

Stephenville-Port aux Basques Regional Council Vision Development



Sandbanks Provincial Park

What is a Vision?

This document represents a vision that has been created by the Stephenville-Port aux Basques regional council members. It is not intended to achieve a final form, but rather it will continue to be a working document. This will allow it to be adapted as the region and province continues to grow and change over time. The vision will identify what citizens want to see in 15-20 years. Today that time frame is 2022-2027. In five years, that time frame will be 2027-2032.

From the Vision, Regional Priorities will be developed. As priorities are accomplished new priorities will be identified. This will provide an opportunity for us to be informed about what is moving and changing in our region, where the next opportunity will be and where the next challenge will be. It will also provide a challenge for all involved to have faith in the process and realize that it will take time until these priorities are accomplished. It takes time to make significant change and it is important for this council to remain focused on the future, even in the midst of immediate challenges.

Introduction

The Stephenville – Port aux Basques Rural Secretariat region encompasses Stephenville, Port au Port Peninsula, Bay St. George South and extending to Codroy Valley and Port aux Basques area including communities along the south

coast from Isle aux Morts to the community of Francois.

One of the primary tasks that the Rural Secretariat is focused on in support of regional sustainability is to provide support to the work of the provincial and regional councils of the Rural Secretariat. These councils consist of individuals from larger and smaller towns with backgrounds that encompass economic, social, cultural and environmental development. Through their collective knowledge, they will develop a shared vision outlining what they would like to see the region look like in the future.

The approach taken by the regional council members - supported by government - was to begin looking at the situation in their region honestly and realistically. During this process, regional council members quickly began to realize that the factors affecting the region ranged from a declining fishery to a declining and aging population to health care issues to global competition - and that's to only identify a few. As the regional council members, with support from the Rural Secretariat, began to work through the process of reviewing and discussing these various factors and looking at a vision for 2022, it became obvious that in order to reach the vision, it would have to be applied against a set of criteria.

The Rural Secretariat

The Rural Secretariat focuses on the sustainable development of all regions of the province. It promotes information sharing, informed dialogue and collaboration within government and between government and communities. It facilitates horizontal thinking on regional issues and is focused on the long-term sustainability of all regions of Newfoundland & Labrador. The secretariat conducts research, develops processes and tools, and engages citizens to enhance the consideration of regional issues in public policy Development.

The Regional Council

The regional council is comprised of members from larger and smaller communities, males and females who bring a diverse background in experience and expertise.

To view a current list of the members, please visit our membership list on our website at:

www.gov.nl.ca/rural

Rural Secretariat

*Regions &
Government
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As a result, criteria were developed consisting of the following four questions.

- i. Is the vision sustainable?
- ii. Is it achievable?
- iii. Is the vision realistic?
- iv. Is it affordable?

Also, the regional council would like to ensure the following principles be considered and factored into what needs to be done to achieve the vision:

- An approach that is based on sustainable development that integrates economic, social, environmental and cultural principles.
- Any solutions/ideas/decisions for the future are a shared responsibility among individuals, communities, regions and government.
- That everyone should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from sustainable development.
- That economic, social and environmental progress be measured.
- That decisions are based on sound research and evidence to ensure we are living within our means as a region and province.

The above set of criteria and principles will be incorporated into future discussions with various groups / organizations and individuals in the region to explore the topic - *what do we need to do to get there?* These discussions will, over time, begin to identify and influence government policies, programs and services required to achieve sustainability, as well as helping to influence a collaborative approach by individuals, communities and others in the region.

The Vision

In the year 2022, we see the Stephenville - Port aux Basques Region as a place that offers exciting economic opportunities, multi-cultural diversity and unmatched scenic beauty. It will be a region that leads the province in many categories.

There is a positive attitude toward the region which is fundamentally supported by: a belief and pride in ones

region, an ability to seize opportunity, a positive outlook for the future, an overall value placed on lifestyle, and an understanding of what it means to be living here by choice.

The Stephenville - Port aux Basques Region in detail:

Fishery

The fishery is no longer the employer of last resort, in fact, the fishery has undergone dramatic changes since the moratoria of 1992. The fishery has been restructured whereby emphasis is now placed on quality vs quantity both from harvesting and processing perspectives. The fishery in 2022 is an industry where less people are involved with harvesting and processing. This has resulted in fewer fishing enterprises and fewer processing plants in the region and province. However, with the growth of aquaculture and more emphasis on quality and an adoption of doing more with less attitude, the industry has created a much more stable employment situation for those in the industry. Ultimately, there are fewer people working longer periods of time in the industry.

Agriculture

The industry in this region has diversified (vegetable, dairy, red meat, berries, etc.) and there has been significant growth. The sector now includes value added and secondary processing. The industry was promoted and branded in a manner to attract young people. As opposed to in the past, agriculture is introduced in the school system during the early years and is available at the post secondary level for specialized training. Also, the R & D provided by the education sector has been invaluable to the advancement of the industry and will continue to be integral on a go forward basis.

Land issues have been dealt with at the legislative and private levels. As a result large parcels of arable land are no longer sitting idle; agricultural land that is not being utilized is made accessible and available to farmers.

Technological advances in the industry in conjunction with more farmers and diversity implies that the agricultural industry will continue to grow.

The industry players continue to move regions and the province forward in agriculture. Much of the produce now purchased locally is also grown locally which has resulted in a decline of imported produce. Best practices have been adopted to ensure that any environmental impact on soil is minimized.

Forestry

With the global crisis in the newsprint industry and the closure of the mill in Stephenville focus on how our forest resources were being used had to change. In 2022, even though the industry is smaller and does not employ the same numbers it did in the past, it is still a major component of the economic stability in the region. The forestry sector in the region consists of small businesses focused on creating products that are able to compete in any market - provincial, national or international. The industry is utilizing both softwood and hardwood to create its products.

Mining and Energy

In past decades, there has been considerable activity in the region with mineral exploration. In 2022 the production levels are high, but so is the stewardship level, with particular attention being paid to impacts on the environment. Oil production on the Port au Port Peninsula is coming to fruition and aggregate is being shipped in abundance to the eastern United States, creating employment in the region.



Codroy Valley Coastline

Also, as a result of the continued growth in demand for energy, there was an increase in the effort of research and development for alternative sources of energy. The emphasis is being placed on more environmentally sustainable methods employed to generate the power we require. This created opportunities in the region for research and development activities such as wind powered energy.

Manufacturing

By 2022, activity in the manufacturing sector in the region has become more diversified. The region has capitalized on the outsourcing by companies from other provinces and as a result a variety of companies have set up operations. There is continued promotion of this province as a good place for companies to operate from, and, where they can be profitable. The industry sector is driven by collaboration and clustering amongst the various industry operators. It has meant significant investments in machinery, equipment and technology and also in the transportation infrastructure in the region. More and more companies are attempting to position themselves whereby they are concentrating on growing their share of the export markets.

The region has a better educated workforce as a result of partnerships between industry and educational institutions. Wages for employees have increased because of demand and combined with other incentives and benefits these employees will be retained in the region.

Information Technology

The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its tools in the field of education has seen tremendous growth in the recent past. Technology has entered the classroom in a big way, to become part of the teaching and learning process. In addition, it has made this sector appealing to youth and some are recognizing opportunities whereby they can stay in the region and earn a living.

Access to higher speed Internet is available and accessible to those who want it. Also, all appropriate ICT infrastructure is in place to allow rural communities to utilize it for an array of activities, not the least of which include the education and health care systems.

Appropriate use of IT has meant easier and cheaper access to information for private businesses and others that have resulted in growth in the knowledge based economy in the region. Also, with the ability to more easily purchase innovation, local firms have been able to increase things such as productivity, competitiveness, and, at the same time develop more products and services.

Tourism

Over the past decade and a half leading into the year 2022, the tourism sector has developed into a year round industry in the region. The growth in the industry is a result of more networking and clustering across industry operators. The private industry operators in this region have developed a product which is supported by the various not-for-profit groups and have positioned themselves so they can compete on a provincial, national and international level. Also contributing to growth in the industry is the reliable and service oriented ferry service connecting the province to the rest of Canada and the United States via Nova Scotia.

The industry operators were paying attention to the demographic changes occurring in the world and as a result, they developed an industry to accommodate and meet the needs and demands presented by those changes. It is an industry that includes activities for those that are interested in culture and heritage as well as those more attracted to the adventurous side of the industry.

The tourism industry, as a part of its development strategy took an approach not to become an employer of last resort. Instead, the region has taken advantage of its strengths and concentrated efforts on marketing the area with success. Partnerships between the industry and the educational institutions have ensured there is a skilled labour supply matched with the demand. The industry sector has become very professionalized and the wages have increased accordingly.

Transportation

The region has a network of roads that provide efficient transportation for those who want or need to use it. The network of roads allow for the ease of transportation of goods and services to and from the region. It ensures the safe commute of our children to and from the schools. It is the vital link that provides the people who live in the region access to education and training, access to health care facilities, access to public services and access to employment opportunities as well as the opportunity to exploit the tourism industry.

The western region of the province has good competition between airlines ensuring reasonable air fares.

Also, marine infrastructure including strategically situated seaports in the region are utilized and maintained. It is a function of partnerships between private sector operators and where applicable, both the provincial and federal governments.

In the year 2022, the ferry service from Nova Scotia to Port aux Basques is employing a new fleet of ships including a faster ferry during peak periods. There are now two loading/unloading docks in Port aux Basques.

The vessel replacement strategy developed by the provincial government resulted in an adequate intra-provincial ferry system servicing the isolated communities with scheduling in place that allow these areas to exploit the tourism industry.

This infrastructure has allowed Port aux Basques to build itself as a major warehousing / distribution center.



Education

The continued decline in enrollment numbers in the region resulted in fewer schools that are strategically located and where feasible are supported by feeder schools. Despite that, our children are able to learn in a public school system that is second to none and where students master the skills to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers in the classroom and beyond. An approach has been adopted whereby our children are introduced to concepts of being innovative and creative at a much earlier age than in the past. The students are receiving the highest quality of education that is available. Appropriate level of technology has been introduced thus allowing all schools to have access to the various courses regardless of location.

A society has been created whereby the schools are truly valued and have become community schools and are utilized for a multitude of purposes. The schools have become very accessible and integrated.

We have a post-secondary system on the west coast that provides access to top tier programs ranging from business to trades and technology to entrepreneurship. Youth in the region are now able to complete an array of university degrees on the west coast. The College of the North Atlantic delivers various specialized training programs that is attracting students from outside the region and province.

The Stephenville - Port aux Basques Region has in the past and continues to produce top notched qualified individuals thus providing an extremely talented and skilled labour pool.

Supporting the exceptional public school system is an equally exceptional network of roads in the region.

Health Care

Like other regions, this region has modern health care facilities and is supported by clinics in various locations throughout the region.

Each of the major health care facilities across the province have a designated specialization that serves the whole province.

The result of an aging population has created more demand for institutional care of seniors. In addition to continued and enhanced government

home support programs, there is an increase in the number of privately operated seniors' homes in the region.

To increase accessibility and reduce wait times, there are more mobile services being utilized and made available within the region. Also, there is more utilization of nurse practitioners in the region. And, more advanced technologies are now being utilized by the health system for diagnostic and treatment services. There is more awareness and promotion of a healthy population through preventative measures and every person taking more responsibility for their health.

Environment

In 2022 we need to ensure we are extracting the maximum amount from our waste stream and reuse it for other things. The region will have a comprehensive recycling program where everyone participates.

New innovative ideas are developed that encourage people and businesses to utilize the materials for other processes and/or industries. Environmentally friendly technology must be utilized. It is an era where development at any costs to the environment is no longer an accepted practice.

Culture

With the dramatic changes caused by the demographic shift and global competition pressures, people have looked at what is of real value to them and how to go forward while preserving some of these values. It is having this sense of history which allows people to feel pride and commitment to an area. These values are being preserved in large part through our artists, Aboriginal peoples, Francophone community, and an integration of the arts within the curriculum of the secondary education system.

Social Economy

The region has always had a strong history with a litany of non-profit groups/organizations representing the social economy. These groups / organizations over time became known as social enterprises. These enterprises have been very important and integral in building strong communities within the region from many different perspectives including

quality of life. It is important to continue to ensure our social economy is supported and promoted as an asset to our lifestyle and/or values.

Making It Happen!

What do we need to make this vision a reality? We have to plan out as citizens and government working together what we are prepared to do to make it happen. We must ensure there is inclusion and participation. All citizens must know that their contributions are valued.

Leadership - there must be collaboration between communities within the region. Municipalities and other non-incorporated communities in the region must recognize the benefits of working together and sharing resources (physical and human). We all need to recognize opportunity. We must continue to create a strong economic base. There is a need to employ creativity around new ideas, new opportunities, and new approaches.

Such things as health and education provision have and will continue to change. Choices will need to be made to enable all to access a good quality of services. Everyone must be prepared to apply critical thinking and pose questions regarding trade-offs and implications so that we gain the knowledge required to make the right decisions. This has to be a shared responsibility - regions and government working together.

Rural Secretariat

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