its production technology section.
- We need the industry to put the skilled people, including our kids to work.
- Halifax gets spin offs from the fact that the government is located there, but it is not called a subsidy. Rural initiatives are needed, but cannot be seen as handouts.
- Nova Scotians think they are second rate.
- We are not promoting our quality of life.
- Farmers work too hard to have time to promote themselves. We need to keep agriculture land safe.

- Our two grocery retailers do not buy Nova Scotia very much, all small grocery stores are gone, a two firm monopoly exists.

What should government do to improve economic growth ?

- Government should stop subsidies to large enterprises that could finance themselves.
- A consequence of the above (no subsidy) would be lower taxes, we face too many taxes, government needs to take a serious look at lowering taxes.
- We should stop looking to government for the solutions, we should change our culture to be more self sufficient.
- Government could take the role of identifying and researching business opportunities and best practices for Nova Scotia regions and matching the partners with the opportunities.
- We need to keep our money at home and invest it in our local businesses and not let it leave the province. Businesses have complained that they cannot expand because it is not worth it due to the red tape and bookkeeping. Let the entrepreneur do the entrepreneur work not bookkeeping. Complained about the Workers' Compensation Board wanting all kinds of money.
- Need to change the mind-set that government gives us money, need to remember it is our money. People come here for the quality of life, but leave because of a lack of money. Government has to make a choice between small business or handouts.
- Kings county has grown due to Michelin, it would be good to give money to get another business like that.
- Give government tax rebates to well researched, targeted companies so we can be competitive in a global market.
- Give good tax rebates to new Nova Scotia companies which hire Nova Scotians and pay good wages.
- We should use Michelin to help to attract other big companies here.
- The chamber is looking for the ability to get the information and go after the businesses and maybe the government could work with the chamber. We need funding assistance to prepare attraction packages, Economic Development is not coming to us with information. We should stop looking at Halifax and Port Hawkesbury-start looking at us.
- Help us attract Nova Scotian graduates back to Nova Scotia to work, set up businesses etc.
- Government has been helpful in providing several leads; the Regional Development Authority has been helpful with packages and leads; the Nova Scotia investment program and Connections NS have been useful.
- There is not a good innovation council or team in each region that encourages new product or service development, government could help form regional innovation councils. Help e.g. matching up ideas with entrepreneurs who want to do them. Support innovative development projects like the Valley Technology and Innovation Center current proposal.
- The Regional Development Authority is working with communities on many projects, they rely on volunteers. There are many regulations, government needs a decision-making inter-governmental group for economic development that a community group can go to and explain their project and get coordination and help - get the government staff to come out to our community to see us, for the government departments to be able to speak and communicate with each other.

How can we improve pieces in the document ?

- Vision statement - do not like the term “world class networks” - perhaps change “class” to “global opportunities”. “World class” seems more like a quality issue than a network issue.
- The vision needs to be more grass roots based.
- People cannot reach their full potential in some rural communities.
- Should change “self sufficient” to “self sustaining”.
- The vision should emphasize action e.g. “just do it”.
- These are just bureaucrat buzz words, needs to be in plain english.
- Perhaps could try “provides quality employment and opportunities for its Nova Scotians” in the vision.
- We have heard it all before, it did not grab my attention, nothing made me stop and say “wow that’s great”. Needs to be succinct, to the point.
- Want equal taxes for county and town so that businesses can be equally attracted to settling in town. Towns do not have the money for infrastructure, especially when county residents use town services. If we do not have enough money to pave our streets, how can we invest in other things to attract business? We should look at a tax base across the province that is equal.
- Residents have an incentive to live in counties not towns. It is the reverse of what we really want to happen. The Province should fund all municipalities equally e.g. roads, plows, basically the total infrastructure.
- Our towns are dying, they are no longer the vital centers of activity, which causes people to go after good agricultural land just to pay lower property taxes. If we equalized the taxes, then the land could stay protected and the towns could get redeveloped/filled.

Can we sharpen the strategic directions ?

- Labor market should have incentives for small businesses to increase minimum wage. The coastal roadways need to be improved to connect the coastal communities to increase tourism draw.
- Signage – we need to focus on getting the tourists from the 100 series highways to the other roads.
- We are overlooking eco-tourism e.g. New Brunswick really promotes the Bay of Fundy on television. We could develop an excellent eco-tourism trail along the bay in stages connecting the communities.

Other points

- Promoting our assets to ourselves and others does not stand out in the strategic plan.
 - “Comparative advantage” as a term should be used in the document. “Competitive advantage’ is overworked and almost meaningless. Comparative advantage takes into account geographic positioning, our people, our advantageous trading routes, etc. – Who are we positioned to serve best?
-