

TOWARD PROSPERITY

Lunenburg County Roundtable (Bridgewater)

June 16, 2000

Notes:

Vision:

- C Southwest Nova Scotia (SW Nova) is not at its full potential - we need new technology. Other areas are getting the money for Information Technology (IT) development. Youth and companies are relocating to Halifax.
- C The staff at the Department of Economic Development (NSED) do not want to work with people here on exports. 2 years ago we began an IT program for new exporters, 2-3 people from SW Nova were involved.
- C Were telling people they can “ship all over world” - not so. We are prevented from exporting because of the lack of commitment and investment.
- C MTT wants too large a profit, we are getting no cooperation from them. East Link provides a good alternative/competition. M- Powered is coming to Liverpool - this will employ young people.
- C A recording industry client tried to use Campus equipment, but has to go to Halifax and consequently charges clients more. Why would businesses stay here, the cost of business is higher. People are having to give up “quality of life” and relocate.
- C Have to convince companies to hire Nova Scotians.
- C Also need our traditional jobs - fishing/forestry.
- C The christmas tree needs increased training and education.
- C IT, e-commerce and exports are the future.
- C Many in the area have only a grade nine level education. 50% of the population has less than a grade ten level education. 30% - less than grade twelve and are illiterate in math and English.
- C The highest rate of drop outs is in grade nine. These people have the ability to operate equipment but can not pass aptitude tests.
- C The education system has to be revamped for **all** to achieve their “full potential”. Need to get over the stigma that you are a failure if you attend community college rather than university. A lot of mature students are going “back to school” to retrain for trades.

- C Have to have courses to train people for the appropriate trades in the South Shore e.g. heavy equipment mechanics. We must train our people for the jobs we see coming.
- C In our “Vision”, the word “realistic” should be inserted before “enterprise”, since 50% of our people do not complete high school.
- C Port Mouton - during the downturn of the fishery new companies started up with outside labour. It would take years to upgrade our local workers - there was no community gain in employment.

Context and Principles:

- C Key aspects are tourism, the coast-line, our quality of life and the quality of our workforce. Large companies give our workers a good endorsement.

Critical Success Factors:

- C 900,000 people live in the South Shore.
- C There is a conflict in government regulations between departments.
- C Queens County is an economically disadvantaged area.
- C We need to strengthen and advertize partnerships more.
- C Government must combine the provision of related services into one office e.g. the Department of Environment.
- C In New Brunswick a single person handles funding from different sources (ACOA, Economic Development etc.), but in Nova Scotia the company has to do this. Things happen faster in other Atlantic Provinces.
- C Example: Aquaculture - it takes 2 years to obtain all the necessary approvals and environmental studies. Then 2 more years to grow the business. We are driving businesses away.
- C We need more funding - it takes 5 years to make money in the cranberry industry.
- C We seem to be able to get golf courses built quickly.
- C Snow crab fishing is a growing industry in the Halifax area.
- C Public/private partnerships - Halifax could bring in key people/decision-makers for meetings e.g. John Risley and Nova Scotia Power representatives. We must listen to these people who know how to make things work and then capitalize upon their ideas e.g. key fisheries people to get faster approval for aquaculture businesses.
- C The South Shore is selling a lot of coastline to people who do not want change. The Village of Chester does not want change.

Strategic Directions:

- C Innovation: Information Technology - the government should pressure MTT and East Link to get high power lines to areas quickly.
- C The Regional Development Authority gets 2-3 calls per week from businesses wanting to locate here - looking for 25,000-30,000 sq. ft. buildings. We cannot supply such infrastructure.
- C In other areas, the government puts in 3 slabs and 30,000 sq. ft. shells to add on to. (Not referring to incubator malls). It is not government's job to erect buildings for rent. The public would complain.
- C The municipal units have to get involved. Communities have to have their own marketing plans.
- C The 3 levels of government should have an infrastructure/policy in place that will allow them to act faster when the opportunity presents itself. Do not have to reinvent the wheel each time.
- C Maybe we could offer tax credits, but not everything up front.
- C Irving is building railroad tracks in Maine - doing things right for the future. We gave ours up!
- C We need municipal leaders at our table.
- C Theodore Tugboat - no publicity for our area. It is going all the way to Australia over the next 2 years and Halifax will get all the publicity.
- C We pride ourselves on our tourism industry. We need more promotion for our area. It is a

very long process to get signage on Highway 103. Cape Breton has no problems in getting signage out.

- C Why the Bluenose not sail out of Lunenburg in the summer?
- C We are not promoting what we have to our own people. We have to sell Nova Scotia to Nova Scotians and raise our pride and work ethic.
- C We should support our people to do what they want to do e.g. individuals on community assistance - we should not slam doors by making it impossible for them. We should be giving them options and helping them. Everybody has potential to be developed.
- C Community projects improve the area for residents. The Waterfront Development and Community Opportunities Fund program cuts have had a huge impact on rural communities.
- C The federal government has downloaded everything to the province. We are heading down a rough road - taxes are going up.

Investment Development:

- C It is difficult to secure patient capital/venture dollars. These are good projects, but there is no homework done.
- C The figures last year indicated that \$850 million went out of province in RRSP funds and pension money. How do we keep this money here in Nova Scotia?
- C It is risky investing in this province. It is a great concept but a hard thing for government to take on. We have to come up with something attractive.
- C We need to encourage foreign investment. We complain about the Germans coming here and buying our land and building expensive houses which put taxes up, but they are bringing money into the economy.
- C Government should get involved in financing business, but not with free money - that spawns failure. In such cases there is no personal investment so there is no reason to stay.
- C The Business Development Bank does training, but only in large groups.

What are the three best opportunities in this region?

- C tourism
 - C forestry
 - C value-added industry
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- C We should do research into what products people want and identify potential markets.
 - C We must provide relevant tools and training to meet the demand.
 - C Maybe we should go to foreign countries and find out what those countries need e.g. Ambassador to China trade mission - 2 Nova Scotia companies went.

What are the obstacles facing this region?

- C lack of training
- C poor attitude
- C poor infrastructure
- C entitlement mentality
- C a lack of cooperation at the municipal level (the RDA has a good relationship with municipal units)
- C red tape

Summary:

- C Does the province want this to be “a people’s strategy”? Will it be implemented or has the policy been written already?
- C This strategy should be long-term (8-10 years) - new government should inherit this strategy and keep it going.