STRATEGIC
SOCIAL PLAN
NEWFOUNDLAND and LABRADOR

Strategic Social Plan - Eastern Region

Town Hall Forums Report

Submitted By:

Baird Planning Associates

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Strategic Social Plan

 In 1998, *People, Partners and Prosperity: A Strategic Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* was published by the provincial government as the framework for the development of the Strategic Social Planning (SSP) Process in Newfoundland and Labrador. The main goal of this process is to promote the integration of social and economic development in order to support community growth and sustainability across the province.

In October of 2000, the SSP Eastern Region was established. The geography of the Eastern Region includes the Isthmus of the Avalon, the Bonavista Peninsula and the Burin Peninsula. The Regional Steering Committee, made up of government and community partners, oversees the SSP's activities in the Eastern Region. The Steering Committee employs a regional planner to guide the process on a day-to-day basis.

The mandate of the Eastern Region Steering Committee is as follows:
- Plan in a connected way, the social and economic development of the region by engaging all citizens in the decision making process
- Implement strategies and actions to address the priorities identified through the processes of community capacity building, coordinate service delivery, support of volunteer organizations, and focus on tackling root causes that require prevention and early intervention
- Bring a regional voice to Provincial and Federal decision making (policy development and program design)
- Utilize evidence-based evaluation to develop the strategies which support the priorities identified

In order to meet this mandate, early in 2001, the Steering Committee developed a workplan to guide its activities in the region. One of the program activities outlined in the workplan is the implementation of a series of Town Hall Forums to identify major local issues and proposed solutions.

1.2 The Town Hall Forums

The purpose of the Town Hall Forums was to aid the implementation of the Strategic Social Plan by continuing the process of increased cooperation and partnership with community groups. The rationale is that increased partnership will help to ensure that policy development and service delivery can become more responsive to local and regional needs. To this end, the Town Hall Forums were designed to solicit a response from community groups and individuals to:

1. Assist in understanding the challenges and opportunities in the region
2. Guide the identification of solutions
3. Identify gaps in service and information which are hindering individual and community development

4. Provide input into the solutions outlined in the Regional Workplan of the Steering Committee
5. Identify partnership opportunities
6. Encourage the development of positive public attitudes for communities

The SSP Town Hall Forums were conducted between September 24th and October 17th 2002. The twelve forums took place in the following communities:

o Arnold's Cove
o Chapel Arm
o Trinity
o Musgravetown
o Clarenville
o Marystown
o Lamaline
o Grand Bank
o Placentia West/Fortune Bay East
o Bonavista
o Little Heart's Ease
o King's Cove

The participants for each forum were invited from surrounding communities. Names were suggested by SSP Steering Committee members, as well as, members of their respective boards and government Departments. An attempt was made to invite local leaders who represented a cross-section of community interests and government departments. Members of the Steering Committee also attended each forum.

For the most part this consultation exercise involved community leaders. It is recognized that the input of many other stakeholders, particularly people directly affected by particular issues, would have been valuable as well. However, it is intended that consultation with affected groups will be a continual process, of which the Town Halls were merely a start.

With the guidance of the facilitators, the participants were encouraged to share their views on a wide range of issues that had been identified in consultation with the Steering Committee, or which they themselves felt were important. The analysis in this report addresses the major issues raised in the discussions, but by no means addresses all of the important issues facing communities.

The proceedings of each forum were recorded through written notes as well as tape recordings. Based on these records, the facilitators compiled a report that details the input received on major issues and proposed solutions that communities, government, and SSP partners can take action on.

Subsequent to the Town Halls, the consultants completed a thorough analysis of the identified issues and proposed solutions, which are outlined in the following sections.

1.3 The Report
The report is divided into four sections

Section 2 provides a description of key indicators for the twelve areas represented by each Town Hall, as well as, a brief synopsis of the major issues brought up at each Forum.

Section 3 provides a more in-depth analysis of the major social and economic issues raised in the Forums, as well as, solutions derived from the discussions as well as the subsequent analysis.

Section 4 is intended specifically for the SSP Eastern Region Steering Committee. It offers an assessment of how the goals of the work plan relate to what was heard at the Town Hall Forums, and answers key overall questions posed in the Terms of Reference.

2.0 SUMMARY OF AREA PROFILES AND ISSUES

This section presents a brief statistical description of each of the twelve geographical areas making up the Eastern Region, followed by a summary of the major issues raised at each Town Hall. This information is preceded by a statistical overview of key social and economic indicators comparing the Province and the Eastern Region.

2.1 Regional Perspective
The following table highlights key demographic and socio-economic indicators to compare the Eastern Region with the province.

Province and Eastern Region at a Glance		
Indicators	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	53 years	55 years
Population 15+ without high school diploma	53.4%	45.4%

The above indicators generally show that the Eastern Region has a similar demographic and overall socio-economic make-up as the province. Significant differences appear to exist in Employment Insurance (EI) incidence and education levels. However, upon deeper examination, a number of key differences emerge.

Women in the region have a higher income disparity than men from the province as a whole. Female average incomes are approximately 84% of provincial levels, compared to 91% for men. Income disparities within the region are more significant, with a 29.6% difference in average personal incomes between the lowest ($15,180) and highest-income ($21,564) areas. Among women, regional income disparities are even greater with a 40.1% spread between the lowest ($8,816) and highest ($14,730) average incomes.

The Eastern Region has higher per capita transfer payments than the province. It has double the proportion of people employed in the processing and manufacturing sector, due primarily to the prominence of fish plant operations.

The regional perspective illustrates the basic situation facing communities in the Eastern Region. Populations are declining and aging at a rapid rate. There is a high dependence on Employment Insurance payments. There are significant income disparities between communities and between men and women. Significant numbers of people have less than a full high school education. Many of these concerns framed the issues discussed at the individual Town Hall Forums.

2.2 The Town Hall Forums

2.2.1 Arnold's Cove and Area (September 24, 2002)
(*Including but not limited to the communities of Arnold's Cove, Come By Chance, Sunnyside, Swift Current, Garden Cove, and Southern Harbour*)

Area Compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	3,910	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	16.0%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	24.5%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	+3.6%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	8%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	56%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$15, 279	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	48	53 years	55 years
Population 15+ without high school diploma	53.7%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	9		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

The Arnold's Cove area is somewhat of an anomaly in the Eastern Region. In contrast to most areas, it has experienced some positive population growth. As well, the local economy, powered by such big employers as the National Sea fishplant, Come by Chance Oil Refinery, Whiffen Head Transshipment Facility, and the Bull Arm Fabrication Site, has managed to stay reasonably robust throughout the downturn in the fishing industry.

Major Issues at the Forum
- The area is fortunate to have a higher than average number of young families to contribute to their communities.
- There are not enough facilities available for early childhood education.
- Recreation facilities for youth are concentrated in Arnold's Cove, making access more difficult for residents in other communities. Come by Chance has an organized youth recreation program open to people from other communities.
- Recreation programs are suffering due to volunteer burnout.
- Water and sewer costs are major expenses for communities. They have difficulty finding funds because banks will not loan to small communities. Unincorporated communities have further problems, as they often don't qualify for provincial aid for infrastructure projects.
- Arnold's Cove has well-established services and infrastructure for seniors (senior's housing, a senior's club, and various recreation programs), but demand is increasing quickly.
- The suggestion was made that if the communities in the area were willing to pool more of their resources, they could increase the amount and quality of services and

reduce costs. The example put forward was regional cooperation among volunteer fire departments.

2.2.2 Chapel Arm/Norman's Cove Area (September 25, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Norman's Cove, Long Cove, Chapel Arm, Fair Haven, Chance Cove, and Bellevue)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	2,025	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	17.0%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	28.5%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-4.4%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	13.1%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	51.3%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$12,308	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	55	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	53.7%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	11		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

Statistically, the Isthmus area shares certain characteristics with the Eastern Region, but also differs in a few key areas. Its population is declining, but at a slower rate than both the region and the province. It has a slightly higher proportion of young people than the region, and a slightly lower incidence of social assistance. The area has had problems with its water supply. Between 1996 and 1999 Bellevue had three boil orders, and higher than acceptable arsenic levels were recently discovered in wells in Norman's Cove.

Major Issues at the Forum
- The volunteer population is aging, and there are few youth stepping up to replace them.

- Concerns were raised about negative local attitudes towards businesses, economic development initiatives, and volunteerism.
- The area does not feel a connection to Clarenville, even though many services are based out of there.
- The area feels particularly ignored by the Discovery Regional Economic Development Board. Questions were raised concerning the appropriateness of the area being located within Zone 15 boundaries.
- Several local municipalities have debt problems, and have been forced to cut back some services.
- The closure of schools has reduced the attractiveness of the area for young families.
- The area has been without a doctor for some time, but was recently successful in recruiting a new one who is expected shortly.

2.2.3 Trinity Bight Area (October 1, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Trinity, Trinity East, Port Rexton, Dunfield, Old Bonaventure, New Bonaventure, Champney's, and English Harbour)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	Area	Region	Province
Population (1998)	1,540	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	25.7%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	19.9%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-15.9%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	13.9%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	65.2%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$12,011	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	60	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	61.1%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	6		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

The Trinity Bight area, like many parts of the Eastern Region, took a big economic hit from the downturn of the fishery in the early 1990's. The indicators reflect an area that is struggling with a declining and significantly aging population. Its proportion of residents over 59 years of age is almost sixty percent higher than the region. This may, however, distort the actual situation somewhat. The area has a bustling summer tourist trade and a significant population of summer residents, who are not captured by Statistics Canada data.

Average personal incomes in Trinity Bight are 87% of regional levels. Social assistance incidence is lower than the region, but EI incidence is higher. As reflected by median hospital morbidity, area residents seem to be somewhat healthier on average than regional and provincial residents. There have been significant water supply and quality problems. Boil orders have been issued on a number of wells in the last three years.

Major Issues at the Forum.

- Youth organizations in the area are struggling - there are fewer youth enrolling and it is difficult to recruit adult leaders.
- The costs to maintain the fire department are very high (equipment and certification) and funds are difficult to raise.
- Declining congregations are making it difficult to keep churches open. Residents are very reluctant to support church consolidation, because they regard their churches as the last bastion representing distinct community identities.
- Excessive red tape is hindering church raffles and other fundraising activities by church organizations and other volunteer groups.
- Municipal taxation regimes as legislated by the provincial government are unfair and an impediment to business development.
- Water supply is a major problem in some communities. Dunfield has 18 homes there without running water. In dry years, many wells in Trinity go dry.
- The local Development Association provides a valuable function in the area, but is having trouble staying on its feet financially.
- There are a number of widows with low incomes in the area, who are having major problems maintaining their properties and meeting household costs.

2.2.4 Musgravetown Area (October 2, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Charlottetown, Port Blandford, Bunyan's Cove, Musgravetown, Canning's Cove, Bloomfield, Lethbridge, Portland, Brooklyn, Jamestown, and Winter Brook)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	4,245	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	19.4%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	26.6%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-9.4%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	15.6%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	59.9%	50.7%	38.1%

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$12,425	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	61	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	57.3%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	9		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

The Musgravetown area consists of approximately eleven communities from Charlottetown to Winter Brook. While the communities in the area are facing several of the issues typical of the region as a whole, such as depopulation and low incomes, the area has some notable strengths. There are strong forestry and agricultural operations in the area that are helping to maintain the economy. Musgravetown functions as a mini-service centre for the surrounding communities, which has resulted in a more diversified economy in that community. The area's proximity to Clarenville means that it has an even greater number of services available within a short drive.

The proportion of seniors in the area is 20% higher than the region, but it also has a slightly higher proportion of young people. Population decline is on par with the region. Average personal incomes are 90% of the regional average. Dependence on social assistance is identical to the region, and EI incidence is about 18% higher.

Major Issues at the Forum
- The future of the Family Resource Centre in Musgravetown is in question because of financial difficulties being experienced by its landlord, the local development association.
- The Development Association, which also houses a CAP site and provides other services to the area, has been having trouble staying on its feet since losing its financial support from government in 1996.
- Seniors in the area, particularly widows and widowers, have difficulty maintaining their independence because of financial concerns. When one partner dies, the household income is cut in half, with only a small decrease in expenses.
- Creating opportunities for young people so they can stay in the area is a major priority.
- Municipal councils in the area often employ summer students with HRDC funding to do odd jobs around the community. This is a valuable program coordinated by the Development Association, which participants want to see continue.
- The number of volunteers in the area is decreasing due to liability issues and a lack of government support and incentives.
- Several participants felt that community services could be improved and delivered more efficiently through municipal cooperation and resource sharing.
- The forestry industry in the area is not putting enough effort into silviculture. Current forest management policies are making it difficult for smaller forestry operations to make a living.
- The cancellation of the co-op program at the high school was lamented, and there were calls for its reinstatement.

2.2.5 Clarenville/Random Sound (October 3, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Clarenville, Shoal Harbour, Burgoyne's Cove, Waterville, Hickman's Harbour, and Lower Lance Cove)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	7,850	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	15.3%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	26.9%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	+9.8%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	13.1%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	35.4%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$15, 601	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	55	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	42.7%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	12		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	2		

Clarenville/Random Sound is one of the larger and more prosperous areas in the Eastern Region. It had significant population growth in the 1990's, growing by 9.8% between 1993 and 1998, compared to a negative growth of 9.1% for the region as a whole. The age structure of the population is on par with the region. The area has a lower incidence of social assistance than the region and a significantly lower incidence of EI. The area's education levels are higher on average than the region. Clarenville's strategic location is its major advantage, contributing to its growth as a regional service centre.

However, these indicators mask a certain amount of disparity between communities in the Clarenville-Random Sound area. As we heard at the Clarenville Forum, economic and social conditions are less positive in some of the communities immediately outlying Clarenville.

Major issues at the Forum
- The vulnerability of seniors to exploitation was raised as a concern.
- There is inadequate infrastructure for seniors socialization and recreation needs.
- Less rigorous streams in the high school curriculum, particularly basic mathematics, are not providing students with essential skills to enter post-secondary education or to become employed.
- Concern was expressed that some students are being pushed through the school system too quickly. It was suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on remedial studies rather than directing students into lower streams.
- Schools should be doing more outreach to communicate with parents.
- Level 1 Adult Basic Education (ABE) is not available in the community. This is a barrier for people at this level who want to re-enter the education system.
- The prosperity found in Clarenville is not trickling down to outlying communities.

- Many children from outlying communities who are bussed into Clarenville remain socially isolated in the school system.
- There is major need for life skills education for at-risk people in the Clarenville area.

2.2.6 Marystown-Burin Area (October 7, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Marystown, Burin, Creston, Epworth, Lewin's Cove, and Winterland)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	10,770	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	11.4%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	29.3%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-0.1%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	16.0%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	41.7%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$15,048	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	51	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	46.5%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	23		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

The Marystown-Burin area is the most populous area in the Eastern Region. It functions as the primary service centre for the entire Burin Peninsula. Its statistical profile is indicative of a stable community, with little population change and higher than average incomes. The low hospital morbidity median age may indicate the presence of health issues in the community, as it indicates a lower average age of hospital treatment than many other areas in the region.

Major Issues at the Forum
- There is a need for a youth centre and more services and programs aimed at youth.

- Participants would like to see the return of co-op education programs in the schools and job opportunities that will encourage youth to stay in the area.
- Level I Adult Basic Education (ABE) is not available in the community. This is a barrier for people at this level who want to re-enter the education system.
- Need more infrastructure for seniors care, including housing, personal care homes, and home care services.
- Some healthcare services are only available by driving off the Peninsula to Clarenville or St. John's.
- Volunteerism is dropping off; need a way of motivating more people to come out.

2.2.7 Lamaline/St. Lawrence (October 8, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of St. Lawrence, Little St. Lawrence, Lamaline, and Lawn)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	Area	Region	Province
Population (1998)	3,820	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	12.9%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	32.2%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-12.1%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	21.3%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	57.0%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$11,597	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	50	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	52.5%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	19		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

Despite a higher population decline then that of the regional average, this area has a considerably younger population than the region as a whole. The proportion of residents over 59 is 20% lower than the region as a whole, while the proportion of youth under 20 is 26% higher. Incidence of social assistance and EI are both higher than the regional average. Average personal incomes are 84% of the regional average.

Major Issues at the Forum
- The youth centre in St. Lawrence is under-utilized. One of the major problems is the shortage of parent volunteers. Liability issues, difficulty of dealing with adolescents, and fear of making long-term commitments were cited as reasons for the difficulty of recruiting volunteers.
- The lack of family networks in the area, along with the absence of a seniors club, has resulted in many seniors becoming isolated from the community.
- Healthcare services are difficult to access, and there is little consistency in care, particularly with regard to doctors.

- The Development Association has found it difficult to continue to operate without core funding for consistent staffing. Community development activities traditionally facilitated by the Development Association are suffering as a result.
- The fishery is still the backbone of the economy in the area, but most workers are aging and not being replaced. One fisherman said he would not encourage his son to follow in his footsteps due to uncertainty of the industry.

2.2.8 Grand Bank/Fortune Area (October 9, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Fortune, Grand Bank, Garnish and Frenchman's Cove)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	5,825	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	17.3%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	24.3%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-12.4%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	15.3%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	53.8%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$13,976	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	58	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	54.8%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	14		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	4		

The Grand Bank/Fortune Area is the second most populous area on the Burin Peninsula. Its fishery-based economy suffered a major downturn over the course of the 1990s. Despite the continued operation of fishplants in Grand Bank and Fortune, employment levels remain significantly lower than during the heyday of the trawler fishery. The key population and socio-economic indicators for the area reflect a similar situation to the region as whole. The rate of population decline in the 1990's was about one-third higher than the region as a whole.

Major Issues at the Forum
- The state of the economy was the number one concern. The downturn in the fishery has had large effect on the entire area, and attempts to diversify have had limited success.
- The economic problems have resulted in large out-migration of younger people.
- Recruiting and retaining health professionals (particularly doctors) to the area has been very difficult.
- Volunteerism, historically strong in the area, is taking a downturn as volunteers age and are not replaced.
- The youth centre in Fortune is very successful, but the one in Grand Bank has had difficulties.

2.2.9 Fortune Bay East/Placentia West (October 10, 2002)

(Including but not limited to the communities of Bay L'Argent, English Harbour East, Grand Le Pierre, Harbour Mille, Little Bay East, St. Bernard's-Jacques Fontaine, Terrenceville, Baine Harbour, Boat Harbour, Red Harbour, and Rushoon)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	4,030	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	13.6%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	29.3%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-11.6%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	20%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	66.5%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$12, 563	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	57	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	68.9%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	26		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

This area is made up of a large number of smaller communities located on the west side of Placentia Bay and east side of Fortune Bay. The inshore fishery remains the mainstay of this area, but does not provide economic benefits comparable to before the groundfish moratorium. A significant number of residents commute to jobs in Marystown. Most shopping also takes place in Marystown.

The area has a somewhat younger than average population for the region. The proportion of residents over 59 years is 16% lower than the region average, while the proportion under 20 years is 14% higher than the average. Incidence of social assistance and EI are both higher than the region.

Major Issues at the Forum

- Volunteerism drives a lot of initiatives in the area, but volunteers need more incentives and fewer bureaucratic barriers from government.

- Amalgamating and combining service delivery for the whole area could work. Community councils would remain in existence, but a central staff could be responsible for administration, municipal services, and infrastructure maintenance.
- Recruiting and retaining health professionals (particularly doctors) to the area has been very difficult.
- Need to encourage entrepreneurism in the area, and get away from the 'working for the big guy' mentality.

2.2.10 Bonavista and Area (October 16, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Bonavista, Port Union, Catalina, Little Catalina, Elliston, Newman's Cove and Melrose)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	7,795	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	18.7%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	26.1%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-6.3%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	20.0%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	52.1%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$12,287	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	62	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	58.1%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	16		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	3		

The Bonavista area remains one of the more populous areas in the Eastern Region, despite dramatic declines in the populations of several communities in the area. Whereas Bonavista and Catalina experienced only small declines in the 1993-98 period, Port Union, Elliston and Melrose each experienced losses of over 20%. The decline of the fishery dramatically affected the area's economy, although the community of Bonavista functions as a service centre for the surrounding communities and has a more diverse employment profile.

Incidence of social assistance is almost 30% higher than the region, while EI incidence is closely on par with the region. Average personal incomes are about 10% lower than regional levels.

Major Issues at the Forum
- Some of the smaller outlying communities have no easy public access to the Internet or computers. The CAP sites at the school and library in Bonavista are available only during certain hours.
- Costs associated with their children's schooling are prohibitively high for some families.
- Too few students are being held back for remedial studies when they are not performing well. As a result they get passed through the system to the point that

they cannot ever catch up. Parents must intervene directly to have their children repeat a year. Schools should make stronger efforts to communicate with parents to make them aware of the consequences of the educational path being taken by their children.

- Many of the courses offered at the CNA campus do not seem to be relevant to finding work in the local economy.
- Recruiting and retaining health professionals (particularly doctors, but also nurses and therapists) to the area has been very difficult. More financial resources should be directed to supporting local residents for studies in medical professions. In return they would have to agree to work in the area for a minimum number of years.
- Need to encourage entrepreneurism in the area, and get away from the 'working for the big guy' mentality.
- There was a general call for more government investment in the area.

2.2.11 Southwest Arm (October 28, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of Little Heart's Ease, Gooseberry Cove, Hillview, and Northwest Brook)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	Area	Region	Province
Population (1998)	2,585	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	20.1%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	22.1%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-13.4%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	12.1%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	53.4%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$14,220	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	62	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	67.6%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	1		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	2		

The communities of Southwest Arm are generally small and unincorporated, with populations of less than 500 people. Out-migration from the area has been higher than the regional average. Population shrinkage in the 1993-98 period, at 13.4%, was almost fifty percent higher than the region. The proportion of youth in the area is lower than the regional average, and the proportion of seniors is higher. The area's single largest employer is the fishery. A significant number of residents commute to jobs in Clarenville, Come by Chance, and Arnold's Cove.

The incidence of social assistance is lower than the region, while EI incidence is slightly higher. Average personal incomes are slightly above average for the region.

Major Issues at the Forum
- Declining school enrollment is a major concern. If the local high school closes it will be very difficult to convince young families to settle in the area.

- Tourism infrastructure is a major need. Many tourists come into the area but there are no restaurants or accommodations to capture spending by them.

2.2.12 Bonavista South (October 29, 2002)
(Including but not limited to the communities of King's Cove, Plate Cove East, Plate Cove West, Summerville, Sweet Bay, Charleston and Knight's Cove)

Area at a Glance compared to Region and Province			
Indicators	**Area**	**Region**	**Province**
Population (1998)	1,145	57, 525	531, 295
Proportion of pop'n over 59 years of age	19.0%	16.2%	15.6%
Proportion of pop'n under 20 years of age	26.3%	25.6%	26.6%
Population change 1993-1998	-19.6%	-9.1%	-6.5%
Social assistance incidence (1998)	13.0%	15.6%	16.3%
Employment Insurance incidence (1998)	57.4%	50.7%	38.1%
Per capita personal annual income (1998)	$11,873	$13, 806	$15, 266
Hospital morbidity median age	61	53	55
Population 15+ without high school diploma	65.9%	53.4%	45.4%
Community stakeholders at forum	4		
SSP Committee and staff at forum	2		

The Bonavista South area consists of a number of small communities, none larger than 250 people. Traditionally dependent on the fishery, this area experienced significant population shrinkage in the 1990's, over double the regional average. The age structure of the population is similar to the region. Incidence of social assistance is lower than the region, and EI incidence is higher. Average personal incomes are about 14% lower than the region as a whole.

Major issues at the Forum
- The declining number of younger people has meant that the pool of volunteers is steadily shrinking. One area fire department has not been able to find any young people willing to join, and insurance premiums for the older members are very high.
- Some communities have homes with poorly installed septic tanks. There is a concern regarding the smell and the effect of the pollution on water supplies.
- Volunteer groups have put a lot of effort into developing tourist infrastructure such as walking trails and look-off platforms, but there is a need for entrepreneurs to set up operations to capture visitor spending.
- The work of volunteer groups is often stymied by bureaucratic red tape. For example, it cost $600 in fees and a considerable amount of time just to establish legal title and a permit to build a small observation platform.
- Many people and companies come into the area from other parts of the peninsula to cut wood, but there are no reforestation programs in place. Much of the forest has been denuded.
- The area's Development Association is finding it difficult to operate without funding for core staff.

- The Development Association had created a Seniors Resource Centre staffed with the aid of government funding. It was working to set up a network of volunteers to help seniors with home maintenance and companionship. However, the funding was cut and the initiative was discontinued. The need for such a service remains.

3.0   ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

This section provides analysis of the major issues discussed at the Town Hall Forums and proposes solutions and recommendations wherever applicable. The major issues identified at the Town Halls have been included under the following topic headings:

- Youth
- Seniors
- Employment and Income
- Lifelong Learning
- Health and Healthy Living
- Community Services and Infrastructure
- Volunteerism

As most issues affecting community well-being are interwoven, the analysis, by necessity, includes considerable overlap between these topics. While particular issues may be relevant to more than one heading, the report has attempted to consolidate the analysis such that individual issues are discussed under the heading that seems most applicable. For example, the issue of youth volunteerism is included in the Volunteerism section, but it could just as easily have been included in the Youth section.

3.1   Youth
Along with the overall population decline in the Eastern Region, its demographic make-up is changing rapidly. Whereas the age group less than 25 years old made up 40.8% of the population in 1991, this fell to 30.3% in 2001 and is projected to drop to 23.2% by 2011. In absolute figures, whereas the 0-24 age group comprised 26,266 people in 1991, it is projected to fall to about 11,000 people by 2011. This will be most pronounced in smaller, more remote communities of the region.

This dramatic decline in the youth population has many implications for communities, and for young people themselves. Although youth issues cannot easily be compartmentalized, for purposes of this discussion, this paper has broken them down as follows:

A.   Jobs, Out-migration, and Career Development
B.   Early Childhood Intervention
C.   Primary and Secondary Education
D.   Recreational Needs and Programming
E.   Level 1 Adult Basic Education
F.   Post-Secondary Education

Discussion of a related issue, youth volunteerism, is dealt with in Section 3.7.

A.   Jobs, Out-Migration, and Career Development
Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 dominate the out-migration statistics for the Eastern Region. In the period 1991 to 1996, net out-migration was approximately 30% in

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the 15-19 age group and 17% in the 20-24 age group. In comparison, out-migration by residents over 24 years was less than one percent.

High out-migration among younger age groups is normal. As young people finish secondary school, a high proportion move away to pursue post-secondary education or employment. What is less normal is that very few of these people seem to be returning after achieving their educational goals or getting work experience. The 1991-96 figures show continued net out-migration by residents between 25 and 49, albeit at much lower rates. Historically, these age groups experienced some migration back to the region, as former residents took advantage of their education and experience to get a foothold in the local job market.

Ironically this high youth out-migration is taking place at the same time the region is experiencing growing job vacancies in certain occupations. These include medical professions (from doctors to technicians), social workers, teachers, and some of the skilled trades. Several Town Halls noted a concern over shortages of people with needed entrepreneurial skills to develop economic opportunities.

The high out-migration of youth in the face of these occupational shortages points to a clear opportunity to encourage young people who want to stay in the region to train for existing and future job vacancies. In addition to the occupational needs noted above, other sectors such as the fishery are expected to experience increasing vacancies in a decade or so due to workforce aging and retirement.

Various initiatives could be undertaken to encourage and assist young people to pursue careers that will help them stay in the region. These initiatives should target youth at all levels of the educational system – beginning in the earlier grades, intensifying in high school, and continuing at post-secondary levels.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
1. Develop a long-term initiative aimed at matching local youth with existing and future employment opportunities in the region. This should include labour market research to assess long-term occupational demand, awareness building of career opportunities, career development programs and counseling, and post-secondary curriculum development aimed at meeting labour market needs.

2. Develop and strengthen school programs aimed at developing entrepreneurship and business skills. This should include course curriculum, job shadowing, work co-op programs, and similar initiatives.

B. Early Childhood Intervention
Several Town Halls identified early childhood education as an important need that is suffering from limited resources. Such intervention contributes to improved literacy and social skills necessary to help children cope when they enter the school environment. Its objective is to facilitate a more level footing between children in their readiness to begin grade school.

Some areas of the region have sizable waiting lists for existing pre-school programs. Other areas, particularly small communities, have no pre-school services at all. The affordability of pre-school programming for low-income families was also flagged as a problem. We heard of instances where parents cannot afford to pay directly for such programming, and are unaware of funding designed to help them access such services.

Essentially the children most in need of this service - those of low-income families and in outlying communities – are, to a large extent, those who are mostly falling through the cracks with existing programming. With regard to low-income families, it seems the problem lies mostly with families characterized as the working poor. Whereas families receiving social assistance normally have access to social workers who can facilitate appropriate intervention and subsidies, low-income working families are often not aware that subsidies are available. Therefore their children miss out.

In the case of small communities, early intervention programming is simply not offered because of the low demand. Transportation of these young children to larger centres is usually a major barrier due to the distance involved, high cost, etc. Several Town Hall participants felt that these children are the most at risk due to the lack of programming because their isolation puts them at a disadvantage in terms of social skills when they enter the school system.

Children in this situation are more likely to develop self-esteem problems and learning difficulties as they progress through the school system. Participants suggested that, while early childhood programming is beneficial for all children, special efforts are needed to ensure it is accessible to the most disadvantaged children. Overall, they feel that early childhood programming is seriously under funded, resulting in waiting lists, low wages for the educators, and inadequate accessibility to the children most in need.

Another example of underfunding came to light in Musgravetown. The area has a successful Family Resource Centre, which provides programming for pre-school children and their parents. The FRC operates rent-free in the local Rural Development Association's building. Recently, because of the funding crunch faced by the Development Association, the FRC was given notice that it would have to vacate the premises unless funds were provided to help cover the building's overhead costs.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
3.   Increase funding for early childhood programming.

4.   Make special efforts to ensure all low-income families (those receiving and not receiving social assistance) are aware of available subsidies to help pay for pre-school programs.

5.   Develop initiatives to help overcome the physical and social isolation of pre-school and early school-age children from small communities.

C.   Primary and Secondary Education

Discussions about educational programming in the regular school system consistently focused on several core issues. While most of these issues are interrelated, the following discussion attempts to deal with them individually.

An alarming proportion of students are leaving school without essential skills to move into the workforce or post-secondary education. These include not only dropouts, but also a portion of Grade 12 graduates. Without a good high school education, these young people face a massive barrier to building productive and self-reliant lives. We heard that while the overall social assistance caseload is decreasing, the caseload of people under 30 years of age is increasing. Approximately three-quarters of young people in the Eastern Region on social assistance have less than Level 1 literacy capability. Yet many of these are high school graduates.

We heard at several Town Halls that the school system is failing to address the special needs of youth disadvantaged because of their family's socio-economic status or because they are from small communities without adequate social networks of children of similar age. Academic and social problems are generally higher among these children. Children from poorer families and outlying communities tend to under-perform the average. Some of the reasons we heard for this include:

- Course standards in less academic streams, especially mathematics, are inadequate to prepare students for future employment and skills training.
- Students are pushed through the system without adequate remedial work.
- Remedial work focuses on repeating individual courses as opposed to entire school years. While repeating an entire year may sometimes be in the best interest of the child, parents must take the initiative in order to make this happen. We repeatedly heard the opinion that this has been a backward step.
- There seem to be major breakdowns in parent-teacher communications involving children from low-income families and smaller communities. These parents need to be more aware of the consequences of the paths that their children are taking, but often lack the confidence themselves to meet with teachers.
- Teachers often take the road of least resistance, often giving up on more disadvantaged students and focusing on the successful ones.
- Smaller schools have more limited curriculums and fewer extra-curricular activities.
- Former successful programs such as job shadowing and the workplace co-op program have been discontinued.
- Transportation (i.e. extra buses) for extra-curricular activities is prohibitively expensive and logistically difficult.
- There is a lack of parent volunteers to help make up for funding cutbacks in the school system, especially in smaller communities.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

6.   Revise current approaches that result in students graduating from high school without essential skills to gain employment or move on to post-secondary

education. This should include a review of curriculum standards and higher efforts and resources targeted to remedial activity.

7. Implement focused outreach efforts to communicate with parents of under-performing children. This should focus on increasing parents' awareness of their children's educational status and needs and facilitating their ability to make rational decisions in the best interests of their children. It should also focus on breaking negative attitudes toward schools and parents' lack of confidence in dealing with teachers.

8. Institute special initiatives to help pre-school and students from small communities overcome the barriers of distance and social isolation. One example has been the innovative approach taken by Balbo Elementary in Shoal Harbour, which subsidizes a small number of families from outlying communities to take their children to movies in Clarenville. This experience enriches the family dynamic, helps their children share a common experience and build stronger social networks with other children.

9. Increase resources aimed at involving socially and physically isolated children in extra-curricular activities inside and outside the school system. This should include recruitment campaigns and capacity building aimed at increasing the number of parent volunteers contributing to activities and organizations involving their children.

10. Put a greater emphasis on students' individual interests and skills. Improve career-counseling programs and reinstate former successful initiatives such as the workplace co-op program and job-shadowing program.

D. Recreational Needs and Programming

The Town Halls generated much discussion about the recreational needs of youth, the types of programming and facilities required, the effectiveness of existing programs and facilities, and issues affecting recruitment of adult volunteers to work with youth.

A consistent message was that youth are under social and economic pressures like never before, especially those from single-parent families, low-income families, two-working-parent families, and small communities. These situations are increasingly the norm compared to a generation ago. In this social environment, we heard that problems associated with youth alienation, low self-esteem, and delinquency are increasing problems.

We heard that traditional non-curricular approaches to address these problems, namely recreational programs and youth development organizations, no longer seem to be working as well as they once did. While some Town Halls argued for more sports and youth centre facilities, in other areas with good recreational infrastructure, we heard that utilization levels are sometimes very low. One of the reasons given for this is that, with the declining youth population, there are insufficient numbers to support successful

programs. In the words of one participant*, "When I was young, we could get a game going just by calling around the neighbourhood. Nowadays, there are whole communities without enough kids to make up a game."*

School facilities are a traditional resource for recreational activities, but with closures and consolidation of schools in the region, a high proportion of students face long travel distances to participate in activities outside normal school hours. The school system cannot afford extra busing and many families cannot afford extra travel costs, thus limiting their children's options for activities outside of school hours.

A number of people suggested that recreational programming focuses too heavily on sports. As a result kids who are not into sports get excluded from the crowd, beginning usually at an early age. It was argued that more emphasis should be placed on arts programs and social events. We also heard that program development often results from the subjective perspectives of adults regarding the needs of children. It was argued that more effort should go into objective determinations of children's interests and preferences.

A universal issue seems to be the difficulty of recruiting adult volunteers for youth programs. Responsibility for running recreation facilities, youth centres, and leadership groups such as Guides, Scouts, CLB, and Cadets seems to be falling to a dwindling number of adults among whom burnout rates are high. Programs are collapsing as a result. We heard a variety of reasons for this, including the following:
- Adults increasingly have less free time, and fear getting tied up with long-term commitments.
- Adults fear having to deal with youth misbehaviour and delinquency
- Adults fear being accused of abuse.
- Adults are turned off by the requirement of some organizations for background security checks by the police before they can volunteer with the organization.
- There is a growing concern about liability issues for adult volunteers.

Solutions/Recommendations
12. Planning and development of youth programs should place higher emphasis on consulting directly with youth themselves to determine their needs, interests, and preferences.

13. As suggested at one Town Hall, consideration should be given to the hiring of regional recreational planner/coordinators. They would provide professional support not presently available to communities and organizations for program planning and development.

14. With the declining youth population, consolidation of facilities and programs is becoming increasingly necessary to ensure a sufficient critical mass of young people for successful programs. This solution, however, brings with it additional problems and costs associated with the distance youth have to travel to participate. In cooperation with School Districts, municipalities, and youth organizations, a

long-term strategy should be devised to address appropriate and affordable methods of consolidation, infrastructure utilization, transportation, and program delivery.

15. Develop appropriate responses to the issues that discourage parents and other adults from volunteering with recreational programs and youth organizations. These might include:
    - Strategies aimed at volunteer work sharing to overcome the understandable fears of parents regarding excessive demands on their time.
    - Training of adult volunteers on dealing with youth behavioral problems.
    - Awareness building to help overcome negative attitudes and fears related to the issues of abuse, the need for background security checks, and volunteer liability. Development of concrete measures to overcome these as deterrents to volunteer recruitment.

E.   Level 1 Adult Basic Education
An alarming proportion of youth between the ages of 18 and 30 in the Eastern Region has literacy levels below Level I (or Grade 9 level). We heard that 70 percent of people under 30 who are on social assistance have less than a Level I education. Yet these people are falling through the cracks of adult education programming in the province. We were told that Level I ABE programming is a provincial responsibility, but that funding is a problem. We also heard that several new Level I ABE sites would soon be piloted at different locations in the province.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
16. Given the high social and economic costs of growing social assistance caseloads of young adults, it is imperative to focus more attention and resources on helping these people become productive and self-reliant members of the community. The SSP Committee should work closely with the responsible agencies to develop and implement programs aimed at this objective.

17. Adequate Level I ABE programming should be made available to accommodate the needs in the Eastern Region.

18. Along with ABE programming, employment development programs such as Bridging the Gap should be instituted more widely to provide workplace skills to unemployed and under-employed young adults.

F.   Post-Secondary Education Issues
Two major issues were raised at the Town Halls regarding post-secondary education. The first relates to what was described as an inadequate match between available training programs and the province's job market. The second relates to high student debt burdens and the resulting impact on the ability of graduates to work in this province after they graduate.

We heard a criticism that the province's post-secondary institutions are not adequately meeting demands for certain labour skills, particularly in the medical and social work

fields, a number of skilled trades, and increasingly in teaching. In the face of these occupational shortages, the province continues to face an exodus of many of our brightest young people. At the same time we are expending resources to recruit skilled workers from outside the province. To address this, we heard that CNA and MUN should be doing more to increase the available training seats for high demand occupations.

The issue of student debt came up mainly in the context of its impact on the braindrain of young people. High debt burdens are forcing graduates to go to where the best money is – and most never come back. Suggestions to address this issue included lower tuition fees, training subsidies for occupations in short supply, making loans interest free, more co-op programs, and higher paying student employment programs.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
These issues have an obvious impact on local communities, but they are problems that are much larger than the Eastern Region alone. Indeed these issues are not limited to Newfoundland and Labrador – they are widespread across the country. Based on the input for the Town Halls, the following solutions are proposed:

19. Advocate that local post-secondary institutions increase training seats for high-demand occupations.

20. Work with appropriate provincial and federal agencies to identify solutions to crippling student debt loads, which are reducing the ability of young people to take employment in this province.

3.2 Seniors
Issues affecting the well-being of senior citizens were raised in virtually all of the Town Halls. Seniors comprise a rapidly increasing proportion of the population of the Eastern Region. Between 1993 and 1998, the overall population of the region shrank by approximately 9%, while at the same time, the 60-plus population grew by 2%. By 2016, the seniors population is predicted to make up 28% of the region's population, compared to 16% presently.

With this rapid aging of the population, issues affecting the well-being of seniors will become increasingly critical. This paper has identified the following issue areas arising out of the Town Hall Forums:

A. Income and cost of living
B   Household upkeep and maintenance
C. Social isolation
D. Housing and care facilities
E. Recreation needs and programming

A.   Income and Cost of Living Issues
Most seniors live on fixed incomes. In the Eastern Region, per capita transfer payments are approximately $4,000 per year. Of these, old age security payments and Canada

Pension payments amount to approximately $1,600 per capita. With seniors making up about one-sixth of the population, this translates into average per-senior pension incomes in the vicinity of $10,000 per year.

We heard that current pension levels are generally sufficient for fixed-income seniors who live as couples, are relatively healthy and independent, and have reasonable housing costs. However, fixed incomes provide little flexibility to deal with unexpected costs or negative changes in health and physical ability. The problem is especially serious for seniors who become widowed and, as a result, see drastic reductions in household income. This is especially the case for women whose Canada Pension benefits are low or non-existent because of years spent doing unpaid work raising children and often caring for elderly family members. We heard repeatedly of cases of seniors, particularly women, who have great difficulty paying for basic costs such as food and home heating.

Income issues are linked to several other seniors' issues, including home maintenance, isolation, and vulnerability.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

21. Increased pension benefits targeted to needy individuals is the most obvious solution to the problem of seniors poverty. However, pension issues are national in scope and cannot be resolved on a local basis. Nevertheless, the SSP Committee can contribute to the resolution of this problem through awareness building and participation in provincial and national policy forums on this issue.

22. Pension reform is necessary to alleviate the impact of lost household income on surviving spouses when partners die.

23. Pension reform should recognize the value to society and the economy of unpaid work (especially by women) in child rearing and caring for elderly family members. This unpaid work should be recognized in the calculation of every individual's Canada Pension benefit.

24. Regional and community solutions to low senior incomes should focus on means to alleviate cost of living factors. There are large bodies of research related to this subject, particularly seniors housing. Given the rapid aging of the seniors population in the Eastern Region, a priority of the SSP Committee should facilitate targeted research to identify solutions to present and anticipated housing and other needs of seniors.

B.   Household Upkeep and Maintenance

The ability of senior citizens to upkeep their houses and properties and carry out other day-to-day tasks necessary to continue living independently generally declines as they get older. This subject was addressed in the Town Halls in the context of how the community can help seniors stay in their homes as long as possible.

As families become separated due to out-migration, traditional family support for aging parents has been declining. Fewer and fewer seniors can expect to rely on their immediate families to help them out with the normal demands of living in their own homes. As they become less self-reliant, property upkeep becomes an increasing burden on their ability to remain in their homes. This problem is compounded further if they develop health problems.

We heard at some Town Halls that informal community support networks are helping to fill the void created by loss of day-to-day family support for seniors. This normally comes in the form of household assistance from neighbours and friends. This informal support is an important factor in facilitating the ability of aging residents to remain in their homes. But there are many other seniors who fall through the cracks of this type of informal support. Many live in growing isolation from the community and are having increasing difficulty to make ends meet. Housing alternatives for these people are generally limited, less desirable and much more costly.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
There is tremendous value in the work done by informal volunteers to help elderly friends and neighbours remain in their own homes. However, total reliance on such informal support networks leaves a lot of potential for some elderly people to fall through the cracks. Several Town Halls suggested that more organized approaches are needed to ensure that all seniors who need help can get it. The Town Halls generated the following suggestions in this regard:

25.   Through local organizations, organize volunteers to help seniors with home maintenance and other needs. The Bonavista South Development Association initiated a project of this type. It inventoried the assistance needs of local seniors and developed a list of people willing to contribute labour. Unfortunately the project was not completed due to lack of funding for a paid coordinator. It is obvious that these types of initiatives will need good coordination. The SSP Committee should facilitate further discussion of this concept, promote the idea, and provide logistical support to help initiatives get started.

26.   Utilize student employment programs to provide labour to help seniors with minor property maintenance and household tasks. This would available at nominal costs to the seniors themselves.

C.   Social Isolation
Another impact of the aging population and declining family networks is the increasing social isolation of seniors, particularly as they become older and less mobile. This problem is compounded by low fixed incomes, inhospitable winter conditions, and lack of appropriate infrastructure and programs for social gatherings. This isolation contributes to loneliness and poor mental health. A volunteer with a development association said that seniors often call for a chat simply to have human contact. She said that members of the association try to visit *"shut-in"* seniors as much as possible but can only do so much.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

27. Expanding on the suggestion above for community volunteer networks to help seniors with property upkeep, this concept could also include regular social visits with seniors. This would particularly beneficial in the winter when seniors least able to get out.

28. One Town Hall participant related her family's experience of *"adopting a grandparent"*, which she said provided mutual social benefits both to the adopted senior and her family. This is another concept that could be facilitated through local volunteer networks.

29. Solutions to the issue of isolation are tied to infrastructure issues as well. With more community facilities and programming dedicated to seniors, more opportunities would be available for social interaction. For example, we heard of local initiatives, often facilitated by seniors themselves, such as card nights, church suppers, and daytime activity centers. Seniors unable to get out to these events under their own power can be picked up and driven by volunteers.

D.   Seniors Housing and Care Facilities

The need for expanded seniors infrastructure and health care services was raised at several forums. This includes homecare services, various levels of housing, recreational services, and palliative care facilities.

Most seniors prefer to live in their own homes or with their families for as long as possible. We heard opinions that higher spending on homecare services should be a major priority of government. We were also told that, compared to institutional care, this option is generally less costly for government. Homecare and assisted living services help seniors remain independent and/or help make it possible for families to care for aging parents. Compared to institutional care, homecare can also be kept very decentralized, allowing seniors to stay in their own communities. Presently the demand for homecare services far exceeds the supply, creating tremendous hardships and often forcing seniors to move into institutional settings before they really need to. As one respondent put it - *"if a person becomes incapacitated and needs homecare, four hours of help a day is a joke."*

Demand for seniors housing ranges from independent-living rental units to medium-care and palliative care facilities. In terms of independent living units and medium care nursing homes, a number of people expressed the view that these facilities should be kept somewhat decentralized so that people can continue to live within a reasonable distance of their home communities, families, and social networks.

In terms of high level and palliative care, we heard that there is a significant undercapacity, with long waiting lists at existing facilities. Strong cases were made in both the Schooner and Discovery zones that new palliative care facilities are necessary. We heard that the lack of such a facility on the Burin Peninsula is a major hardship for

residents who are forced to send family members to facilities in other areas of the province. We heard of instances where whole families have moved in order to be close to family members under palliative care.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

30. Increase funding for homecare services. This was a key recommendation of the Romanow commission on Canada's health care system.

31. Ensure that future development of independent living seniors housing and nursing care homes provides a reasonable geographic distribution throughout the Eastern Region, corresponding to demand levels. This will help to ensure that residents are able to continue living within reasonable distance of their home communities.

32. Ensure that planning for future palliative care facilities takes into account geographic factors and the hardships of families who are forced to place loved ones in facilities great distances from where they live.

E. Recreational Needs and Programming

Another infrastructure issue facing seniors, particularly in smaller communities, is a shortage of suitable recreational opportunities. Seniors are often limited in the activities that can participate in by either income or a lack of physical mobility. We heard that more resources are necessary to meet their particular recreational needs. For example:

- While many communities have outdoor walking trails, these are only available seasonally.
- Many communities do not have a dedicated seniors group or facilities for social gatherings.
- Service organizations, for example the Lions and Legion, tend to be male dominated, leaving limited outlets for elderly women to become involved.
- Community Access Program (CAP) sites are popular with many seniors, but in some areas they are located inappropriately for their use. Seniors are more likely to use CAP sites in non-intimidating locations. For example, seniors in the Musgravetown area are comfortable using the CAP site at the development association but not the one at the school.
- Sports such as golf and skiing can be prohibitively expensive for some seniors.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

33. There is a proposal in the Youth section above (3.1 D) for the hiring of regional recreational planners/coordinators to offer professional support to communities and organizations. A major responsibility of these positions should include recreational planning for seniors.

34. The Seniors Club in Arnold's Cove has had a great deal of success developing facilities and recreational programming that could serve as models for other areas. It has a club building that is used for meetings and events and organizes special events such as sightseeing tours.

3.3 Employment and Income Issues

Employment and income issues were a major theme in most of the Town Halls. Although some other topics often received more explicit attention, we heard countless comments that the single most important factor in community well-being is the economy. Almost all topics of discussion included elements relating to economic issues. No matter what the topic at hand, elements relating to the economy usually entered into the discussion. It was common to hear comments such as *"what this area really needs is jobs"*, *"this is a problem caused by the economy"*, or *"if there were lots of jobs, this wouldn't be an issue"*. The point was driven home most bluntly in Grand Bank where the catchphrase of the evening was *"it's the economy, stupid."*

Economic issues were raised primarily in the context of the collapse of the groundfishery a decade ago. Prior to that, the groundfishery dominated the economy of the entire Eastern Region. The region had a highly industrial fishery, with a high proportion of the province's offshore and inshore groundfish plants, trawler fleets, and a substantial inshore fishing sector. Thousands of jobs disappeared with the closure of the fishery with devastating economic and social consequences for fishing communities and the entire region.

Although species diversification has stimulated a significant recovery in the fishery, this has not resulted in employment levels comparable to before the groundfish closure. While there has been some success developing other economic sectors, it is generally acknowledged that no other industry will be able to create the scale of employment that existed in the groundfish industry.

Average personal incomes in the Eastern Region are equal to 89% of the provincial average. Within the region itself, income disparities between local areas are significant, with a 29.6% difference between the lowest ($15,180) and highest-income ($21,564) areas. There are also major disparities in employment levels. We heard at one Town Hall that there were sixty applications for eight job openings on a local work project. At another Town Hall we heard that there were not enough applicants to fill available positions in a similar project.

Income disparities between women and men are higher in the region than at the provincial level. Female average incomes are equal to 84% of the provincial average, compared to 91% for men. Regional income disparities among women are even higher with a 40.1% spread in average income between the lowest ($8,816) and highest ($14,730) income areas.

This section has identified the following issue areas with regard to employment and income issues:
A.   Economic development
B.   Tourism development
C.   Attitudes towards business and entrepreneurship
D.   Municipal business taxes
E.   Land management

Obviously, these issue areas cannot cover all of the economic concerns of communities in the eastern region, but they are representative of the most common and lucidly expressed issues at the forums.

A.   Economic Development

The economic development agenda, its institutions and stakeholders were a common topic of discussion at the forums. Most communities and areas are attempting to diversify their economies to create growth and jobs. At the forum in Grand Bank, participants expressed their desire to move beyond a single-species fishery. *"Why can't we process multiple species? Why does it have to be fish? What about tourism, or cars for that matter?"* After moving beyond these types of comments, the discussion would usually turn to the institutions responsible for economic development.

In Zone 15, concerns were expressed about the zonal process. Some people questioned the commitment of the Discovery Regional Economic Board (DRDB) to reach out to remote areas of the zone. In some communities people said they have very little communication with the board. Participants in Norman's Cove/Chapel Arm area, for example, said that the DRDB has absolutely no presence. Several questioned whether their communities should be in Zone 15. In Bonavista, participants felt that the DRDB is too focused on the Clarenville area. However, the Board was also criticized at the Clarenville Forum for its lack of presence. The DRDB generally lacks visibility throughout the zone, reflecting a wide concern that it is not carrying out its agenda effectively.

In Zone 16, in addition to the Schooner Board, there are various local organizations involved in economic development, including rural development associations, municipalities, and Chambers of Commerce. We heard one criticism that sometimes there seems to be too much turf protection and competition going on between organizations and communities. But we also heard that these types of attitudes are waning, and a stronger spirit of cooperation is now developing.

The leadership role of Rural Development Associations (RDAs) in economic development was an issue at several Town Halls, particularly in more rural areas. We heard that RDAs have traditionally been a focal point for resources in the community - developing proposals, managing and administering development projects, running student programs, operating tourist information centres, and providing support to other organizations such as community councils, fishermen's associations, harbour authorities, and other volunteer groups. Most of these functions were made possible by funding from government, which enabled RDAs to employ coordinators who were responsible for facilitating volunteers and implementing day-to-day functions. Various participants lamented the fact that this funding is no longer available. They said this left a void in the ability of rural communities to undertake economic development initiatives.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
35. Encourage the zonal boards to undertake more outreach and communications with sub-zonal stakeholder groups.

36. Work with the zonal boards and local development groups to instill a greater sense of cooperation and proactiveness between communities and organizations.

37. Work with the zonal boards, RDAs, and government development agencies to define solutions to help overcome the void in economic development leadership created when RDAs lost funding support.

B.   Tourism Development
Although some attention was given to other sectors, the tourism industry was of primary interest in discussions about economic development. Tourist visitation has grown rapidly in recent years, generating a lot of interest in local opportunities. Volunteer groups and municipal councils are putting a lot of emphasis on developing tourist infrastructure such as trails, museums, look-off platforms, signage and the like.

Forum participants reported that this is, in fact, working and that the number of visitors coming to their communities is increasing. However, only a few areas are realizing significant economic benefits. Tourist visitation cannot translate into local spending and jobs unless there are corresponding commercial activities to capture tourist dollars.

The essential message in this discussion is that infrastructure initiatives to attract tourists alone are inadequate to achieve economic benefits for communities. They must be complemented by commercial activities. Several people commented that there is a lack of entrepreneurs with the skills and willingness to invest in appropriate tourist products and services.

Several people cautioned against too many communities jumping on the tourism bandwagon. They suggested that there is limited market potential to duplicate the tourism success that has been realized in Trinity Bight and, to a lesser extent, a few other locations. When the subject came up at the Musgravetown Forum, participants suggested that tourism should not be a priority. Alternatively, they suggested that development should focus on sectors more appropriate to the strengths of the area, particularly agriculture and forestry.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
38. Local infrastructure development aimed at increasing tourist visitation should be balanced with stronger entrepreneurial development of products and services aimed at capturing tourist spending.

39. Economic development strategies should avoid the 'bandwagon' or 'me too' approach to tourism development.

C.   Attitudes towards Business and Entrepreneurship

We heard a concern at a couple of Town Halls about negative attitudes in some areas toward business owners and entrepreneurs, which make it difficult to generate support for economic development initiatives. According to one participant, this attitude derived from *"the days that fish merchants were screwing us all over."*

Another common sentiment is that the region lacks people with entrepreneurial skills and ambitions. In the words of one person, "we are used to working for the big guy and getting a regular paycheque. The idea of taking a risk is foreign to us." In the post-groundfishery era, this lack of an entrepreneurial tradition is another barrier to community-driven solutions for economic development. As noted in the Youth section, there were calls for more entrepreneurship education in the school system.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

40.   Develop and strengthen school programs aimed at developing entrepreneurship and business skills (see relevant discussion in Section 3.1)

41.   Consider the implementation of a public communications strategy aimed at enhancing the image of entrepreneurs and the business community.

D.   Municipal Business Taxes

A business participant said that present municipal taxation practices are inequitable and discourages business development. One example he provided is the different tax regimes between incorporated and unincorporated communities. A business in an incorporated town normally pays property and business taxes, while a similar business in a nearby unincorporated towns pay no tax. Another example is the different treatment of businesses with land and building assets versus businesses whose primary assets are not real estate, for example trucking and heavy equipment construction companies. Under the property tax system, the first company must pay higher taxes than the latter, regardless of their respective incomes or demands on municipal services.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

42.   The question of the inequitable effects of municipal tax and the impacts on economic development should be brought to the attention of the provincial government for review.

E.   Land Management

According to one participant, a major issue impeding economic development is the large tracts of land tied up because of unclear and outdated title and boundaries. Many communities have some of their best land lying vacant with unknown or unclear ownership. In many cases, land remains registered in the names of people who died generations ago. In some cases, there are no obvious heirs and, in other cases, there are so many descendants that it is almost impossible to resolve ownership. We heard that under the current land management system, the bureaucracy involved in freeing up such land can take years to resolve. It was suggested that this problem demands major reform by government of the province's land management system.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

43. The extent to which unresolved land ownership is negatively impacting economic growth and development is uncertain. Nevertheless, it is a well-known irritant that needs reform through government intervention.

3.4 Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and skills over an individual's entire life. It refers to formal and informal means of education. While a few key issues were raised, lifelong learning was not a significant topic in the forums. This may reflect the fact that it affects smaller numbers of people, or does not stand out in people's minds as a significant factor contributing to personal and community well-being. However, with rapid societal changes affecting individuals and communities, the need for continuing education will become of increasing importance in developing skills and knowledge to enable people to make better and more healthy choices, increase their employability, and access information.

The following issues are addressed below.

A.   Adult Basic Education (ABE)
B.   Life Skills Needs
C.   Community Access Program (CAP) Sites

A.   Adult Basic Education (ABE)
ABE is discussed in Section 3.1 – Youth.

B.   Life Skills Needs
A major need was identified for special life skills training for people in the community considered disadvantaged or at risk. This was a key topic in the Clarenville Forum, where representatives of three different community-help organizations stressed the importance of life skills development among their client groups. The Discovery Women's Network works with women prisoners to help them prepare for release and reintegration into the community. The Ability Employment Corporation works with differently-abled individuals to help them develop employment skills. The Salvation Army operates a foodbank and goodwill store aimed at helping low income families and individuals. Their representatives expressed dire concern about the lack of basic knowledge and skills of many of their clients in critical areas such as nutrition, cooking, healthy living, and household budgeting. Their concern was even greater about the generational impacts of family dependency and lack of basic life skills, referring to their observations of clients' children falling into the same routines and habits of their parents.

Despite their similar mandates, these organizations had not encountered each other until coming together at the Clarenville Forum. They each made a strong case of the need for more resources to be focused on life skills intervention for at-risk groups. That they represented distinct client groups, but brought the same perspective to this argument, made their case all the more powerful and convincing.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

44. The three groups mentioned above showed some interest in working together, and identified partnership possibilities with the SSP. The SSP Committee should facilitate joint discussions with these and similar organizations to develop consolidated strategies and solutions to provide for life skills training needs of at-risk groups.

C. Community Access Program (CAP) Sites

The CAP Program was instituted to provide public computer and Internet access in communities. It is especially valuable for families and individuals who may not have the means or need for their own computers. A number of issues were raised concerning CAP site accessibility.

A few people indicated that the practice of locating CAP sites in larger centres makes the service less accessible to people from outlying communities. They argued for more decentralization of the service by placing smaller sites in more communities.

We heard CAP sites are often poorly located for optimal access to all client groups. For example, the site in Catalina is located on the second floor of a building, making it inaccessible to people with disabilities and some seniors. Many CAP sites are located in schools. This discourages access by many older residents, particularly seniors, who find school environments somewhat unwelcoming. Finally, many CAP sites are open for short and irregular hours, reducing their accessibility.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

45. Applying certain standards of accessibility to all CAP sites would alleviate some of the above issues. CAP sites should be as accessible as possible to people with physical disabilities. Ideally, they should be in buildings normally accessible to all members of the public. As much as possible, they should be in locations that are open for a significant number of hours each week, including evenings and weekends.

46. The issue of which community the site is located in is more difficult. Obviously, not all communities can have a CAP site, yet every effort should be made to ensure maximum access for residents of outlying communities.

3.5 Health Care and Healthy Living

Health and health care refer to separate but related concerns. Health relates to the quality of people's health as affected by lifestyles, environment, and genetics. Health care relates to infrastructure and programs targeted to the prevention and treatment of illness. The primary issues arising at the Town Halls related to these subjects included the following:

A. Environmental Effects on Health
B. Lifestyle Effects on Health
C. Homecare Services

D.   Shortage of Health Care Practitioners

A.   Environmental Effects on Health
(*Water quality issues and solutions are also discussed in Section 3.6 – Community Services and Infrastructure*)
Water quality was the primary environmental issue raised in the forums relating to public health. Many communities have, or have had at some time, quality problems serious enough that their water was not considered safe for human consumption. The provincial government has issued numerous boil orders in the Eastern Region in recent years. In a few locations, water supplies have been discovered to have unacceptable arsenic levels.

Public awareness of water quality issues has increased noticeably since the Walkerton tragedy in Ontario, which resulted in several deaths from the town's contaminated water supply. A growing number of people now refrain from using water from their taps for drinking and cooking, opting instead to purchase bottled or commercially treated water.

Municipal water quality problems usually derive from natural factors in the water supply area. However, with increasing frequency, problems are arising because of poor land use practices, particularly groundwater contamination from poorly functioning septic systems.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
47.   Infrastructure solutions to water quality problems are discussed in Section 3.6.

48.   More stringent, stronger standards and enforcement are required to ensure sewage septic systems are installed and maintained in a way that protects against groundwater contamination. Owners of septic systems found not operating efficiently should be required to replace them.

B.   Lifestyle Effects on Health
Personal lifestyle has a major influence on an individual's health. Important lifestyle factors include eating and drinking habits, smoking vs non-smoking, type and frequency of exercise, work and leisure habits, stress levels, ability to deal with stress, etc.

Lifestyle issues came up in various contexts in forum discussions. The following highlights some of the major comments:
- Stress related health problems increased substantially after the fishery moratorium, because of lost employment, lower incomes, uncertain futures, and low morale.
- There is a contradiction in the schools. They are teaching healthy living, but serving up junk food in the cafeterias.
- Life skills training is desperately needed to help some people learn about nutrition, proper cooking, household budgeting, and generally how to live healthier.
- Low-income jobs create a lot of stress, but people are too proud to ask for help. People under stress don't eat as well, are less physically active, and have more health problems.

- Technology is a curse for healthy living. A lot of youngsters spend all their free time on the Internet or watching TV.
- More adults are quitting smoking, but young people seem to be smoking more, especially girls. What education is offered on smoking?
- Community trails are proving to be extremely popular and beneficial for people's health. In our community, they are being used by all kinds of people who never used to be seen out getting exercise, especially the seniors.
- We need some kind of winter facility to allow older people to get out more in the wintertime.
- Better promotion and education programs are needed to encourage healthy living. The message has got to get out on health issues, especially smoking.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

49.   More resources should be targeted to promotion and education for healthy lifestyles. In this regard, special resources should be targeted to connecting with low income and at-risk people in the community.

50.   School programs should include curriculum initiatives aimed at increasing healthy living awareness in students. Along with these, school boards should encourage healthy eating through reductions in junk food served in their cafeterias.

51.   The development of local trail systems and other low cost recreational infrastructure should be encouraged in all communities. Support should be provided to communities for help with recreational needs assessments and program and facility planning.

C.   Homecare Services
Homecare is discussed in Section 3.2 – Seniors

D.   Shortage of Health Care Practitioners
Not surprisingly, the major health care concern emerging from the Town Halls is the low recruitment and high turnover of doctors. There are growing problems as well in recruiting other health care occupations, including nurses, nurse practitioners, therapists, dieticians, and medical technicians. With the highly competitive market for health care professionals, money seems to be the primary constraint for recruitment. Other jurisdictions in Canada and the US are offering higher salaries and lucrative signing bonuses, which this province cannot match.

While these shortages are being experienced throughout the Eastern Region, the impact is being felt most severely in less populated areas. Primary health services in small communities have been reduced significantly from a decade ago. Several communities that once had their own resident doctors now have rotating rosters of visiting doctors, which provides little consistency in the care patients receive.

The following sample of comments catches the essence of the concerns raised about this problem:

- Chapel Arm - We have no family doctor here anymore. Our residents now go to the clinic in Whitbourne, where you rarely see the same doctor twice.
- Trinity - Our last community doctor left in 1997. We now get a different doctor or nurse practitioner every week in our clinic. People who want a regular doctor go to Clarenville.
- Grand Bank - We need a lot more money to attract doctors. We can't even recruit nurses to come and stay because they get overworked and stressed out.
- Lamaline - People can't have a family doctor like years ago. Turnover is so high that people often never see the same doctor twice.
- King's Cove – We used to have a clinic but it's gone now. The community health nurse does some visits. There's a different doctor every time you go to Bonavista. To see one doctor regularly you have to go to Clarenville.
- Placentia West/Fortune Bay East – Who's working to keep Newfoundland doctors and nurses in the province? The health care boards have to do a better job – offer incentives, emphasize our low cost of living, help them through medical school.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

52.   These problems are much larger than local solutions alone can hope to resolve. The Romanow Commission has proposed major reforms and investment of new monies in Canada's health care system. One of its cornerstone recommendations is for a major infusion of new dollars into rural medicine. This would be used to improve salary scales and other incentives aimed at encouraging doctors and other medical professionals to stay in rural areas.

53.   Various suggestions were made regarding recruitment practices by the health agencies in the Eastern Region. The most common suggestion was that incentives such as tuition and cost of living subsidies should be provided to local residents who are studying medicine, nursing, etc. In return, these people would sign contracts to work in the region for a specified period after they graduate. A difficulty in proposing specific solutions such as this is that most participants, including the consultants, have little knowledge about current practices and incentives for recruiting students in the medical field. A couple of times we heard from someone more in the know than everyone else that such methods are already being used.

54.   A number of people suggested that nurse practitioners should be assuming a more prominent role in rural medicine delivery. By taking over some of the more basic physician responsibilities, doctor workloads would be reduced and they would be freed up to concentrate on more acute patient needs.

3.6 Community Services and Infrastructure

A growing number of communities are experiencing difficulty developing and maintaining services and infrastructure for their residents. This is due to economic conditions and shrinking populations and tax base. A compounding issue, discussed in Section 3.8, is the difficulty many towns are experiencing attracting volunteers to sit on municipal councils, recreation committees, and other community service organizations.

Community services and infrastructure issues came up regularly at the forums. This section has divided the main discussion points as follows:

A.   Municipal infrastructure and services
B.   Water quality
C.   Sewage septic systems
D.   Internet services
E.   Volunteer fire departments

A.   Municipal Infrastructure and Services

With declining populations, many municipalities are being squeezed by a shrinking tax base. At the same time, many continue to need improvements and expansion of municipal infrastructure and services such as water and sewer, roads, waste disposal, and recreation facilities. We heard of some communities where significant numbers of households still have no running water supply. In the meantime, existing infrastructure is aging and becoming increasingly expensive to maintain. These problems are often compounded by high municipal debt loads, forcing many communities to cut back on services and infrastructure maintenance.

Present initiatives to regionalize waste management operations in the province were a hot topic at some Forums. While agreeing that existing waste disposal in local municipal dumps is damaging to the environment, concerns were raised about the affordability of regional waste management. Some people feared that municipalities would not be able to recover increased costs through higher taxes and fees. They worried that the ultimate consequence of this would be increased illegal dumping by residents, and maybe by some municipalities themselves. Under this scenario, they feared that, rather than solving existing problems, new environmental hazards might be created.

The recently released Avalon Waste Management Plan proposes one landfill site to serve all communities on the Avalon Peninsula, as well as, communities along the Trans Canada Highway corridor west to Clarenville. Communities on the Bonavista and Burin Peninsulas would be able to opt into the system if they chose. Under the system, municipalities would continue to be responsible for garbage collection and delivery to designated transfer sites. In addition, they would pay a per tonnage tipping fee to the regional waste management authority. An equalized rate per tonne will be charged to all municipalities.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
56.   There are no easy solutions to these problems. Compounding the financial stress that many towns are experiencing is the fact that fewer and fewer residents are willing to sit on municipal councils. This issue is discussed Section 3.8. An increasing number of people are advocating stronger cooperation and sharing of resources between municipalities. This can achieved through various mechanisms such as regional government, amalgamation, or less formal partnerships around particular initiatives (see Section 3.7 H for additional discussion of this issue).

57. The Federation of Municipalities has endorsed the proposed Avalon Waste Management Plan. Because of the proposed equalized fee structure, the proposed system would not result in unfair costs to smaller municipalities. However, it is obvious costs will increase, forcing municipalities to pass these on to residents through higher taxes or fees. There are ways, however, that local costs can be minimized. One of the key ways is for residents themselves to begin reducing and diverting waste, for example through greater composting and local recycling.

B.   Water Quality

The issue of water quality was raised so frequently that it deserves special attention in this section. Many communities have water quality problems. In the Eastern Region, at least twenty-four communities have had one or more boil orders issued since 1991. Boil orders in some communities have remained in effect for years. In many cases, boil orders do not affect entire communities, but are confined to one or two artesian wells. Typically the problem is associated with high numbers of coliforms or e-coli, but other harmful substances have been found as well.

Benzene is present in well water in some areas, making the water resistant to purification through boiling. In a few notable areas, more than acceptable levels of arsenic are present. We heard that in some areas, residents tend to ignore boil orders, usually because they have few alternative sources.

A major problem in addressing water quality problems is the high cost of developing water treatment plants or alternative water sources. The Department of Municipal Affairs does provide capital assistance, but usually only for a portion of costs. This assistance usually comes with conditions for increases in municipal own-source revenues to help pay for the related capital and operating costs. An additional constraint on communities is their treatment by chartered banks. Because they are considered high credit risks, most banks will not provide loans for capital projects.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

58. We heard from one participant that the Province's municipal financing corporation can be flexible in how communities meet their capital financing obligations. For example, in one community, the council is meeting its obligations through volunteer labour and equipment time provided by local residents. This type of arrangement is a positive sign of the willingness of government and communities to come up with unique and flexible solutions to address water quality and other community infrastructure problems.

C.   Sewage Septic Systems

A number of people raised concerns connecting water quality problems with inadequate enforcement of standards for septic system installation, maintenance, and periodic replacement. They said that many community problems with contaminated wells originated with poorly installed septic systems. Associated with this we heard that dysfunctional septic systems are responsible for the unpleasant smells found in some communities, especially during the summer.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

59.   Strict standards for septic system installation, maintenance, and replacement should be enforced. People should be encouraged to make complaints about poorly functioning systems, and these complaints should be immediately followed up on by the appropriate inspection agency. More resources should focus on educating homeowners regarding the health hazards of inadequate and dysfunctional septic systems. This implies a major need for increased resources dedicated to inspection, enforcement, and education.

D.   Internet Services

Many participants noted the benefits that computers have brought to rural communities in terms of communications, quality of life, and economic opportunities. However, the present quality of Internet access leaves much to be desired and is becoming an increasing burden as more people and businesses go online. At practically every Town Hall we heard calls for high speed Internet access through fibre-optic cabling or dedicated service lines.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

60.   The federal government has stated a policy to make Canada the world's most connected nation. However, it has been slow to follow up on this with a commitment of dollars. At several Town Halls we heard of local lobbying efforts for improved Internet infrastructure. It is suggested that such lobbying efforts would be more effective if they were consolidated for the Eastern Region as a whole.

E.   Volunteer Fire Departments

There are various pressures affecting the viability and effectiveness of volunteer fire departments in the Eastern Region. Issues raised by the Town Halls included:

- Many are facing serious funding issues. Even with free labour, operating, equipment, and insurance costs that require substantial revenues. Training for First Aid and CPR certifications is a regular expense and basic equipment can be very expensive.
- Many departments have great difficulty collecting adequate monies from the communities they serve, especially unincorporated communities. In some areas, the volunteers are responsible for collecting fire fees, which many describe as an onerous and thankless task. We were told that in some communities, less than a third of residents actually pay the fees.
- In some communities, because of their closer proximity, fire departments will be the first to respond to emergency calls. This puts increased onus on them to have a wider range of skills and equipment. This requires greater time commitment of volunteers and increases the cost of running the organizations.
- Young people are not joining fire departments like they once did, resulting in fewer numbers and aging memberships. The aging of fire fighters is contributing to higher insurance costs.

- Certification requirements are increasing due to legal liability concerns. This is expensive for departments; time consuming for members, and another reason for the difficulty of recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- In some areas, there seems to be an excess of fire fighting infrastructure and equipment relative to local need.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

61. A review should be undertaken of issues and needs affecting the viability and effectiveness of volunteer fire departments in the Eastern Region. Its objective should be to identify necessary measures to increase volunteer recruitment, reduce irritants that are making recruitment difficult (such as high time commitments for training), reduce the burden associated with collecting fees, and increase efficiency through greater cooperation and resource sharing between fire departments.

62. In the Arnold's Cove Forum, representatives from the communities of Arnold's Cove, Come by Chance, and Sunnyside expressed support for the idea of an amalgamated fire department to serve all three communities. The amalgamated fire department would benefit from an increased volunteer and funding base, while still maintaining adequate capacity in all three communities. This idea should be followed up on. If successful such an amalgamation could serve as a valuable model for fire departments in the region, as well as, the province.

3.7 Volunteerism and Volunteer Organizations

Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador have a well-earned reputation for the degree to which they contribute as volunteers to their communities - this province has among the highest volunteer rates in the country. Town Hall participants agreed that volunteers play an indispensable role in every community. As one participant put it, *"Rural Newfoundland could not survive without volunteers."* Yet, as the discussions revealed, many, indeed most, communities seem to be experiencing significant declines in levels of volunteerism.

The aging of the volunteer population has been cited as a significant factor in this decline. There is a widespread perception that younger people were not stepping in to fill volunteer roles as they once did. Representatives of service clubs and church groups confirmed this situation, indicating in many cases that the majority of their members are over sixty years of age. This is taking its toll on the older volunteers, some who said that they do not have the "*legs*" to keep up with the demands on them.

Apathy and fear of having to make excessive time commitments are regarded as two major problems in recruiting new volunteers. We heard that many people do not volunteer as long as they think that someone else will take the responsibility. In other words, new people often do not step forward unless there is a pressing need or an organization is up against the wall. One longtime Girl Guide leader said that she spent years trying to recruit new volunteers to the organization. Only after she gave notice that she was quitting did some new volunteers step forward. But even that does not always

work. We heard numerous cases of organizations that have stopped operating due to the lack of volunteers.

The following discussion highlights the major issues concerning declining volunteerism, which were raised at the Town Halls.

A.   Defining volunteerism
B.   Disincentives to volunteerism
C.   Economic conditions and volunteerism
D.   Youth volunteerism
E.   Impact of negative attitudes
F.   Church organizations
G.   Volunteer fire departments
H.   Municipal government
I.   Role of Rural Development Associations
J.   Matching individuals with volunteer interests

A.   Defining Volunteerism

A number of the Town Halls brought to light the differences between "formal" and "informal" volunteers. In the context of the discussions, formal volunteers can be described as people who contribute as members of organizations or committees, for example, church groups, social clubs, youth organizations, municipal councils, heritage committees, recreation committees, and rural development associations. Informal volunteers contribute in more ad hoc and individualistic ways. For example, a person who helps an elderly or sick neighbour with household needs such as snowclearing and house repairs would be described as an informal volunteer. Most communities have a high proportion of residents who fall somewhere in the range between formal or informal volunteers.

There are other defining differences that characterize different types of volunteers. Some are happy to make long-term commitments, attend meetings regularly, and be members of several organizations. Some of this type would describe themselves as professional volunteers, wearing numerous "hats." Others prefer to engage in activities according to their own schedules. They are more interested in contributing hands-on labour than in attending meetings. While they may be enticed to volunteer on short-term projects, they are leery of becoming "trapped" in long-term commitments. For example, a majority of people who helped out with the recent Targa car rally are not regular volunteers. A probable attraction of the car rally for these people was that their involvement had a clear endpoint. Another likely reason was the uniqueness of the event and the intrigue of being involved.

B.   Disincentives to Volunteerism

Town Hall participants identified a number of irritants and discentives that discourage volunteerism and hinder the viability of volunteer organizations, including the following:

- There is a growing concern about the legal liability of volunteers, especially adults working with youth organizations. They can be liable for accidents, injury, or other harm that may occur to young people under their supervision. We were told that this problem must be addressed to encourage more adults to volunteer with youth groups.

- There is an increasing red tape burden on volunteer organizations for fundraising. We heard that small groups attempting to raise amounts as small as a couple hundred dollars face the same permit requirements as much larger fundraising organizations. The burden is doubly difficult in outlying communities where someone has to travel to a larger centre, such as Marystown or Clarenville, to get the permit. We were told of one instance where a person had to make two trips because the office was closed the first time. In another case the church rector had to sign for the permit – no one else is considered trustworthy. Some groups said this makes small fundraising events, such as church raffles, simply not worth the effort. Others admitted that they ignore the regulations and do their fundraising without a permit.

- Some government funding agencies have a requirement that organizations receiving project funding are not permitted to employ their own volunteers or members of their families on these projects. Several people felt this requirement is discriminatory and discourages people from volunteering especially in small communities. They said it was especially restrictive on women, who tend to be the main volunteers in many communities, but who are also the most burdened by unemployment.

- The audit requirement is very costly relative to the financial circumstances of many volunteer organizations. They felt it should be eliminated in its present form and replaced with a less burdensome auditing mechanism.

- The training and certification requirements necessary for volunteer fire fighters to reduce legal liability are increasingly expensive for organizations and time consuming for volunteers. This is seen as a major reason for the membership decline in many fire departments.

- We were told that financial support from government for volunteer groups is inadequate. Lack of financial resources to complement volunteer labour and other in-kind contributions is generally the most serious constraint on the viability and achievements of organizations. It was suggested that modest incentives to help cover expenses would contribute out of all proportion to morale within organizations and the enticement of new volunteers.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

63. While volunteer liability was identified as a deterrent to volunteerism, there seems to be a lot of uncertainty as to the nature and extent of such liability. A review should be undertaken to ascertain the facts about volunteer liability and determine what measures can be taken to alleviate liability as a constraint to the viability of volunteer organizations.

64. A review should be undertaken of the regulatory burden on fundraising by volunteer organizations and the impact this has on their viability. The object of this

review should be to identify selective measures to reduce this burden on small organizations.

65. A review should be undertaken of the requirement of some funding programs that does not allow organizations receiving project support to employ its own members or their families on these projects. In the interest of reducing the impact of this on volunteerism in small communities, this review should identify means by which such restrictions can be eased, while continuing to guard against possible abuse and conflict of interest.

66. A review should be undertaken to determine the impact of financial auditing requirements on the viability of small volunteer organizations. The object here should be to determine if less burdensome audit requirements could be implemented for small organizations.

67. Small financial donations by government to voluntary organizations can work wonders in facilitating concrete achievements, boosting morale, overcoming burnout, and recruiting new members. We heard instances of contributions of a thousand dollars and less that provided a significant boost to organizations.

C.   Economic Conditions and Volunteerism

The Town Halls brought to light two somewhat contradictory viewpoints regarding the relationship between an area's economy and its level of volunteerism. One view is that volunteerism is strongly affected by economic circumstances (i.e. volunteer activity tends to be higher in healthier economies). The rationale for this view is that people with jobs have their personal security taken care of, therefore tend to be more willing to put time into volunteering. Underemployed people on the other hand have less stability in their lives, therefore must put their own needs above community commitments.

Other participants argued that economic circumstances are not necessarily the predominant factor affecting this issue. In fact, some argued that working people are often less prone to volunteer because of other demands on their time, especially the balancing of job and family responsibilities. This is particularly the case working single parents and double working parents, who comprise an increasing proportion of the employed workforce.

Despite convincing arguments supporting both sides of this issue, anecdotal evidence from the Town Halls was inconclusive in supporting either of these positions. It is felt, however, that while economic circumstances are certainly a factor, it is but one of various influences that affect volunteerism in a community. Other significant influences that seem to be at play include demographic characteristics and local traditions of community involvement.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

68. Stronger knowledge of causal relationships between socio-economic factors and voluntary activity would be beneficial to the SSP Committee in helping to address

declining volunteerism in the Eastern Region. Previous studies may help shed light on this issue. Or it may be worthwhile to undertake a random survey in the Eastern Region to determine if a correlation can be drawn between socio-economic circumstances and the status of individuals as volunteers or non-volunteers.

D.   Youth Volunteerism

We heard at practically every Town Hall that fewer and fewer young people are not offering themselves as volunteers in the community. As older volunteers are forced to reduce their workloads or give up volunteering altogether, young people are not stepping in to fill the gap. Based on the Town Halls, this problem seems to be widespread throughout the Eastern Region.

We heard a number of reasons for this situation. The most obvious is the declining youth population. There are simply not enough young people in many communities to fill the volunteer gap. The shortage of job opportunities seems to be taking away the more community-minded of our young people. We also heard that young people's priorities today, in a universal sense, are more focused toward their own needs than the community's.

Several youth participants in the Town Halls added a different perspective on this issue. They said that longtime volunteers do not always enthusiastically welcome new blood into their organizations. They likened this to a turf issue – some people are not easily receptive to change or to younger volunteers taking over their responsibilities. Related to this, we heard that young people are often reluctant to challenge their older peers for fear of having their ideas shot down.

On the Burin Peninsula, we were told about a successful youth leadership project sponsored by the Community Services Council and the School Board. Called "Youth Mobilizing Youth", this program was funded by Youth Services Canada. It hired ten unemployed people between the ages of 18 and 25 to recruit students in five schools to undertake worthwhile community activities. Over 200 students participated, engaging in activities such as waste recycling projects, supervising movie nights and recreational nights for smaller children, organizing lunchtime activities for children who are bused to school, collecting used toys for the local transition house, and helping with charity fundraising events. The project was beneficial for all involved. For the ten youth employed by the project, it contributed to their self-esteem, confidence, and leadership abilities. It did much the same for the students involved, and gave them experience as volunteers and working with adults.

One of the weaknesses of the Youth Mobilizing Youth project apparently was the difficulty of selling adults on its value and what could be achieved. This skepticism among the adult population seems to be all too common, and is a problem that can only be addressed through education and awareness building.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

All of these reasons, given above regarding the difficulty of recruiting younger volunteers, probably hold some validity. Maybe not a lot can be done to address the impact of the declining youth population. However proactive measures such as the Youth Mobilizing Youth project are certainly possible to counteract the apparent reluctance of young people to become volunteers. Measures should also be possible to address the difficulty some older volunteers have in accepting new blood into their organizations.

69. An ongoing program of public education should be initiated by the SSP to inform and educate youth and adults on the value and importance of youth volunteerism. This should include a school program to inform and involve students in volunteerism. It should also include measures aimed at countering negative attitudes among many older volunteers about what young people can offer to their organizations.

70. The SSP Committee should facilitate more youth leadership development initiatives such as the Youth Mobilizing Youth program.

E.   Impact of Negative Attitudes

Some Town Hall participants expressed concern about the negativity that seems to permeate resident attitudes in some areas toward community development and community leaders. They said there is a tendency in some communities to put down people who are trying to do something new, whether they are volunteers or business entrepreneurs.

This type of negativity exists to a degree in most communities. There are always some residents who regard volunteer groups as local cliques. The participants who raised the issue felt it acts as a significant deterrent to community progress and volunteerism. However, based on the Town Hall discussions, it seems the extent to which this problem exists varies considerably. Other participants acknowledged the issue, but felt it may have been overstated as a factor in discouraging volunteerism.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

71. The SSP Committee should consider the implementation of a public relations campaign to recognize the contribution of volunteers to community well-being and to encourage more people to become active as volunteers.

F.   Church Organizations

Declining community populations are resulting in dramatic changes in the size and make-up of church congregations. Many today are a fraction of their former size and are aging rapidly, particularly in small communities. This is putting a tremendous financial and human resource burden on congregations to maintain church properties, raise funds, and sustain normal functions.

To alleviate this burden, increased cooperation, sharing of resources, and joint services are increasingly common between congregations. Amalgamation of congregations is taking place in some areas, but often in the face of strong reluctance from parishioners, particularly in communities that have already seen the closure of school and other public buildings. There are strong rational attachments between churches and community identity, which are very hard to give up. The degree of this attachment was put most succinctly by one Town Hall participant who said, *"When you lose your church, it's just as well to say that your community is dead."* In a few places congregations have closed their churches only to reopen them at a later date.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
72.   In the face of declining congregations and resources, the need for resource sharing and amalgamation in difficult to avoid in many areas. The SSP Committee should work with church communities to search for ways that these measures can be facilitated with the least impact on parishioners and communities. In some cases, there may be ideas for reusing church properties in ways that compatible with the community's needs and priorities.

G.   Volunteer Fire Departments
(see Section 3.6 C)

H.   Municipal Government
A growing problem in many communities is the difficulty of encouraging residents to sit on municipal councils and local service districts. Under-represented Councils are increasingly common. The extent of this problem was publicized recently when Plate Cove East and Plate Cove West became unincorporated because none of their residents could be recruited to form a Council.

There was surprising support (and lack of opposition) in several Town Halls for stronger formal links between municipalities. This was surprising because rural communities in this province have traditionally shown huge resistance to losing their independent status and identities. But this sentiment was not strongly evident in the any of the Town Halls. Instead, we heard a repeated message that many communities are simply too small to support their own councils. Because communities cannot afford paid staff, excessive responsibility is often borne by council members. Many said this is a thankless responsibility, especially when it comes to collecting taxes and fees.

Based on the discussions, the time certainly seems right in some areas for opening discussions on municipal reform. We heard concrete suggestions as to how municipal reform could overcome duplication, free up resources for other needs, and achieve more efficient municipal services. One respondent put it his way, *"The time is gone when small communities can expect each to do their own thing. If we are going to meet the needs of our communities, we've got to come together."*

In the Fortune Bay East/Placentia West Town Hall, there was lengthy discussion about the role that the area's two development associations might play in facilitating an

amalgamation strategy (see discussion in following section). This went so far as suggest that the Placentia West RDA's building could become the administrative centre of an amalgamated or regional council. Although participants anticipated there would be considerable position, they felt that many - probably a majority - of residents could be sold on the concept.

In addition to fiscal benefits, we heard that more regional municipal structures would reduce the need for volunteer councilors. For instance, if one municipality brought together five adjacent communities, the number of councilors required could be reduced from about twenty-five to six or seven.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations
73. The SSP Committee should consider facilitating further discussions on the issue of municipal cooperation and/or reorganization into larger units in areas where these ideas were proposed and favourably received. While such initiatives could provide many benefits, they would certainly help to reduce pressures on the municipal volunteer base.

I.   Role of Rural Development Associations
The Eastern Region has approximately eleven Rural Development Associations (RDAs) within its boundaries. These volunteer organizations historically have played a prominent role in the region coordinating social and economic development activities. RDAs used to receive financial administrative support from government, but that was discontinued in 1996. While some of the RDAs have remained fully active since that time, others have had great difficulty maintaining their functions.

Issues related to the role and current status of RDAs received attention at a majority of Town Halls, particularly in the more rural areas. RDAs have traditionally been a key coordinating/facilitating organization for volunteer groups in small communities (e.g. community councils, local service districts, local harbour authorities, daycare committees, etc.). Since their administrative funding was eliminated, these functions have become much more difficult to achieve. Without this support, volunteer groups in small communities are finding themselves stretched very thinly in their capacity to mobilize resources. While there tend to be stronger and more diverse support mechanisms in more populated areas, we heard over and over again that volunteer groups in small communities desperately need the type of support formerly provided by paid coordinators employed by the RDAs.

A few Town Hall participants proposed that RDAs could facilitate greater resource sharing and joint services between municipalities. This concept was explored the furthest at the Placentia West/Fortune Bay East Town Hall, where there was serious discussion about the merits of a regional government structure. Under this concept, participating communities would consolidate their resources and employ a central administrative and public works staff. It was even proposed that the Placentia West RDA building could be used as the as the municipal office.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

74. The SSP Committee should consult more extensively with community leaders in more rural areas of the Eastern Region with an aim to improve facilitation and coordination support for volunteer groups.

75. A consultant review is currently (November, 2002) being conducted of the role of RDAs in the province's regional development process. Representatives of the SSP Committee should meet with the consultant to discuss issues surrounding RDAs in the Eastern Region, particularly how their volunteer-support role can be strengthened.

J.   Matching Individuals with Volunteer Interests

As discussed in Section A, there is no one type of volunteer. The potential to recruit volunteers to an organization or project depends on how closely it corresponds with their personal interests and the level of commitment they are willing to make. Individuals will often not step forward because they do not know what will be expected of them in terms of responsibilities and time commitments.

From the perspective of organizations, volunteer recruitment is often hindered by lack of understanding about what motivates people to volunteer and what turns them off. Stronger awareness of the characteristics of different types of volunteers, and which types of volunteers would best complement the needs of their organization would help them be more focused in their recruitment strategies.

Proposed Solutions/Recommendations

76. Organizations should endeavour to build certain levels of flexibility into the responsibilities and time requirements they need of their volunteers. By trying to accommodate different levels and types of commitments individuals are willing to make, they may be able to recruit more volunteers.

77. The SSP Committee should seriously consider the development of a training module related to volunteerism and volunteer recruitment. This could be delivered to volunteer organizations to help them develop more targeted approaches to recruiting and retaining new volunteers. The Newfoundland and Labrador zonal boards developed a series of volunteer training modules, some of which may be applicable or adapted for this purpose. In particular, Module 11 – Leadership and Motivation – may be beneficial. The module descriptions can be linked from the Department of Industry, Trade, and Rural Development website or at sourced directly at www.cedresources.nf.net.

78. Several Town Halls discussed the value of developing a volunteer registry, which would be a tool to help organizations recruit volunteers for particular purposes. Although slight variants to this idea were presented, there was significant support for the general concept. One person in Marystown suggested a Community Involvement Foundation, where prospective volunteers could complete a profile form describing their interests. This would be kept on file to help link volunteers

with community activities that match their interests. A similar project was initiated in the King's Cove area to compile a list of seniors with particular needs (e.g. house repairs) and to match that with a list of people willing to donate some time to help the seniors out.   Unfortunately, that project was not sustained because the funding to employ the paid coordinator expired.

The SSP Committee should consider working with local leadership groups to develop volunteer registries in their areas. One suggestion was that a registry could be developed and managed for the Eastern Region as a whole. While this may have some merit in terms of efficiency, the consultants feel that the most effective approach would be one that is locally coordinated by people with a good knowledge of their areas and the people involved.

4.0   SSP WORK PLAN

The SSP vision for the Eastern Region is that of *"healthy, educated, self-reliant and prosperous people living in vibrant, supportive communities"*. In the context of input from the Town Hall Forums, the purpose of this section will be to review the Eastern Region SSP Work plan with respect to its relevance to the major concerns and proposals arising from the Forums. Section 4.1 addresses eight key strategic questions posed by the Eastern Region SSP Steering Committee. Section 4.2 reviews the four primary goals of the SSP Work plan in terms of their appropriateness to the major needs and whether different or additional goals are required.

4.1   Strategic Questions

A.   *What positive things are happening that can be built upon?*
One of the inherent aspects of community consultation processes is that they often focus on problems and frustrations that communities and community leaders are experiencing. Rather than being a weakness, this is an essential aspect of consultation because it identifies and focuses attention on the issues that are of highest importance. But in the process of discussing problems, solutions tend to emerge, as does information about positive things that are happening and opportunities that are arising.

The following points identify key features in the current social and economic milieu of the Eastern Region that help to provide a basis for future progress in improving the well-being of people and communities.

- Newfoundlanders' traditional caring and attention for more vulnerable people in the community seems to be alive and well. The Town Hall discussions revealed that a lot of informal and unrecognized volunteer activity takes place to help out elderly, sick, disabled and widowed residents who are having difficulty to care for all of their own needs.

- Traditional rivalries and the desire to maintain individual community identities seem to be giving away to more pragmatic attitudes that favour stronger community partnerships. Some positive discussions took place around ideas such as regional municipalities, resource sharing by volunteer fire departments, and increased regionalization of recreational facilities. A number of community service organizations talked positively about partnership initiatives, for example, three groups in Clarenville showed interest in working together to develop a joint life skills initiative for their client groups.

- The recent Youth Mobilizing Youth project on the Burin Peninsula demonstrated that young people can be enticed to volunteer in worthwhile community activities. That project employed a core group of 6-8 older youth to facilitate volunteer activities by over 200 high school students. The project sponsors said that this was a positive experience that facilitated a number of valuable community activities and contributed

to the morale of the young people involved. They felt confident that the experience would encourage most of these youth to volunteer again.

- In the face of high youth out-migration, labour shortages are increasing in certain sectors such as health care, teaching, social services, and the skilled trades. With workforce aging, employment opportunities are likely to increase in other sectors in the coming years. For young people intent on staying in the region, this will create career opportunities if they prepare appropriately through post-secondary studies.

- Economic conditions in the Eastern Region have improved noticeably over the past decade. The fishing industry recovered substantially from the groundfish moratorium due to diversification into crab, shrimp, and other species, and it remains the largest employer in the region. While total job numbers are fewer, for those who are employed, income levels and job stability are much higher. However, many of the industry's former workers have missed out in this recovery. Formerly prosperous fishing areas such as Trinity to Bonavista, Placentia West, and Grand Bank to St. Lawrence continue to suffer economically, with limited alternative opportunities for former fisheries workers.

  Other industries are contributing to reasonably good economic conditions in certain local areas. Tourism has been growing steadily and is generating significant benefits in areas such as Trinity Bight and Port Blandford. Agriculture and the lumber industry are mainstays in the Musgravetown area. Recent development initiatives have created optimism for further growth in agriculture production. The Come by Chance Oil Refinery and Whiffen Head Transshipment Facility are major economic contributors in the Isthmus area. Marystown/Burin and Clarenville are doing well in their roles as regional service centres. The White Rose offshore construction project is expected to provide a boost for the Burin Peninsula. It is hoped this experience can be transformed into a stable future for the Marystown shipyard. These activities provide a reasonably stable economic base, which hopefully can be built for further diversification and spreading of benefits throughout the region.

- The Town Hall discussions provided a lot of anecdotal evidence of a growing public consciousness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. This is most evident among middle and older age groups, but unfortunately is less so among youth.

- The Romanow Commission on Canada's health care system has recommended new investments in rural medicine. Hopefully this will come to fruition and help alleviate present difficulties in recruiting and retaining health care professionals in the region.

- The Eastern Region has an extensive network of local organizations involved in economic and social development, including the two RED Boards, up to eleven rural development associations, two Chambers of Commerce, and various special interest groups. These represent a substantial base for capacity building and cooperation.

B. *How can people be encouraged to improve their lives and contribute constructively to their communities?*

Section 3 makes various suggestions relevant to this question. The following summarizes some of the main points.

- Schools should institute stronger outreach to communicate with and assist needy and isolated families in making appropriate decisions for the education of their children.
- Develop appropriate responses to issues and barriers that discourage volunteerism.
- Increase funding for Level I Adult Basic Education.
- Increase programming for workplace skills development such as Bridging the Gap.
- Develop and implement strategies for life skills training for at risk people in the community.
- Increase promotion and public education activities aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- Increase promotion and public education activities aimed at encouraging community volunteerism. Stress the personal fulfillment benefits that are realized from volunteer activity.
- Government should provide more financial incentives to community organizations in order to facilitate progress toward their goals, boost volunteer morale, and encourage more people to become involved.
- Facilitate youth leadership development and volunteerism through programs such as Youth Mobilizing Youth,

C. *How can individuals and community groups work cooperatively together to improve their lives and their communities? What partnerships can be forged?*

A number of the Town Halls brought together groups with parallel and complementary interests. The discussions indicated that various informal partnerships already exist. They identified some new opportunities for cooperation and partnerships, and revealed an encouraging willingness among groups to explore these opportunities. Some of the existing and potential partnerships include:

- Formal and informal partnerships between municipal councils, local service districts, and unincorporated communities in order to improve and increase the efficiency of municipal operations.
- One of the historical roles of rural development associations has been to facilitate the needs of other community organizations and volunteer groups. For example, the RDA in Musgravetown, sponsors a summer employment program that provides student workers to different town councils in the area. In the Lamaline area, the RDA provides project support to local harbour authorities for wharf maintenance, etc. In the King's Cove area, the RDA was promoted as the key organization necessary to facilitate wider volunteer initiatives. A strong case was made that RDAs should receive some administrative support to improve their capacity to facilitate community partnerships and volunteer initiatives.
- A number of partnership opportunities exist between community social action groups. For example, three different organizations in the Clarenville Town Hall highlighted the need for life skills training among their client groups. In terms of addressing this need, the potential for a joint initiative was obvious.

These are but examples of partnership opportunities that exist in the region. A key role of the SSP Committee should be to follow-up with local groups to encourage and facilitate particular initiatives.

D.   *What should the community's role be in social and economic development?*
Whether local or regional in scale, communities can be defined as collectivities of individuals working for common goals and interests.   It is fundamental unit without which social and economic development would not be possible. Strong leadership at the community level is essential for the achievement of progress. .

E.   *What should the individual's role be in contributing to social and economic development?*
Productive and vibrant communities are possible only with strong participation and support from individuals in the community. As one Town Hall participant put very succinctly, *"rural Newfoundland would not survive without volunteers"*. As discussed in Section 3.7, there are many types of volunteers who contribute in valuable but different ways to their communities. Some provide essential leadership in the community through formal organizations such as town councils, service groups, and special interest organizations. Many others contribute in less visible ways such as helping out elderly neighbours and other needy people in the community.

The well-being of a community is directly proportional to the willingness of community members to contribute to its needs. Vibrant communities have high levels of volunteerism. Non-vibrant communities are usually characterized by negative attitudes and apathy.

F.   *What are the major problems to be overcome in the ability and willingness of individuals and communities to help themselves?*
As revealed in the Town Hall discussions, many communities and organizations are suffering due to declining volunteerism. Fewer individuals are stepping forward to contribute to the needs of communities. We heard various instances of organizations that have closed for this reason. Various reasons are documented in Section 3. Some of these include:
• The decrease of volunteers is creating heavier workloads for those who remain. This is contributing to volunteer burnout and in turn discouraging new people from stepping forward.
• Regulations and red tape affecting volunteers and fundraising activities are discouraging people from becoming involved.
• Legal liability is becoming an increasing impediment for volunteers and organizations, for example, volunteer fire fighters and youth group leaders.
• Older volunteers have cited community apathy and negative attitudes as a constraint.
• Generational differences and turf protection by longtime volunteers are discouraging young people from volunteering.
• Lack of financial incentives and assistance from government is holding back community initiatives and discouraging people from volunteering.

- There is a lack of funding for paid staff to facilitate and coordinate volunteer groups. This is particularly a constraint in more rural areas lacking strong institutional capacity.

G.   *What should government's role be in helping communities and individuals develop and grow?*

The Town Halls revealed a divergence of views concerning government's role in facilitating social and economic development. A few participants placed overwhelming emphasis on government's responsibilities, and tended to blame government for many of the ills facing their communities. The large majority, however, took a more pragmatic view, as reflected in the following comments:

- Government's most important role is to provide for a social safety net so that all members of the community have a basic income for food and shelter and access to reasonable health care and education opportunities.
- Government has a responsibility, in partnership with community organizations, to provide a hand-up to the most vulnerable and at-risk members of society, including families and children living in poverty, the elderly, mentally and physically disabled people, people with literacy and life skills problems, etc.
- Government should remove barriers and provide reasonable incentives to encourage and facilitate volunteer organizations.
- Government should facilitate local partnership and capacity building initiatives aimed helping communities to help themselves.
- Government has a responsibility to assist, facilitate, and in some cases, provide leadership in economic development.

H.   *What should the regional partner's role be in helping communities and individuals develop and grow?*

The SSP Regional Steering Committee should play a pivotal role in facilitating social and economic development objectives. The need for three essential types of intervention emerged from the Town Hall discussions. First is to provide support long-term sustained initiatives. Second is to respond quickly to opportunities that arise, in other words, to strike while the iron is hot. Third is to intervene within government circles to influence positive program and policy changes.

The Town Halls highlighted many issues that require long-term intervention to bring about and sustain positive change. For example, long-term measures are necessary to combat declining volunteerism. This must take place on numerous fronts, for example, public education and promotion, positive reinforcement, development of more supportive policies and incentives, reducing red tape and legal liability barriers, capacity building, and awareness building within government. Long-term involvement is also required in areas related to supporting vulnerable and at-risk people in the community, for example, children needing special educational intervention, disabled people, adults needing literacy and life skills training, isolated seniors, etc.

The second type of intervention involves responding quickly to facilitate opportunities that arise. There were a couple of good examples of this in the Town Halls. At least two

Forums broached the need for some form of municipal integration. On both occasions, a constructive discussion ensued involving members of different town councils, suggesting that the time may be right for those communities to explore the idea further. In another Forum, representatives of three separate organizations identified the pressing need for life skills training among their client groups. In the ensuing discussion, it became obvious there was an opportunity for a partnership of the three organizations to pursue this need. In these types of situations, the SSP could play a productive facilitation role by encouraging further discussions and acting as an intermediary.

The third important role for the SSP Committee involves issues that essentially are larger than the Eastern Region and cannot be resolved through local action alone. One example, is the concern raised that excessive regulation is impeding the ability of local groups to hold church raffles and other small fundraising events. Another, is the concern about the impact of increasing legal liability on volunteer organizations. The role of the SSP Committee in these types of situations should be to bring them to the attention of the appropriate authorities and, if appropriate, advocate for positive changes.

4.2   Reviewing the SSP Goals

The purpose of this section is to comment on the appropriateness of the four major goals outlined in the SSP Eastern Region Work plan in the context of input received in the Town Halls. As well, its purpose is to propose additional goals and objectives if they are not adequately addressed in the existing work plan.

The Work plan's four goals are as follows:
1.   Build community capacity
2.   Foster life long learning
3.   Promote health and social development through prevention and early intervention
4.   Build partnerships

Goal 1: Build Community Capacity
Under this goal the work plan states two objectives:
- Support the development of leadership
- Support the development of volunteerism as well as individual and community participation

This goal and its objectives are fully relevant to major themes emerging from the Town Halls. The proposed program activities are also appropriate. The SSP Committee should review proposed solutions in Section 3.0 to determine whether any should be added to the work plan under this goal.

Goal 2: Foster Life Long Learning
The work plan states two objectives under this goal:
- Link and coordinate activities on Early Literacy Development
- Advocate for a culture of life long learning

The proposed program activities under these objectives are relevant to several major issues and proposed solutions discussed in Section 3, including early childhood education, literacy development, and life skills development.

This section however does not address some major issues relating to the regular school curriculum that were discussed in the Town Halls. These concerns and proposed solutions are outlined in Section 3.1 C. They include curriculum standards, approaches to remedial education, parent outreach, the needs of students from small communities, student co-op programs, career counseling, etc. It is suggested that the SSP Committee review these issues to determine whether they should be addressed in this section of the work plan.

Goal 3: Promote Health and Social Development through Prevention and Early Intervention
This goal includes two objectives:
- Promote lifestyle changes which result in better health for citizens
- Promote pilot projects/initiatives focusing on health research

The first objective is certainly relevant to the Town Hall discussions as reflected in Section 3.5 B and other sections that refer to community recreational needs. While the proposed program activities under Objective 1 are appropriate, they do not explicitly address the importance of physical exercise and recreation for personal health. The issue of recreational infrastructure and programming was raised at several Town Halls. If this subject were to be included in the Work plan, this would be an appropriate section for its inclusion.

Program Activity 3 under Objective 1 would probably be the most far-reaching in its effect on promoting healthy lifestyles. There is a desperate need for stronger outreach to encourage and help at-risk people develop more productive and healthy lifestyles through positive action. Literacy, employment, and social inclusion contribute enormously to self-esteem, mental and physical health, and the well-being of the community. Outreach is also extremely important in getting information to parents so that they are aware of the value of early intervention for the well-being of their children.

Program Activity 1 under the second objective is directly relevant to healthy lifestyle issues discussed in Section 3.5. Program Activity 2 refers mainly to violence in schools and the community. While this received virtually no discussion in the Town Halls it is certainly relevant to many of the issues discussed.

Goal 4: Build Partnerships
The three objectives under this goal include:
- Promote better utilization of available resources
- Promote the development of community/regional pride
- Promote inclusion in the community (getting people involved)

Objective 1 is fully relevant to input received in the Town Halls, but is somewhat vague in how it relates to Goal 4. Consideration should be given to rephrasing Objective 1 so that it is more action oriented with respect to the SSP Committee's role in facilitating partnerships. It is proposed that it be stated as follows – *"Promote and facilitate partnerships between communities and organizations to improve services and benefits for residents of the Eastern Region."* This should build on opportunities identified in the Town Halls for resource sharing and stronger integration between municipalities, fire departments, recreational associations, and social service organizations.

Several of the proposed solutions in Section 3 relate to resource sharing and partnerships. Of the three proposed Program Activities under this objective, Program 2, which refers to the role of youth as partners in social and economic development, is most directly relevant. The other two seem somewhat less relevant, certainly less direct in terms of identifying opportunities for better resource utilization and partnerships.

Objective 2 is somewhat of a motherhood statement, but is clearly intent on stimulating positive attitudes by residents towards their communities. Section 3.7 E addresses the impacts of negative attitudes on community well-being and volunteerism. It proposes a public relations campaign to encourage more positive attitudes regarding communities and volunteers.

Objective 3 is perhaps the most important SSP objective. Involvement of as many people as possible in community activities is one of the surest ways to build positive feelings and community well-being. A weakness of this section, however, is that it does not propose tangible program activities aimed at inclusion. Program activities under this section should target specific program measures to facilitate increased involvement by youth (e.g. the Youth Mobilizing Youth project on the Burin Peninsula), low income groups, disabled people, the elderly, and ordinary community members who, for one reason or another, do not normally get involved.

4.3 Additions to Work Plan

4.3.1 Consideration of other Issues
The issues outlined below are included in the Section 3 analysis, but are either not included in the Work plan or are understated. The Committee should consider the extent to which some or all of these should be included in the Work plan.

They include:
- Educational and career development initiatives to help stem youth out-migration
- Recreational facilities and programs
- Post-secondary education
- Seniors issues such as low incomes, housing, social isolation, independent living, and home care
- Economic development and employment issues
- Health care
- Municipal government, infrastructure and services

4.3.2 Proposed Fifth Goal

The following is proposed as a fifth goal to be included in the Work plan:

Goal: Support Policy and Program Development Provincially and Nationally

This proposed role for the SSP Committee is already discussed in Section 4.1 H. The consultant feels it is very important for the SSP Committee to draw on its own knowledge and experience to promote positive change on issues that cannot be resolved alone through local action. This role would include provision of information, making government aware of particular issues and their impacts, and advocating for improvements to policies, programs and regulations.

Suggested Objectives

- Contribute to government awareness of the impacts and effects of policies and programs.
- Advocate for positive change to government policies, programs and regulations.