



Pictou County Forward Together

ECONOMIC FORUM * JANUARY 27 2010 * MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY

Message from the Chair of Board of Directors : Murray Hill

It was my pleasure, as Chair of Board of Directors of the Pictou Regional Development Commission to welcome those present to our 17th semi-annual Economic Forum and offer a few opening remarks. The focus of the forum was our new Regional Economic Development Strategy and how we can work together to move Pictou County forward economically, socially and culturally.

Clearly the only way that our new strategy becomes a reality is if we partner and collaborate to implement these various initiatives. That's why we branded this new economic strategy with the words: *Forward Together*. It's in that spirit that I acknowledged a number of key partners that have committed their support to achieving new levels of prosperity for our community. I was very pleased to have the leaders from our 6 municipal units with us on that evening. I called them forward together and presented a "proud partner" plaque for each to display in their civic offices. Accepting that evening were: Ron Baillie, Warden for the Municipality of Pictou County; Henderson Paris, Councilor for the Town of New Glasgow; Glen MacKinnon, Mayor of the Town of Trenton; Joe Gennoe, Mayor of the Town of Stellarton; Charlene Thompson, Deputy Mayor of the Town of Westville; and, Joe Hawes, Mayor of the Town of Pictou.

Pictou County Economic Development Strategy

Prepared for:
Pictou Regional Development Commission

Prepared by:
Canmac Economics Limited
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I also took a moment to recognize two other community agencies that are also very strong partners: Dave Freckelton, President of the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce; and, Ron O'Brien, Executive Director of NOBL.



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FACTS:

- The industrial manufacturing cluster represents the major source of employment opportunities for Pictou County in the future.
- The new business model is one based on creating a competitive cluster. The competitive cluster enables the export sector to attain a level of specialization to ensure world class capability. All businesses are impacted by the growth of the global economy and will have to become increasingly export oriented to remain competitive.
- The successful growth of the industrial manufacturing sector represents the primary vehicle for economic success in Pictou County. To ensure this emerging cluster can create and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage requires that the cluster emerge as a world class competitor in its products. This of course is already the case for Michelin. What remains is to develop this for the rest of the sector.

Clearly, our partnerships do not end there. I am pleased to tell you that it is our intention over the next few months to recognize other partners including members of our business community, and other key service agencies. We feel this will be an effective way of building on-going momentum towards the effective implementation of our new regional economic strategy.

At the forum that evening, we asked participants to help us elaborate and expand on our position regarding 4 of the 7 strategic directions contained in the Economic Development Strategy.

By way of explanation, the Steering Committee reviewed the 7 Strategic Directions contained in the strategy and felt 3 were pretty straight forward – difficult and important none the less, but straight forward. However, implementing the remaining 4 we felt would benefit from additional input through the forum.

This was not a prioritizing exercise. We are committed to dealing with implementing all 7 strategic directions in the immediate future. Rather, it was the Steering Committee's attempt to produce the best product as we implement the directions of this ambitious and important document.

John Guest—Regional Economic Strategy Steering Committee Chair

The next step is to turn the report into a comprehensive action plan which will occur over the next few weeks. This next step will be organized by the Steering Committee in conjunction with our consultant firm Canmac. As the organization comes together we will be looking for both leaders and participants to move this forward. If you are interested in assisting please review the report (copies are available on the PRDC web site) determine what area you are interested in and let us know. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact us.

It is vitally important to emphasize a number of important aspects of this new Regional Economic Strategy. It represents a broad-based community approach to further economic development and prosperity. It is a "call to action" that requires community stakeholders to do their respective part for the common good of all. Implicit in this strategy is change and the necessity to let go of some of the past and look to new endeavours and new approaches for the future. It entails building on our many strengths, addressing our weaknesses, and creating new opportunities that will foster a renewed sense of community and pride. **FORWARD TOGETHER.**

The way forward is never without its demands and challenges. It will require determination and commitment to fulfill this new Regional Economic Strategy.

Out of the seven directions, four of those were addressed in the form of workshops:

To strengthen and expand the Industrial Manufacturing cluster—John Guest-CA1 plant manager of Michelin. A lot of interest in the innovation centre potential was expressed, it was requested that the concept be better defined highlighting the actual facilities and the benefits to local manufacturers. There was also extensive discussion around dividing the old Trenton Works facility into an incubation mall and a site for the innovation centre. There was consensus that an annual meeting with the top 10 employers with senior government officials, e.g. NSBI was a necessary initiative. Also, the need for training (this includes basic literacy and numeracy skills development) was identified to meet current and increasing labour market needs.

FACTS:

- Goods and services provided by Pictou County businesses will increasingly be customized to individual experience – i.e., unique visitor experiences, specialization and connectedness.
- Tourists spend an estimated \$45.3 million in the Pictou County economy that results in an estimated total employment creation (direct and spin-off jobs) of 1,100 person years of employment. This sector is particularly important in the rural part of the County.
- With a much wider range of available options, consumers increasingly choose products and services that better reflect their individuality. Self-expression and the construction of identity play an ever-expanding role in the marketplace as consumers seek out personally enriching and meaningful experiences.

To Strengthen and expand its tourism sector—Kimberley Dickson, Director of Marketing and Communications for the town of New Glasgow facilitated the Tourism workshop.

Market Pictou County as a day trip / short stay destination. Participants said: there was an opportunity to do both by using Pictou County as a centre, but it was difficult to find information on all the events. It was suggested that we ask our local media-radio, papers and websites to play a more supportive role by covering special events and things to do throughout the county in a weekly section during the peak months. There is an obligation to promote our attractions and the staples of Pictou County. Operators of these attractions and staples have stories to tell, sell the experience. A trip planner brochure would ensure better promotion of the following: outdoor adventures, culture and history (highlight museums), shoreline and coastal experiences, rentals, guides, marinas, music and entertainment, festivals. Suggested opportunities: harbour cruise, fishing, building of new products, water taxi. Artisans and crafters create experiences to capitalize on. Stonehame and the Pictou Lodge are destination accommodations who sell an experience. Another suggestion was to have welcoming tourism packages for employers, listing places to see and things to do throughout the county.

Marketing Pictou County. As mentioned above there are themes that emerge when you start listing assets throughout Pictou County. Signage must be uniform throughout Pictou County this would make it easier to market the County as a destination. There is more than just one season and we need to promote seasonal experiences. Sending consistent messages and promoting the multi-cultures, ship Hector, arts and theatre, music and its musicians, and sports tourism as we host many sporting events and attract regional and national events. The effectiveness of a kiosk system will be explored. Packaging dinner and theatre and accommodations was seen as a necessary step. So, who can help implement: the Pictou County Tourist Association, 3 shores, Pictou Regional Development Commission and the private sector who must branch out and promote to other areas such as the growth corridor of Halifax and Moncton and work collaboratively towards implementation.

Focus on best practise internet marketing. Social media tends to build relationships. Tourism operators are usually small employing a few people if any. Their challenges are finding time and money for media resources. Pictou County should be marketed as a quality place selling the experiences and opportunities by way of social media and provide links to employers websites.

FACTS:

- The Pictou County natural resource sector has always been a pillar of growth for the area. Moving forward, this sector will remain a pillar of growth as it adapts to the new economy and strengthens its competitive position.
- Existing products will have increased market opportunities as the sector connects more strongly with the growth corridor by, for example; developing a central location or two as a major rural retail centre.
- The fishery sector appears to have good potential for sales into the European and Asia market. The European and Asia market conditions are changing rapidly with an increased emphasis on sustainable products. A market assessment of the challenges and opportunities of their emerging market will provide a solid basis for moving forward.
- Fisheries and Aquaculture provides technical and financial support to commercial fishers, aquaculturists and processors in coastal communities in Nova Scotia; supports development and demonstration projects as a means of introducing new and improved technology to the industry; provides engineering services to other divisions of the department; and administers a federal-provincial Cooperation Agreement relating to aquaculture, fishing vessels and sport fishery development.

To Strengthen and expand its Natural Resource sectors

Develop a gateway to Pictou County with an emphasis on the rural and cultural uniqueness of the region.

Agriculture Regional Coordinator — Kevin Bekkers, facilitated the agriculture workshop. A lot of preliminary work has been completed over the last few years in regards to the agriculture industry throughout this region. It is not the intention to duplicate any current studies or reports therefore the focus of the workshop was to get a better appreciation for a “Gateway to Pictou County”. While participants in the room explained that a farmers market gateway concept would not fix the problems being experienced, there was a sense during the consultations that a gateway into Pictou County would highlight experiences of Pictou County culture and heritage. The rural region and in particular the agriculture sector can strengthen its competitive position with development of a central location or two for sale and promotion of local products at various venues – country style restaurant, gift shop, bakery, gateway visitor centre, farmers market, etc. this gateway centre would provide networking opportunities and help to sustain local produce, raw or value added. Other comments included: Pictou County needs consistent communication to provide awareness of buy local, support local initiatives. The agriculture industry is seeking new opportunities for Pictou County by exploring an asset based community development plan which is currently underway. Committee members represent a diverse cross section, so as to get representation in as many different facets of this sector.

Complete a market study for forestry products in the European market.

John MacLellan facilitated the forestry section of this workshop: The forestry sector appears to have good potential for sales into the European market. The European market conditions are changing rapidly with an increased emphasis on sustainable products. A market assessment of the challenges and opportunities of their emerging market will provide a solid basis for moving forward. Participants offered the following: people need to know more about Bio-mass, for the most part is perceived as a clear cutting method. More awareness and education needs to be given to bio-mass and forest management. A comment was made about saw mills closing down because the demands have decreased. However, Asian markets are looking for lumber that is FCC approved only. A market study would provide greater detail on exporting options and opportunities.

Complete a market study for fishery products in the European and Asia market.

Ralph Heighton from the Fisheries Field Services/Northumberland Region facilitated the fisheries workshop. The fishery sector appears to have good potential for sales in the European and Asia market. The European and Asia market conditions are changing rapidly with an increased emphasis on sustainable products. A market assessment of the challenges and opportunities of their emerging market will provide a solid basis for moving forward. It was explained that 85% of our lobsters are exported to USA which ties up investments and decreased revenue for fishermen. In order to become or remain sustainable in exporting, fishermen need to explore the Marine Stewardship Program. A program about eco-labelling rules and expectations of foreign markets. Products must be certified and this deters fishermen from moving forward. Such a study would be inclusive of options and areas to further explore.

FACTS:

- Planning and development officers work closely with government and industry partners in the areas of market chain enhancement, opportunity investment and business development to enhance the international competitiveness of the sectors.
- "Partnerships are necessary among industry, academics, governments, and the community to provide for long-term, sustainable and socioeconomic benefits for our coastal and rural areas of the province," said Mr. Belliveau.
- Get to Know Your roots. Buy Local. Eat Fresh. Nothing beats the quality and freshness of our local food. We encourage you to enjoy the best tasting food around while supporting our local farms and businesses.

Every product tells a story of how it reached your plate.

- Nova Scotia's forests are a mainstay of life. While the requirement to provide wood fibre to support our forest economy is still a primary concern, there is a need to sustain the quality and character of our forest resource and maintain a varied forest ecosystem.

Therein lies our challenge...

Develop an effective liaison with provincial marketing/product development personnel in the forestry, fishery, and agricultural sectors to advance appropriate initiatives to create new opportunities for product distribution and sales, with emphasis on the European and Asian marketplace.

Each of the three facilitators made commitments to partner and become liaisons to assist the Pictou Regional Development Commission and the stakeholders of the natural resource sectors to move forward with this action. Each of these three liaisons have extensive experience and knowledge as representatives of these industries.

This action is based on the recognition of the expertise and knowledge of provincial product and trade specialists in these natural resource sectors. The intent is to foster a strong collaborative approach that takes advantage of proven opportunities, but at the same time pro-actively pursues new niche markets. It is also anticipated that there may be cross-sector marketing benefits of promoting a range (forestry, fishery, agricultural) of Nova Scotian products collectively rather than separately.

- **Innovation in Fisheries and Aquaculture:** Fisheries and Aquaculture provides technical and financial support to commercial fishers, aqua culturists and processors in coastal communities in Nova Scotia; supports development and demonstration projects as a means of introducing new and improved technology to the industry; provides engineering services to other divisions of the department; and administers a federal-provincial Cooperation Agreement relating to aquaculture, fishing vessels and sport fishery development.
- **Growing Forward Programs in Nova Scotia-**The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have entered into a new framework agreement for agriculture called Growing Forward. Under Growing Forward, the federal government will contribute \$14.74 million over the next five years to non-business risk management programming in Nova Scotia. The Growing Forward agreement focuses on three priority outcome areas: a competitive & innovative sector; a sector that contributes to society's priorities; and a sector that is pro-active at managing risks. Growing Forward programming in Nova Scotia not only reflects these three priority areas but also incorporates input received from farmers, producers and processors. With the renewed funding for programs under Growing Forward and the partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture is well-positioned to provide assistance for the tools the agriculture industry needs to improve their profitability and competitiveness.
- **Sound forestry practices** can be enhanced by making informed decisions based on best management practices knowledge. DNR supports all efforts towards sustainable stewardship of our natural resources, and provide opportunities to woodland owners to learn, share, and exchange various woodlot management techniques.

FACTS:

- Pictou County is home to over 2000 small businesses. This sector is the major source of new job creation in the local economy.
- **Innovacorp** helps high potential early stage companies commercialize their technologies and succeed in the global marketplace.
- **Succession planning** is a process for identifying and developing internal personnel with the potential to fill key or critical organizational positions. Succession planning ensures the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.
- **The World Wide Web: A Technology to Enhance Teaching and Learning?** Nothing before has captured the imagination and interest of educators simultaneously around the globe more than the World Wide Web.

Strengthen and expand small and medium sized business sector.

A healthy, dynamic small business sector contributes to the creative “buzz” necessary for growth. Any recognition to businesses is important, therefore this suggestion was accepted as a valuable way to highlight the business sectors in a creative way. This BUZZ can be accomplished through the following; hosting and implementing a **best venture contest**. A Dragon’s den format, open and inclusive to encourage lots of participants, offering interesting prizes such as; accounting services and support services to business. Partners from the province would add value and support to this initiative. Development of an application and criteria of contest would have to be formulated based on issues and concerns identified by the business retention program. The Chamber of Commerce is willing to lead this initiative with the Pictou Regional Development Commission, along with participation from other sectors and agencies. Innovacorp may also be involved to offer their thoughts.

Establishing a Small Business Succession Education Program. The program would involve an assessment of business worth, business sale/new entrepreneur identification for potential businesses website and mentor program. Partners may include CBDC, NOBL and Regional Development Agencies. It is a necessary step to ensure that existing businesses remain successful. There is an opportunity to mentor existing businesses, match people with ambitions to opportunities, provide consultation resources e.g. how to grow a business and provide ongoing support. Research must be conducted to find best practices throughout the province and how it has worked in other areas. This is an important issue for NS Economic and Rural Development so partnerships with the province is of equal importance.

Encourage small business to utilize web-based technology to maximum effectiveness. One of the challenges is the population it is aging and are not necessarily familiar with technology. Technology is readily available but it is not always attainable due to costs, therefore it must be affordable because small businesses are concerned with capital costs. It was recommended to host a video conference, which would showcase best practices utilizing web based technologies, the Pictou Regional Development Commission, Service Canada and the province can provide improved understanding and opportunities. Although some business owners have indicated they prefer the face to face interaction, they too realize that on line interaction is essential to the growth of most businesses.