

CHOICE NOT CIRCUMSTANCE
THE VICTORIA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

June, 2000

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Acknowledgements

Particular thanks for the development of this plan must go to Warden John G. MacInnes, the Victoria County Council and its Community Economic Development Committee: Catherine Ann Fuller, Kelvin Hussey, Jeremy Frith, George Maher, Brian Fitzgerald, Joliene Stockley, Osborne Burke, Jim Morrow, Gerald Sampson, Gerald Yetman, Tom Wilson, and especially to all of those contributors whose names are listed at the end of the plan.

Financial support came from Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, the Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency and the Municipality of Victoria County.

And very special recognition must go to the following for their excellent work collecting and analysing information that went into the strategic planning process: Minerva MacInnis, Candace Christiano, Jody Stockley and Aaron Schneider.

This plan was prepared by R.M. Schneider Associates for the Victoria County Council in the spring of 2000.

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CHOICE NOT CIRCUMSTANCE THE VICTORIA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan was written under direction of the Victoria County Council through its Community Economic Development Committee. Financial assistance came from the Municipality, Strait-Highlands Regional Development Association and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. Information was collected and analysed from background documents, existing community plans, and from over 160 individuals, all of which combined to provide a definition of development, a vision, a review of key sectors and an action plan.

The purpose of this plan is to set a strategic direction for Victoria County that will strengthen communities economically, socially and environmentally. The County consists of 2768 square kilometres populated with approximately 8500 people. Population has been slowly declining over the past decade, and the out-migration of youth is leaving an older population, with the exception of Wagmatcook First Nation. The unemployment rate is high, and over 50% of the labour force have no high school diploma. Victoria County has the lowest average employment income and the highest dependency ratio of the four Cape Breton counties.

However, the County has significant physical and social Assets, making it a place where people choose to live. Many of the Concerns listed are structural: government cuts in funding, privatisation and the downloading of public responsibilities have created increased pressures on communities and volunteers, changes in the Canada Assistance Plan and in eligibility for unemployment insurance have been particularly stressful on seasonal and part-time workers. Lack of funding has meant cuts in services and use of casual labour. Natural resources are under stress as well, as timber demands increase and the fishery, forestry, tourism and culture are threatened by potential oil and gas exploration.

A sector overview followed by issues, opportunities and suggested strategies is provided on ten key sectors:

Fishing

Information Technology

Aquaculture
Forestry
Mining
Agriculture
Tourism
Arts and Culture

Health
Infrastructure

A section on Governance and Finance first discusses the roles of the municipal government and the Strait Highlands Regional Development Agency, and follows with a discussion of money that might be available to the County and the province.

Finally, the Action Plan is built from the information given throughout the preceding pages. Seven Principles are followed by six Goals and thirty Objectives with supporting actions.

Principles:

- Define what we need to live well in Victoria County, not what is needed by someone else in some other place. Recognise our own “defining life-style”.
- Develop what we do well and what we like. Maintain community control and ownership of projects; plan carefully, and include everyone who will be affected in the planning process.
- Encourage niche products in all sectors, small inns and bed and breakfast accommodations, home-based seniors’ facilities, small institutions, home restaurants and farmers’ markets.
- Emphasize quality over quantity. Plan unique trails, viewpoints, exhibits, festivals and activities. Promote attractive signage.
- Diversify the economy and be realistic about seasonal employment. It is a reality that our major industries are based on seasons. Seek to develop complementary seasonal employment, to expand the season in fishing and tourism, to find opportunities for “paid work” rather than “jobs,” and to encourage entrepreneurs and artists.

- Recognise that our interests go beyond county lines. Think in terms of watersheds and bioregions, such as the Bras d'Or Lake system and the Greater Highlands Ecosystem. Protect the natural and cultural environment on which all our economic sectors are based.
- Take the time to seek understanding and agreement between communities on long-term goals. Think interdependence as well as independence, and balance sector interests. Recognise that all development is not beneficial. Analyse risks and benefits openly to be sure the latter outweigh the former.

Goals:

I. Health and Education

To ensure that all Victoria County Residents can meet their health needs and can access the education and training necessary to develop the skills needed in the new workplace.

II. Infrastructure

To provide the physical and social infrastructure that will support and expand existing activities, provide employment, and bring new residents to Victoria County.

III. Niche Products

To develop and market specialty products and services, increasing value-added products in all sectors, and establishing small-scale quality institutions.

IV. Finance

To provide additional funds for infrastructure, project and program development, and services in Victoria County.

V. Governance

To strengthen the municipal government so that it better represents and supports all areas and sectors of Victoria County, and to increase its leadership role with other jurisdictions.

VI. Sectors

To additionally strengthen the fishery, forestry and tourism sectors in Victoria County beyond what is suggested in the five Goals above.

Finally, under Implementation, is the suggestion that a Director of Development be hired to oversee the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This person would report to the CED Committee and would be responsible for establishing a team composed of including the County Clerk, the Strait-Highlands Regional Development Association Development Officer and others to work with those named in the Strategic Plan and the Council to ensure that the objectives are reached on schedule. Such a person would have an extensive background in planning, evaluation and implementation in a rural context as well as a proven ability to achieve objectives in collaboration with community groups, municipal governments, provincial and federal agencies. A progress report would be given to the Council and to all County residents on an annual basis, beginning in November, 2001. Evaluation would include the results achieved through the actions listed under each objective.

Vision

Residents of Victoria County consistently speak of their love of the land, of their environment that is envied throughout the world for its scenery, its clean air and water. They speak of wanting to provide jobs for their children and the need for appropriate development that supports a diverse economy. They are concerned about community health and are aware of the need to overcome barriers to co-operation.

United in respect for our natural surroundings and for the integrity of our local communities, residents of Victoria County are determined to live and work productively. We will:

- *join with others here and beyond the County line to ensure an economically, socially and environmentally sound future in which our children and their children can take their rightful place.*
- *support development that will enhance our cultural and natural resources and the beauty of our countryside.*

- *encourage a diverse local economy built on a sound physical and social infrastructure.*

Recognising the short period of time for its initial development, this document will be advertised and made available throughout the County for further reading and discussion until early fall of 2000, at which time the CED Committee will host a public workshop. Copies of the document will be available from Councillors, in libraries, at CAP sites, on-line through e-mail and www.victoriacounty.com, and on request from organisations to the CED Committee (in care of Tom Wilson, 295-3664, fax: 295-1864, e-mail: vcrdt@auracom.com).

CHOICE NOT CIRCUMSTANCE
THE VICTORIA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN
FINAL DRAFT
June, 2000

I. Introduction

Over the past few years, Victoria County Council has recognised a need for a County wide plan that will co-ordinate and support existing community plans and initiatives while focusing the use of human and financial resources in the County. Such a plan would set municipal priorities within the context of provincial government planning that includes the Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency, the Economic Adjustment Fund public consultation process and its report, *Growing the New Economy*, and the Nova Scotia government's stated interest in community-based economic development.

In the spring of 1999, the Council set up a joint committee of Councillors, representatives from the Strait Highland Regional Development Agency, and representatives of community and business groups: the Victoria County Community Economic Development (CED) Committee. The Committee's first priority was to develop a strategic plan for the County.

Accordingly, in February of 2000, proposals were solicited for the planning process and R.M. Schneider Associates was selected to draft Victoria County's Strategic Plan. The Committee and Planning Team recognised that community development organisations on the Iona Peninsula, in the St. Ann's Bay Area, and North of Smokey have and are implementing existing plans, and that Baddeck has a report from the 1992 US/UK/CN Countryside Stewardship Exchange. The County's plan would be based on these and on information gathered from County residents placed in the context of current economic and demographic trends, and geographic and cultural realities.

II. Methodology

Five people worked from February to May collecting and analysing information for this plan. Background documents and the various existing community plans were read, data was compiled from Statistics Canada, the Nova Scotia Department of Finance's Statistics Division, the Cape Breton-Victoria District School Board, Public Health Services, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development and elsewhere. Their availability to meet with any interested individuals and organisations was advertised, and they interviewed over one hundred and sixty people in Victoria County. They met with representatives of Provincial and Federal government agencies and with a variety of community groups.

In May, a draft plan was presented to the CED Committee and, once approved, to the communities in Victoria County both electronically through the Community Access Program (CAP) sites and through public meetings. A final draft, based on comments received, was prepared and presented in June.

Throughout the process, communication was maintained with the CED Committee and the County Council. The Committee provided support and advice, contact lists and references. The County Warden, the Administrative Officer and Councillors were readily available to respond to questions and information as it was gathered.

What follows is based on that information. As a strategic plan is valid only insofar as it reflects the views of those for whom the plan is written, it is hoped that residents in Victoria County will recognise their thinking in this plan, and that the County Council and the communities whose voices are here will take the lead in its implementation.

III. Community Development

Community development integrates the economic, social and environmental resources of a community to create a stable, sustainable way of life for those who live there. It is a dynamic process where local people work together to improve their lives. Economic development therefore must be multifaceted and includes personal, social, health, and education elements. In Victoria County, this means creating sustainable jobs and ensuring the future through supporting our culture and protecting our environment. True community development comes from the bottom up and involves as many individuals and organisations as possible in the process.

Individuals and communities are questioning how much control they can have over their future in a world where our jobs and businesses, our environment and the future of our society are increasingly linked to globalisation. We are living in a world where the five hundred largest multinational corporations account for seventy percent of global trade, and where people around the world are becoming part of an integrated global consumer market, with the same products and advertisements. In Canada, the gap between the rich and the poor is one of the widest among leading industrial countries, and it is growing. As globalisation concentrates economic power in fewer hands and brings increased competition in all sectors, it is harder for small business-people, workers and rural communities to have an impact on their economic future.

It is through investing in different solutions and accepting and respecting alternatives that we can foster more success stories, and perhaps, ultimately, a global success story.
-Sanjit (Bunker) Roy

Making decisions in an increasingly complex world demands the clear setting of long-term community goals, objectives towards these goals, and ways to achieve them. This allows local people to speak with a unified voice, to establish community priorities, to discuss the costs and benefits of proposed development, and to determine appropriate action. Strategic planning helps to ask the right questions and to elicit some of the answers. It is a framework for the achievement of economic and social goals. The resulting plan documents the development activity a community realistically hopes to accomplish and what actions must be taken to accomplish it.

It is true that people go where there are jobs. Cape Breton has a long history of workers leaving to work in the kitchens of Boston, on the Lake boats in Ontario and in the oilfields in Alberta. And Cape Breton has exported nurses, doctors, chemists, teachers, artists, musicians and others. It is also true, however, that good communities attract people and industries who in turn create jobs. These are communities with solid social and physical infrastructures, communities where people respect each other and their environment; in other words, healthy communities.

The purpose of this plan, then, is to set a strategic direction for Victoria County that, if followed, will strengthen our communities economically, socially and environmentally. It will help protect what communities value so that Victoria County remains a place where people choose to live, and will assist in creating the economic options that support their vision.

IV. Vision

Residents of Victoria County consistently speak of their love of the land, of their environment that is envied throughout the world for its scenery, its clean air and water. They speak of wanting to provide jobs for their children and the need for appropriate development that supports a diverse economy. They are concerned about community health and are aware of the need to overcome barriers to co-operation.

United in respect for our natural surroundings and for the integrity of our local communities, residents of Victoria County are determined to live and work productively. We will:

- *join with others here and beyond the County line to ensure an economically, socially and environmentally sound future in which our children and their children can take their rightful place.*

- *support development that will enhance our cultural and natural resources and the beauty of our countryside.*
- *encourage a diverse local economy built on a sound physical and social infrastructure.*

V. Victoria County: Description

Victoria County is composed of five distinct geographic areas: North of Smokey Mountain, South of Smokey, half of Boulardarie Island, Middle River, and the Iona Peninsula. Its extensive coastlines stretch from St. Lawrence Bay and Aspy Bay in the north along the Atlantic coast to St. Ann's Bay, along the Great Arm of the Bras d'Or Lakes and St. Patrick's Channel and around the Iona Peninsula. Major highways, including the Cabot Trail, cling to the coast punctuated by communities containing most of the County's population. The remainder live in valleys fed by streams and rivers flowing from the Highland Plateau.

The County is 2768 square kilometres, more than 80% of which is forest cover. Although there remain a few pockets of old growth forests in difficult to reach areas, the Highland Plateau itself has been intensively

<p><i>. . . a place where people live by choice, not by circumstance. - <u>Voices of St. Ann's</u></i></p>
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logged, as have been most of the accessible woodlands. One major gypsum company remains, and historically there have been many gypsum and aggregate quarries. The small farms that once dotted the countryside have largely disappeared, with the last major dairy farm operation in one farming community, Big Baddeck, closing this year.

Sparsely populated with approximately 8500 people, the County's geographic features (Smokey, Kelly's and Hunters' Mountains, dependence on ferries at Englishtown and Little Narrows, and the Seal Island Bridge) challenge Countywide approaches to planning and development. Baddeck, the County seat, is one hundred and fifty kilometres from the furthest points in the County.

Demographics

As can be seen by graphs in Appendix A, Victoria County has experienced a slowly declining population of approximately 3% over the past decade. That decline has been twice as great in the northern area. Wagmatcook First Nation, where population has increased by 20%, is the only area that has grown. The general downward trend is part of the overall decline of population in Cape Breton that has been going on for over thirty years. (Figures 1,2)

The declining birth rate, increased longevity and out-migration of youth create an older population. The net migration (the difference between in- and out-migration) indicates the out-migration of youth. Many are probably going away to school (ages 18-24) or work (25-44). As the 25-44 year old group leaves, it takes with it many of the 0-17 year olds. The 45-65 year old group is the only one showing an increase in in-migration. (Figures 3,4,5)

It is important to note, however, that more than a thousand immigrants have come here since 1993, many for the same reasons that people may have left. Earlier, in the 1970s, the “back-to-the-landers” came because the area was undeveloped, rural, and offered potential. They found opportunities here: inexpensive land, abundant natural resources and friendly and supportive communities. Many of them remained to run successful small and medium sized businesses.

Nevertheless, although the total population in the County is projected to decline by only 1.2% by the year 2012, the change in its age composition from the decrease in the three youngest groups and an increase in the two oldest groups means an ageing and less fertile population. (Figure 6 and Tables 6,7)

Education

School consolidations and closures could continue to be a problem for Victoria County if the decline in school enrolments continues as predicted to 2012. The profiles above on birth rates and migration indicate the loss of young adults to other regions and a decrease of young, childbearing, families in the County. (Figure 7 and Table 8)

There is a direct relationship between lack of education and unemployment. More than half of the labour force in the County have no high school diploma, and almost 95% have no university degree (Figure 9), although there is a demonstrated interest in upgrading and obtaining specific skills.

The Economy

Since the 1960s, the Cape Breton economy has undergone some dramatic structural changes due to the decline of its major industries and changing demographics. Over the past thirty years, the economy has moved from goods-producing to service-producing. Almost 47% of all people employed on the Island in 1961 worked in the goods-producing sector. By 1996, that number was down to 20.5%. Consequently, ‘where people are working’ has changed dramatically over the last three decades. While coal and steel employed 24% of the labour force in 1961, today that percentage has dropped to 4%. (Table 10)

In 1973 the top 10% of Canadian families earned an average income 21 times higher than the bottom 10% . . . By 1996 the top 10% earned 314 times as much as the families in the bottom 10%.
- *Social Watch, 1999*

The 1996 census data places Cape Breton first in the percentage of income from government transfers out of all seventy-four Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) with populations exceeding 25,000. Other economic indicators also rank Cape Breton as the worst performing CMA. Victoria County is in worse condition than Cape Breton overall according to most indicators. (Table 9)

Between 1991 and 1996, the unemployment rate for Victoria increased by almost two-thirds. As a result of high unemployment rates, regional labour force participation rates have remained low compared to other regions. As an important measure of a region’s economic health, the “participation rate” is the extent of a population’s involvement in the paid labour force. It is a measure of the percentage of the working age population that is employed or unemployed but actively seeking work. A low participation rate often reflects the fact that there is a significant number of discouraged workers who are unemployed but are not actively seeking employment because of the present economic environment.

The good news is that Victoria County has a slightly higher participation rate than Cape Breton overall. The County has a labour force of 3830 out of a total population of 6635 who are over fifteen years old. 2365 are actually employed. (Figure 11 and Table 15)

Employment in the primary resources sector in the County is about 18% of the employed workforce, almost three times the average for Nova Scotia. Most employment (71%) is in the service sector. (Table 11, Figures 13 and 14). While manufacturing employment is a low 11%, there are 807 listed business establishments in the County (Table 14). Some of Statistics Canada's definitions may need clarification, however 215 business establishments are Fishing and Trapping (licensees). Of the 54 Manufacturers, Statistics Canada seems to be including studio craft shops and sawmills. Construction, Retail Trade and Food and Accommodation are among the more numerous small business employers. A breakdown of the labour force into industry divisions (Table 16) and broad categories of occupation (Table 17) indicates a high concentration of sales and service occupations (1155) followed by primary industry workers (655) and then by construction trades, transport and equipment operators (595).

*They're working for a billion dollar
tourist industry at disgraceful wages.
- Interviewee*

Victoria County has the lowest average employment income and the highest dependency ratio of the four counties in Cape Breton. Subdivision A (North) had the greatest loss of population (-5.7%) from '91 to '96, the highest unemployment rate, and the lowest percent of the population over twenty-five years of age with a university degree (8.2%). The average age in Wagmatcook (25 years) is only two-thirds of the County average (37 years). Wagmatcook's population has grown by 20%, in contrast to the average County decline of -2.6%, and while its incidence of university degrees appears higher than in Subdivision A, the average two-parent family income is the lowest of the three divisions. Subdivision B (South) is older and slightly better schooled, but 4% less so than the average Nova Scotian. (Tables 12, 13)

VI. Assets and Concerns

County Assets

In spite of the discouraging statistics, people want to live in Victoria County. As the numbers above show, there has been considerable in-migration, most recently of early retirees, returned former residents and others attracted by the County's rural beauty and its strong communities. Internet access, although still developing, has made it possible for many to stay in touch with former friends and colleagues and, in some cases, to continue working part-time.

County residents are seen as honest, conscientious people who are multi-skilled from years of seasonal and part-time work. They are good at self-providing. Given the opportunities, many are able to put together a living from complementary pieces of work throughout the year. Fishing is the main industry in the county with a vibrant in-shore fishery and active fishing ports, and the growth in tourism has provided many seasonal and some full-time jobs. A variety of entrepreneurs have been able to create successful businesses often based on primary resources or their natural surroundings.

<p><i>Canada's wealth is in the rural areas: talented creative people and resources.</i> – Interviewee</p>
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Changes that have occurred in Wagmatcook First Nations over the past six years have led to the paying off of the deficit, the construction and opening of an Enterprise Centre, and more young people working or attending university. There is also a new interest in working with the rest of the County on joint initiatives.

Other assets include the Bras d'Or Lake and the Highlands, two unique eco-systems. Half of Cape Breton Highlands National Park is in Victoria County, as is the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, the Gaelic College and the Highland Village. As well, there are provincial protected areas and numerous provincial parks and walking trails, including the North River trail to Nova Scotia's highest waterfall, Cabot Landing on Aspy Bay and Uisge Ban Falls in Big Baddeck. There are two world class golf courses in the County, Bell Bay and Highlands Links.

The County has two hospitals, Buchanan Memorial Health Centre in Neil's Harbour and Victoria County Memorial in Baddeck, as well as doctors' clinics. The St. Ann's Bay Community Health Centre offers clinics and health education programs; well-woman's clinics and other outreach programs are offered through both hospitals. There are four Seniors Citizens Complexes (Iona, Baddeck, Ingonish and Dingwall) as well as the Highland Manor in Neil's Harbour and Alderwood Rest Home in Baddeck.

Secondary schools are located in Baddeck, Neil's Harbour and Iona. Two high tech elementary schools are being completed North of Smokey, one in Boulardarie, and another is planned for Iona. The "artists' loop" around St. Ann's Bay is known for fine studio crafts, where the craftspeople encourage young apprentices. SAPPY, a summer arts performance program for youth, takes place in Baddeck each year, and the Gaelic College provides instruction in the Gaelic arts and culture, and the Community Learning Association North of Smokey (CLANS) is centred in Ingonish. The University College of Cape Breton is within commuting distance from some areas of the County and offers unique degree, diploma and certificate programs, applied research, and the second largest distance education program in Nova Scotia.

There are three libraries in the County, one in Cape North, one in Ingonish, and the Baddeck Public Library. In addition the Cape Breton Regional Library Bookmobile serves the county and there is an archives in Cabot High School in Neil's Harbour.

The *Victoria Standard*, published every two weeks to 5500 readers, supports communication within the County. Seven Community Access Program (CAP) sites are currently operating to provide public internet access

and encourage informal communication throughout the County, and two more have been approved.

Financial services come from the Highland Credit Union, Bay St. Lawrence Credit Union and from banks located in Ingonish and Baddeck. The Northside Economic Development Assistance Corporation (NEDAC) provides loans to small businesses. Since 1992 NEDAC has loaned over \$2.3 million to 78 businesses in the County. As well, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC) is a federal Crown corporation legislated to foster sustainable job development and economic growth on Cape Breton Island.

Overall, residents talk about their position wealth: the fact that they live where the waters are pollution free (many homes still have pure, gravity-fed stream water for drinking) and where the landscape is spectacular. Victoria County residents live in an area that people from around the world choose for holidays. The crime rate is low, the “informal economy” is strong, coming from a long-respected bartering system, and communities are still able to rally when individuals or families are in need.

We're told that we're a 'have-not' region, but we have it all.
-Interviewee

Concerns

Government cuts in funding and services, privatisation, and the downloading of public responsibilities have put increased pressures onto the municipality as well as onto communities and volunteers. Public wharves must now be maintained locally by harbour authorities and communities. Utilities, such as Nova Scotia Power Incorporated, are private, but the municipality can not tax their land and infrastructure. This further disadvantages a municipality that has a small tax base in a large geographic area. As well, the funding formula for public education based on number of students puts rural areas at a disadvantage and forces consolidation. At present, Victoria County has only one member on the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board.

The 1996 change from the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), a cost-sharing agreement between the federal and provincial governments, to the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) has allowed provinces to decide how to spend federal grants for social services without the CAP restrictions. This has meant major changes to social assistance funding because provinces

can make decisions based on cost savings rather than on need. The CHST allows the federal government to shift the blame for cutbacks in social services onto the provinces, and considerably less federal money for social programs is available at a time when unemployment and financial need are increasing.

Eligibility for UI was made more difficult in the 1980s. By 1990, 23% of unemployed workers were ineligible for UI. By 1996, this had increased to nearly 50%. UI was renamed Employment Insurance (EI) to promote a shift of emphasis from structural unemployment and job creation to the personal characteristics affecting “employability”. The duration of benefits was reduced, and those in full-time, full-year jobs could qualify for benefits earlier than those newly entering the labour force or repeat users of employment insurance. Employer’s contributions exclude contract workers, a policy that encourages employers to reduce full-time and part-time employees and replace them with contract workers. It now takes longer for most part-time workers, especially those working less than twenty-five hours a week, to qualify for benefits which results in lower total incomes and lower living standards.

What is happening in Victoria County and elsewhere is an increased use of casual labour in hospitals and schools, lack of funding for community based initiatives such as CED groups, health centres, education programs, and training programs for industry, as well as heavily overused volunteers. The EI structure encourages dependency, both for individuals and for those businesses that depend on it to keep a labour force available for seasonal employment or short term work. It also sets up disincentives: Those who go back to school lose their EI.

People would rather see five meaningful jobs created than one hundred seasonal, minimum wage jobs. - Interviewee

As well, the business occupancy tax as it is currently structured can be a disincentive to full-year employment. It is cut in half for a seasonal business, and employers in financial difficulty could be moved to close off-season, resulting in layoffs.

Natural resources are also under stress. Since 1975 there have been calls for management and co-operation to protect the Bras d’Or Lake that is shared by Victoria with the other three Cape Breton counties. The Lake is a 2500 sq. km. inland sea, slightly less saline than the Atlantic Ocean into which it drains through two narrow channels, one of which is a shipping lane. Water quality is decreasing because of run-off and inadequate wastewater treatment,

and at this time there are thirty-six closures of aquaculture sites. A green crab infestation has been noted both in the Bras d'Or and in St. Ann's Bay. There have been studies, conferences, a stewardship exchange, and proposals, all looking for ways to rationalise resource development and resource protection.

The question of rights over the use of public resources is ongoing in the County. There have been heated debates over leasing public land and water for any one industry and over management of protected areas with regard to traditional uses. Communities complain that they are given only partial information and are left out of decision-making processes.

The rights to Crown timber in the County are leased by Stora Enso, thus constricting the wood supply to some small and medium sized sawmills. The Highlands have been extensively clear-cut and private woodland owners are under pressure to meet the high demand signaled by the highest softwood prices ever seen here. Sustainable hardwood management is difficult as there is no hardwood species inventory, and the Atlantic Region's exemption from the export limitations of the Softwood Lumber Agreement is a mixed blessing as softwood stands are being cut at an unsustainable rate.

At the same time, private land is currently being sold at high prices to absentee owners. Although these prices are less than those found elsewhere and seem inexpensive to Europeans or Americans, particularly considering the currency exchange, they limit opportunities for local young people and others who would like to buy land or start a business.

The in-shore fishery is at risk because of potential oil and gas exploration. The recent changing of rules in the fishery for licensing is seen as confusing, and large companies and buyers are seen to be playing ports off against each other.

Infrastructure to support existing industry and business is an ongoing concern. Climate and geography put seasonal pressures on infrastructure, and in a highly competitive global atmosphere, existing business and industry must factor additional upkeep into regularly scheduled maintenance. Upgraded infrastructure is needed to support existing business/industry or to attract any new business or residents.

While all of these problems are serious, they are worsened by an acknowledged negative attitude, lack of trust and parochial rivalry between

some individuals and communities based on traditional religious and cultural separations. For example, with few exceptions, there appears to be little community and County ownership of tourism and a mistrust of Highlands National Park by surrounding communities. There is said to be lack of leadership and, overall, there is little co-operation between the five County areas that might serve the economic advantage of all. However, some all-county committees have been established such as the Victoria County Tourism Advisory Committee, the Community Health Board, and the CED Committee.

Relative Wealth

According to Ronald Colman's work on Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI), the measures of progress are perverse. The more we deplete our natural wealth, the more "progress" we make, and the better we look according to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measurements. For example, crime pays because security systems and prisons are fast growing businesses, and they contribute to the Gross Domestic Product. Sickness creates more jobs than health and so adds to the GDP. Paid childcare makes the GDP go up, but unpaid family time with children goes uncounted. In effect, we measure our well-being by how much money we spend (we hear "that consumer confidence is strong" if we spend a lot at Christmas).

From its inception, the GDP was not meant to be a measure of progress. You were always to ask what is growing and in what direction.

- Ronald Colman

Victoria County residents who choose to stay here recognise that the quality of life items listed above under Assets offset what they might gain were they living elsewhere, and they know that the cost of an apartment in Vancouver or Toronto might negate what they would earn by living there. Recognising the difference between "want" and "need" has allowed them to define well-being as a lifestyle that offers room for personal growth and community development. In this context, County residents look for work that respects individual dignity, which will support initiative and that will allow them to live comfortably and provide for their children.

"Progress," then, includes using the County's natural resources in ways that will not deplete them, creating sustainable, dignified employment and building and maintaining healthy communities.

VII. Sector Review

This section provides an overview of ten key sectors in Victoria County. Each includes a summary followed by issues, opportunities, and broad strategies, some of which will be developed later in the Action Plan. Issues are included in order to suggest some things that, if overcome, would strengthen the sector. There is no attempt here to cover everything, but rather to give a sense of some directions that can be pursued. Most of the information is taken from Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation's 1999 *Cape Breton Sector Profiles* and combined with materials received from individual sectors and from informants. (See Reference list.)

1) Fishing

Overview

Victoria County's economic base is built primarily on the fishing sector, with the in-shore fishery being the biggest income-earner in the County. There are 731 registered fishers with 269 vessels that fish inshore adjacent to their home communities. There are fishing wharves in communities from Bay St. Lawrence to Englishtown and Boulardarie, and processing facilities in Neil's Harbour, Dingwall and Big Bras d'Or have over 150 employees total. Catches include groundfish species, shellfish and pelagic, but shellfish, predominantly lobster and snow crab, are the most valuable, comprising 86% of the total catch value in 1998.

Fish landings in 1997 were worth \$11.9 million (12% of the Cape Breton catch and 2.3% of Nova Scotia's) and have increased in the past two years, although they have gone down overall in the past ten years. Victoria's catch is the second smallest of the four Cape Breton counties (Richmond is smaller). The catch values remain relatively stable (see Figures 18, 19, 20, 21 in Appendix A.).

The most active fishing season in most of the County is a ten-week period from mid-May to mid-July, when lobster may be trapped. The snow crab fishery adds a two-month window, but eight to ten days of intense effort usually fills the quota. Despite structural and cyclical problems, the fishery in

Cape Breton survives, providing employment and income where other industries have failed.

Issues

There was an overall concern for the fishery when ground fish catches declined, providing employment for fewer people. Victoria County depends heavily on lobster, and efforts are being made to increase their numbers and to protect the stocks.

Income for fishers varies due to a number of factors: whether one is a license holder or a paid helper, the type of species license, and the location of fishing grounds. However, the average income has increased markedly since 1981, making the transfer of a lobster license that may have cost 25 cents before 1968 into a substantial investment of hundreds of thousand dollars.

Licensed snow crab fishers in Area 19, which extends from Margaree in Inverness County to Bay St. Lawrence in Victoria, entered a co-management agreement in 1996 with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). When the snow crab catch exceeds \$13.8 million, the rest is shared between the 111 licensees and the 70 snow crab fishers without licenses. This year, there is a 70% reduction in the Alaskan king crab fishery and a 70% increase in the Area 19 Total Allowable Catch (TAC), with a current price of \$2.75. This means that 25 fishers in Bay St. Lawrence who had not had previous access to this lucrative fishery may earn well over \$1 million in new money.

The socio-economic impact of this agreement in Area 19 will help temporarily to even out the income gap between fishers, but this is the first time it has ever been triggered by the combination of TAC changes and price events. With a new five year plan beginning in 2001, an Area 19 group called ACCESS (Association of Core Fishers Committed to Equitable Sharing of Snow crab) are working to lobby DFO for some measure of permanent license access to the snow crab TAC for all fishers in the Area.

There is rapid harvesting that results in the snow crab quota being landed in eight to ten days, making it necessary to ship most of it to New Brunswick for processing. If the season and effort were extended before and after the lobster season with a regulated landing rate, it would be possible for the Victoria Co-operative Fisheries Ltd. plant in Neil's Harbour to create new

jobs, adding value to the catch instead of trucking those jobs to New Brunswick. As it is now, the Co-op will have to import crab for processing during the spring. Additional new licenses could also create new jobs. There is no assurance, however, that enough workers would be available to maximise lobster and crab processing opportunities.

Gas and oil exploration presents the risk of irreparable damage to the fishery. Those who are most affected say they have little power in the decision-making, and are requesting a moratorium on exploration. Similarly, government agreements with multinational companies impact negatively on the inshore fishery, and fishers have little say in decisions about regulations, licensing fees, quotas and pricing.

At the same time, harbour management has been downloaded to local harbour authorities as have costs of on-board observer

When asked about the fishery, fishermen inevitably reverted to talking about the harbour, the financial stress and lack of qualified human resources to run the harbours for profit. - Interviewer

coverage and the trawl surveys necessary to increase the catch. Annual licence renewal fees have already been increased ten-fold, and a percentage of catch is paid in a federal cost-recovery program. All of this has caused financial drain with money going out of the County, and has resulted in some cases in loss of financial support for other community organisations.

Historically, local people have depended for subsistence on cod and mackerel for food, and it is important to continue to allow handlining and to maintain local access to the food fishery.

Opportunities

Value added processing is crucial for increased employment opportunities in the fishery. Slowing the landing rate would allow more snow crab to be processed. Value added processing of mackerel and herring (smoked mackerel and solomon gundy, etc.) would make an even larger percentage change in such lower-value species. The feasibility of a lobster cannery for Victoria should also be examined.

Processing falls into three levels: 1) fresh, headed and gutted; 2) fresh or frozen fillets or blocks; salted, smoked, pickled or marinated; 3) speciality

packs such as TV dinners, canned goods, etc. The plant in Neil's Harbour now operates at level 2. There is more value added potential opportunity through expansion to level 3, if product development and marketing could make that feasible.

Expansion of fish harvesting probably is not feasible due to present over-capacity. The exploitation of under utilised species to make up for declines in traditional catches may not provide a panacea. The most common constraints are marketing and harvesting techniques. The rock crab experimental fishery has approximately ten licenses in Victoria. The volumes and price are low (35 cents a pound) and the processing requires considerable work for small yields. Also, market demand is not as great as lobster.

Until 1990 the blue fin tuna industry was open here, at which time a loss of the market made it not profitable and licenses were sold. The market has revived, and although there are licenses available, they are not transferable to Scotia Fundy. There is currently an attempt to change this. Victoria County has the longest record for fishing blue fin tuna in Nova Scotia. The first one caught in Eastern Canada with a rod and reel and the largest one ever caught were both in St. Ann's Bay.

Sea urchins are not fished in Victoria except on an exploratory basis, but in Maine they are second to lobster and have a strong export market to Japan. Constraints include the fact that they are not plentiful now, the need for high quality, regulations requiring scuba diving to harvest, and the best season being December, which would be difficult here.

Strategy

- Support a moratorium on gas and oil exploration off Inverness and Victoria counties.
- Increase value added production by securing fish/shellfish supply for local processing through regulated landing rates of snow crab.
- Invest in product development and marketing to expand capabilities in processing to level 3, higher value added products.

- Lobby for the equitable distribution of the snow crab catch through the co-management agreement (Area 19) and examine the proposal by ACCESS to give that sharing an equitable status.
- Negotiate the reopening of the Blue Fin Tuna fishery in Area 4VN.

2) Aquaculture

Overview

Aquaculture composes 20% of the global fishery, most of which is in low-value species as essential protein for Asia. 9% of Canada's fishery is from aquaculture including salmon, mussels, trout, oyster, scallops, steelhead, char and clams. Nova Scotia aquaculture, mostly salmon, steelhead, blue mussel and American oyster earns \$21 million from aquaculture on 270 farms. 80% comes from a few key operators in ten percent of lease space, although smaller producers dominate the industry.

There are 65 shell and finfish farms on Cape Breton. In 1996, Victoria County earned 6% of Nova Scotia's income from aquaculture. Most licenses are for oysters, which are grown primarily in the Bras d'Or Lakes and in Aspy Bay. The Nova Scotia School of Fisheries in Pictou offers a forty-week Aquaculture Mentorship program with ten weeks of classroom instruction followed by a placement with an aquaculture operation.

Issues

According to Enterprise Cape Breton's *Cape Breton Sector Overview*, key inputs are expensive, particularly infrastructure for mussel growing and feed for finfish farms. Operations are labour intensive, and production costs come close to the farm gate price. Costs of production are lower in the other Maritime Provinces, with the regional market dominated by the PEI industry. Cooler Cape Breton waters increase the growing time for mussels on Cape Breton to 20-24 months (16-18 months on PEI), and hinder finfish growth. Oysters can take four years to market size. Coliform levels in the Bras d'Or is an increasingly serious problem. Shellfish are susceptible to water

contamination and bioaccumulation of pesticides, and mussels are at risk of predators and fouling.

There is a lack of technical assistance and research and development for aquaculture. As well, there is a need for a unified marketing strategy by producers. Canada now has a Commissioner for Aquaculture Development whose role is to improve the legal framework for aquaculture development by changing the perception of aquaculture as a polluting industry.

Aquaculture often requires much space, to the exclusion of other coastal uses, and certain types are considered intrusive on aesthetic grounds.

The regulatory environment is a bottleneck to lease applicants, involving numerous stakeholders, both government and private. The Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture can set up a Regional Aquaculture

Some of the advance preparation would include public information with the goal of securing public support, basic biophysical research, and open consultation with government bodies. To do otherwise is to increase the chances for delays.

- Cape Breton Sector Overview, 1999

Development Advisory Committee (RADAC) to facilitate discussion and agreement among stakeholders around leases, or can order a public hearing. Advance public information and a transparent process helps to win local support.

Opportunities

Demand for aquaculture products is rising. Fine marine conditions exist for blue mussel cultivation along with a well-developed technology and market. Trends are toward greater mechanisation and increased environmental concern, more added value and diversification of markets. The technology exists for offshore production, and within inherent environmental constraints, there is room for expansion. Key success factors include a good biophysical environment, a sound business plan re. costs and markets as well as adaptability to market change and costs, and support from the affected community in order to improve the social environment and facilitate regulatory procedures.

Strategy

- Seek to encourage appropriate sites and environmental information on site usage and capacity.
- Engage local residents in planning and monitoring use of public waters, with aquaculture as one of the primary uses.
- Maintain control over environmental aspects and the affect on the existing fishery of any aquaculture leases.

3) Forestry

Overview

Victoria County has more than 80% forest cover, with good quality soft and hardwood that made the forest industry here a traditional economic sector. Wood volumes, 25 to 50 m³/ha, are average for Nova Scotia but lower than most of New Brunswick, parts of Quebec and Ontario, and almost all of British Columbia. Softwoods were hit hard by a cyclic spruce budworm infestation in the mid- to late-1970s which, combined with the subsequent salvage operation, removed 58% of the merchantable spruce and fir in Cape Breton by 1985.

There are currently nine saw mills in Victoria County (two or three of the smallest may be only marginally active). There is also a roundwood exporter, a logging contractor, a group ventures co-operative (firewood, tree planting and silviculture), a hardwood flooring manufacturer with a dry kiln (high value added) and two small Christmas tree farms. The total employment in the forestry and wood products industry in Victoria is approximately 90, with 60 in primary logging and 30 in lumber milling and wood products.

Issues

While softwood pulp dominates the industry in Victoria as in the rest of Nova Scotia, there has been a recent increase in hardwood volumes as smaller sawmills are finding it difficult to compete for softwood sawlogs with the large

buyers like Stora Enso, Mactara and big mills in New Brunswick. The competition for saw timber is exacerbated by the higher quality pulpwood demanded by Stora. This has resulted in studwood prices being paid for pulpwood.

Wood supply is a major problem for the forest industry. More than 80% of the supply is now coming from private lands which is being cut at an unsustainable rate to meet the high demand at the highest softwood prices ever seen here. There is an inadequate inventory, no accurate accounting and little or no silviculture done to ensure replacement of the resource. Stora controls the rights to almost all of the Crown timber on Cape Breton and this creates another supply bottleneck for small mills and value added wood industries.

The currently weak regulatory environment may be strengthened by the newly drafted Forest Act that will establish a registry of wood sold and establish a funding system for silviculture on private lands but may not guarantee that *local* silviculture workers will be hired. There remains the environmental issue of forest degradation due to monoculture softwood forestry, which does not allow the soil improvement found in mixed forests and is geared to clearcut logging and pesticides. There is some promise for the reduction of pesticides in Christmas tree production through Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The selection management of shade tolerant hardwood and mixed forests has recently gained some interest with DNR but it has been badly neglected in the past and needs some resources diverted from softwoods.

Opportunities

Success in the wood products industry depends on access to the supply or on using waste products or low value and under-utilised species, and in market development, especially for new product and value added niches. Christmas tree expansion is constrained by a small Cape Breton market and the domination of exports by the larger mainland producers.

There are trends favoring further maple syrup development in good sugar maple stands and the continued operation of small hardwood sawmills, but not for dramatic increases in production. There will be a greater emphasis on value added niche products. This could include “green” products made from wood certified under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards for sustainable forest management.

An example of adding value to wood products while using lower wood volumes can be illustrated by the approximate volume of wood (in cubic metres) that each of the following industries use to create one full-time job for one year:

	Cubic Metres
Pulp and paper	920
Hardwood lumber	200-500
Pallets	188
Flooring and moulding	106
Cabinets	68
Violins	0.3

(Source: Local Survey)

External Factors

Global environmental factors will affect forest conditions locally. Climate change, acid rain and ozone depletion will cause measurable changes over the coming decades, affecting forest composition, growth rates, soil conditions, disease and insect infestation. Acid rain and acid fog already cause damage to trees and soils in some areas, and global warming may ultimately change our forest from acadian and boreal toward a northern temperate forest type. Meanwhile, weather patterns are expected to be increasingly erratic in regards to violent storms, droughts, and unseasonable patterns. Forest wind and fire damage are factors to consider in forestry planning strategies.

Strategy

- Focus on securing a wood supply for small and medium sized value added operations.
- Provide financial and technical assistance to develop new markets and products.
- Invest in training and equipment for the above.

In the present situation of supply and market dominance of large mills, local operators have more opportunity in low volume, high value, or non-commodity niche markets.

The forest resource must be carefully managed and monitored with respect to volumes cut, age class and regeneration for the long-term viability of the local forest industry. Silviculture techniques

*A properly managed 100-acre woodlot can sustain a family for seven months a year.
- Interviewee*

that will result in uneven aged stands (selection, patchcuts, group selection, thinning) should be applied to tolerant hardwood stands. Furthermore, the forest must be regarded as providing other values than timber. The forest is our watershed, builds soils, and affects local climate and air quality. It provides habitat for wildlife and is a resource for recreation and tourism. All values, timber and non-timber, must be addressed in a sound forest strategy.

4) Mining

Overview

Cape Breton is one of the most geologically complex regions of Nova Scotia. It has some of the oldest rocks, formed during the Precambrian period over 600 million years ago, and some of the youngest, laid down in glacial deposits. Waves of sedimentation and tectonic disturbances have created very diverse bedrock in which occurrences of gold, copper, molybdenum, lead, zinc tungsten and other minerals have been found. Gas and oil exploration is being considered off the Atlantic coast and in the Bras d'Or Lakes, opposed by local fishers who fear disruption of fish habitat. Northstar Energy Corporation has been granted an onshore petroleum exploration license that includes the south central part of the County.

Nova Scotia is one of the largest gypsum producers in the world. The remains of gypsum quarrying can be seen throughout Victoria County, particularly in Dingwall, Baddeck Bay, Cape North and in the old St. Ann's

quarry. Since gypsum is not considered a “Crown mineral” under the Mineral Resources Act and the landowner owns the resource, many potential gypsum deposits are owned or leased (long term) by a number of companies

Little Narrows Gypsum on the Iona Peninsula has been in operation since 1935 and is a major international supplier of sized gypsum and anhydrite rock products to both wall board and cement producers. In 1999, the company shipped 1.4 million tons of product world-wide, a 21% volume increase over 1998. 106 people are currently employed.

There are also several small sand and gravel companies operating in the County. Significant tidewater supplies of aggregates exist at Kelly’s Cove in New Cambellton, which also had 3.5 million tons of dolomite (limestone) reserves in 1985. Current production is of agricultural limestone and mine rock dust.

Aggregate for local use and potentially for export is an increasingly valuable resource. Consideration was given for the development of a super quarry on Kelly’s Mountain, but concerns raised by other sectors, local residents and the Mi’kmaq, for whom the mountain is a sacred site, as well as the drop in gravel prices caused the project to be withdrawn.

Historically, there were gold mines at Gold Brook and on the Clyburn, with numerous claims elsewhere. Lead and zinc appear in what is known as the Jubilee Showing on the Iona Peninsula, and iron, copper and other metals have been found in small quantities in the County, and exploration continues on a regular basis. Salt deposits, with associated potash, have been demonstrated to exist.

Currently, 1339 claims (53,560 acres) are under mineral exploration license to a total of 10 licensees. This is about double the level of staking since two years ago. Active Mining Permits cover an additional 189 claims (560 acres).

Issues

While the geologic complexity of the County can make exploration interesting, it also makes it difficult to predict when a showing will lead to economically viable production.

Transportation is a problem for Little Narrows Gypsum (LNG) as it is for others, both in terms of distance from Halifax based association meetings (a one-day meeting takes two days). A worse problem, however, is the back road from Route 105 through Orangedale that could be used for shipping if it were an all season road. Currently, it is impassable part of the year.

Power rates are the 5th highest of all industry this size on the North American continent. This puts the company at a disadvantage as LNG competes on a global market with other gypsum companies whose power rates are much less. There is also uncertainty about Nova Scotia Power's ability to meet company needs for any expansion.

Regulation enforcement is inconsistent. At Little Narrows, the plant goes through intense scrutiny to get permits for a repeat operation and is monitored steadily for reclamation processes and water purity, while insufficiently treated sewage is entering the Bras d'Or from other sources.

Limited accommodation and water/sewage on the Iona Peninsula can make it difficult for LNG to attract workers, as does the lack of nightlife for young adults and extracurricular activities for youth. The distance from medical services, especially for a company that requires specialised testing for employees, can be problematic.

Opportunities

Specialty gypsum could foster new products. There is potential for LNG expansion leading to more year-round employment. A new mine has been approved in Inverness County (with some resistance from local residents and environmental groups and concern over transportation methods).

Markets in New Brunswick and PEI would be possible for the finished product from the crusher/screener plant sent in trucks doing backhauls from Sydney if the back road were made all-season without the current weight restrictions.

The area offers a cost-effective method of shipping by water. For example, LNG currently ships from April 10th to mid-January.

Stora Enso might be interested in cogenerating power using natural gas and steam and might provide power to a user group including LNG.

Strategy

- Lobby for improvement to the back road from Route 105 through Orangedale, to upgrade it to all-season.
- Negotiate with Nova Scotia Power Inc. about reduced rate possibilities for established and new companies. Consider other power sources for the County.
- Ensure that LNG and other industry interests are included in multi-sectoral discussions on County development.
- Maintain contact with provincial information sources in order to know what and where geological exploration is occurring or being considered in the County, and make this information publicly available.

5) Agriculture

Overview

Centred primarily in Inverness and Cape Breton Counties, the overall number of farms and the total farmed area of Cape Breton have been steadily declining over the past fifteen years. There is a gradual increase in greenhouse and bedding operations and in the cultivation of berries, and overall, the general trend has been a move from livestock to horticulture, with fruit and vegetable operations mostly on small acre farms. In Victoria County, there were many active dairy farms in Big Baddeck and Middle River. All but one have sold their dairy interests. Those farmers who remain continue the tradition of working together, sharing trucking, haymaking and pasture space.

At present there are a few cattle growers remaining, including some Highland Cattle on small farms, and there are three fur ranchers in the County.

In certain areas of the County there is little frost in the fall, decent soil, and adequate water which are advantageous for vegetable growing. Land prices (particularly for land that is not on the shore) are reasonable.

The Nova Scotia Agricultural College and the Veterinarian College at the University of Prince Edward Island provide academic support for agriculture. In addition, farmers today must know about marketing, financial managing, and computer use, as well as about agriculture.

On mainland Nova Scotia and elsewhere, there is a move towards Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as a way of consumer involvement in growing and buying food. CSA members pay 10-20% less than the farmer's market price and as much as 50% less than the grocery store price.

Issues

Nearly all agricultural revenue is returned to the farms, but as this is often insufficient to balance costs, many farmers rely heavily on essentially unpaid family labour and/or a second income. Young people lack interest in farming, although there are numerous Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOFers) from other places who circulate through Victoria County each summer.

Farming is both a business and a lifestyle, and participants must be willing to accept constant work and high risk.
– Cape Breton Sector Profiles

Lack of short-term labourers during harvesting is a problem. When needed, pickers and picking supervisors are absolutely essential. Employment Insurance is one of the constraints: both the paperwork needed from the farmer and the effect of employment on benefits received by the harvester.

With fewer farms, services are getting scarce. It is difficult to get machinery and parts. Increased fuel prices add to production costs.

Although consumers talk about “buying local,” they want the price to be competitive. Local producers must compete with a variety of fruits and vegetables in a market driven by key players who are merging or downsizing, creating fewer buyers. As distributors look for good prices, they force Cape

Breton producers to sell at lower and lower prices. Organic produce costs more, and the market needs to be further developed.

Except for local farmer's markets, small commercial operations are disappearing. Agricultural inputs are expensive, and it pays to spread these costs over larger production. As well, all costs are increasing, and this increase is usually not equalled by a similar rise in the market price for produce.

Opportunities

Higher-value niche markets exist. Niche markets are increasing, as is the development of value-added goods, providing strong opportunities. There is little value-added processing on Cape Breton, and much of it could be done fairly simply (producing jams and jellies, pickles or pesto, for example), or a small cheese factory.

Organic produce is in demand, and Victoria County land has not been treated with chemical herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers, making organic certification a relatively quick process. There is a market trend to packaged salad mix that could easily be produced here. Organic blueberry demand far exceeds the supply, and if production problems could be overcome, there would be no shortage of buyers.

There is market potential for organic fertiliser with fish and aquaculture by-products.

There is a need for a local organic growers organisation that could be mutually beneficial, could avoid duplication, could assist marketing by increasing public awareness about food production and encourage individual and/or community organic gardens. There are also possibilities for grower-owned marketing co-operatives, modelled on the Bras d'Or Producers Co-operative.

New farmers could be encouraged by land offers to new farming residents and immigrants. Incentives might be given to current landowners who would be willing to make some land available to others to farm.

Fur farming complements the seasonal nature of the local fishery. The climate, landscape and availability of feed supply make Victoria County an

ideal location for more ranches. Such an increase could lead to other businesses such as central feed kitchens and pelt processing plants.

Strategy

- Seek niche markets and product specialities.
- Encourage co-operative marketing and set up seasonal farmers' markets.
- Consider tax benefits for owners of unused land who allow it to be used by producers.

6) Tourism

Overview

Tourism is the one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Canada ranks 8th among the most popular destinations in the world, and tourism is Canada's 11th largest industry (Statistics Canada, *Tourism Statistical Digest*, 1996). For the last three years, Canada, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton have experienced increases in tourism revenue dollars. Canada generated a record figure of \$50 billion, and increase of 6.5%, Nova Scotia had \$1.27 in tourism revenue in 1999, a 16% increase, and Cape Breton tourism revenues in 1999 were \$230 million, an increase of 10% from 1998.

Based on the number of rooms, occupancy rate, party size, and visitors' expenditures, the tourism industry generated \$76 million in Victoria County last year. The industry is expanding through projects such as the Bell Bay Golf Course, Bras d'Or Lakes Interpretative Centre, SeaMount in Ingonish Harbour, and others.

In 1998, *Conde' Nast Traveller Magazine* ranked Cape Breton as the most scenic island in the world and the second most friendly. *National Geographic Traveller* ranked the Bras d'Or lakes as one of the top fifty places of a lifetime.

Most visitors come from the U.S. and Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. They stay an average of 3.5 nights and spend an average of \$253 daily on accommodations, restaurants, groceries and liquor, transportation, entertainment, gas and auto expenses and shopping. Although July and August continue to be the heaviest visitor months, September and October are increasing in popularity. (The Celtic Colours International Festival has highlighted the autumn season for the past three years.) 72% arrive by car, 15% by RV, and 19% by air.

In ECBC's 1998 *Advertising and Promotion Conversion Study*, 89% of the respondents travelled the Cabot Trail and went to Cape Breton Highlands National Park. 48% visited the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site. Only 8% were part of a tour group. Highlands National Park visitors are between 350,000-400,000 each year. 30% camped in 1998, with 33,000 campsites occupied in the Park, and 82% spent time hiking or walking. In terms of cruise ships, the Baddeck and Area Business Tourist Association has joined the Atlantic Canada Cruise Association to increase cruise ship visits, and the Ingonish Harbour Authority is actively encouraging cruise ship visitors.

Visitors are generally older, better educated and wealthier, according to profiles developed by ECBC and Highland National Park, and this trend will continue to increase. 55% are over 44 years old, and 45% have family incomes of over \$60,000. 63% travel with no children, and only 17% have children 16 and under. Those who stay in campgrounds usually stay a day and a half longer than other visitors, and those who stay in B&Bs spend more in the area than do those who stay in hotels, motels and cottages. (*December 1998 Advertising and Promotion Conversion Study Final Report*, ECBC.)

The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) provides certification-based training for the industry such as SuperHost and It's Good Business. The Tourism Regional Industry Training Council (RITC) assesses training needs. The University College of Cape Breton (UCCB) offers a concentration in Tourism Marketing and Management under its Business Administration degree and a diploma in Hospitality Administration. Nova Scotia Community Colleges offer programs in tourism at Port Hawkesbury and Sydney.

Victoria County has two of the three most visited sites on Cape Breton: Cape Breton Highlands National Park and the Alexander Graham Bell

National Historic Site. As well, the Cabot Trail is still recognised as the major trail in Eastern Canada. Highlands Links is the number one golf course in Canada, and the top new golf course is Bell Bay. The County includes the highest waterfall in Nova Scotia, the highest mountain, and other tourism assets, including snow for winter activities when no other area in Nova Scotia has it.

The County's Tourism Advisory Council is made up of tourism industry representatives from the five geographical areas, two municipal councillors and the Director of Recreation and Tourism (ex-officio). This council is unique on Cape Breton, and it has been working with the municipal government for the past three years.

Issues

The tourism sector complements other sectors and is dependent on those such as culture as well as on scenery and on friendly residents. Information technology and the responsible use of natural resources that maintains scenic quality support the sector. Victoria County's significant natural and cultural assets must be maintained if there is to be a prosperous tourism sector, and at the same time, tourism interests must support those of other sectors.

Space competition may arise between tourism operations and aquaculture. . . Golf courses . . . can contaminate aquaculture leases . . . Aquaculture may remove water areas from other recreational uses. Consideration must be given to all users. – Cape Breton Sector Profiles

Some residents are concerned about tourism being the major economic driving force in the County and say it must be developed in a way that supports existing industries and communities and benefits local people. "Tourists are coming to see what we have, not what we could transform ourselves to be in order to serve them." (Interviewee)

Seasonal work is a major issue in the industry, as it is in other sectors. Seasonal workers, who often provide the trained workforce, may earn minimum wages and are dependent on E.I. where changes in legislation that discourage repeat claimants may cause dependable workers to leave the industry. Extending the tourism season is essential to avoid an unhealthy boom and bust economy for local communities, and the Canadian Tourism

Commission, the N.S. Dept. of Tourism and Culture and TIANS have adopted mission statements saying tourism is four season.

Transportation of all kinds is an issue. While fly/drive trips are on the increase elsewhere, Cape Breton receives most of its visitors by car. According to the *1998 Advertising and Promotion Conversion Study*, travel distance to Cape Breton was one reason people chose other destinations. Tourists, it seems, want to travel only three or four hours by car or plane to get to their destination. The Sydney airport is becoming increasingly limited, and the cost of air travel between Halifax to Sydney is prohibitive.

As well, there is a lack of local transportation for those who do arrive by public transit, and there is no way to travel comfortably between communities within the County without a private vehicle. There is no regular boat transportation on the Bras d'Or as once existed when the island was visited by rail tourists from the coastal States, and with increased numbers of tourist businesses in lakeside communities, a water transportation network could be developed and marketed.

The lack of a paved shoulder for cyclists, particularly along the Cabot Trail, endangers bikers and drivers alike. Infrastructure for cyclists is missing, including repair shops, hostels, supply stores. Well-marked short hiking trails and multi-day trails with camping facilities are needed.

Most tourists travel by motor vehicle and there are serious concerns from local residents, the Grand Narrows Board of Trade, BABTA, and the Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce about the poor quality of the roads in Victoria County, especially the Cabot Trail. Road improvements are a continual topic of discussion by councillors at Committee of the Whole and Council meetings.

The quality of signage is inconsistent and signs are often poorly located and unattractive. New legislation for signage is to be drafted and presented this fall. There is a need for more local information kiosks throughout the county and for a visitor information centre and larger park Information Centre in Ingonish. All tourist operators should be able to provide information on local events. Finally, according to the *Advertising and Promotion Conversion Study*, visitors want more available groceries and supplies as well as good, reasonably priced, restaurants.

The historic site at Cabot Landing needs to be kept open from April 15th to November. It is advertised as open from April when in fact it is not. The barred gate making vehicles that park on the road creates a hazard.

Opportunities

There is a market potential in summer months to supply visitors with fresh fish, lobster (possibly boiled at the wharf), and fresh garden produce. As well, there is room for more restaurants providing high quality food at reasonable prices.

Packaged activities or product clusters that include a variety of experiences could be marketed through Internet and traditional advertising outlets. These could include a mix of hiking, sailing, kayaking, golfing, biking, a meal in a restaurant, with a family or at a church hall, a visit to the artists' loop, music and cultural activities. Learning vacations have become increasingly popular and could be developed using the Parks, the Gaelic College and Highland Village as well as the County's unique ecological sites. Animate the historical use of the Lakes as transportation, as well as historic sites and fishing wharves.

Our success as a tourist destination is based on protected ecosystems.
- Interviewee

Quality soft adventure and heritage opportunities exist. There is room for more short walks, and a linked trail system. Eco-tourism is in great demand. A world class multi-day linked trail system connecting the trails in Highlands National Park with those North and South of it would be an appropriate partnership for communities and the Park. Such a system, connected with the Pathways Project linking all of Cape Breton, would encourage shoulder and winter tourism. The Pollett's Cove-Aspy Fault Trail Project is already under consideration headed by a local committee, and the White Point to New Haven trail is being constructed. Middle River Valley could provide a comfortable walking/cycling trail.

Regular, well-marketed, public transportation on the Cabot Trail would encourage youth travellers and allow hikers to spend time in a variety of locations, moving from one to the next on public transport. A Cabot Trail Pass could be marketed, perhaps in conjunction with accommodations. Boat transportation to points around the Bras d'Or for day trips to Highland Village and other locations would provide a similar service and could be part of

packaged activities. Airport taxi service from the Airport in Sydney could link to developed local transportation.

More amenities are needed, particularly entertainment: cosy pubs, buskers in Baddeck, outdoor markets, stalls, galleries, and bed and breakfast accommodations. Develop the wharves and lighthouses.

Winter tourism is yet to be developed, beyond traditional recreational activities (Nordic and alpine skiing, snowshoeing) to photography, winter solitude, spectacular scenery, and wildlife. Theme weeks, retreats, long relaxing weekends could be marketed to the East Coast U.S.

Strategy

- Encourage the establishment of high quality small, home-based, accommodations and restaurants to be available for an extended season.
- Develop cycling and hiking trails through community partnerships with the Park, NS Department of Natural Resources, and others.
- Review Victoria County's liquor laws with the possibility of allowing pubs and micro-breweries.
- Continue expanding the season into spring and autumn and develop the winter market encouraging non-sport activities as well as traditional winter sports.
- Market to increase the days tourists stay through value added tourism encouraging less driving, more activities and fly/drive holidays.
- Cluster products and develop and market package tours.
- Continue to invest in tourism marketing and product development to maintain and increase a competitive market share in an extremely competitive global market.
- Educate tourism operators on the importance of Internet marketing and E-commerce.

6) Arts and Culture

Overview

According to Statistics Canada, Nova Scotia's culture sector is creating jobs at a faster rate than any other sector of the provincial economy. Nova Scotia's film industry alone was worth \$97 million in 1998, up from \$7 million in 1993. Jobs in the sector grew by 20% in Nova Scotia between 1990 and 1996 at a time when overall employment shrank. Even so, Nova Scotia invests less in the arts and cultural industries than is the provincial average in Canada.

The Cape Breton arts and culture sector, which has only recently been recognised as a major sector for economic activity, is experiencing strong economic growth. 2,500 full and part-time jobs are generated in the sector. Self-employment is high, and many jobs are short-term, for example in performing arts, film production or festivals, but there has been a steady increase in trained personnel. The rising prominence of Cape Breton musicians, the establishment of four recording studios with 25-30 recordings yearly and an economic spin off estimated at \$2 million, the opening of a modern 24,000 foot sound stage, the success of the Celtic Colours International Festival, and the increase in quality crafts produced on the island indicate the sector's potential for growth. In 1998-99, three feature films were shot in Cape Breton.

Cape Breton music, through its independent artists, as well as organised festivals . . . are critical draws for the tourism industry. An investment in these areas can be justified on the cultural contribution, or in increased tourist revenue.

– Cape Breton Sector Profiles

Arts and culture form a key component of Cape Breton's tourism product. Their existence is essential for tourism to thrive. Victoria County is fortunate in having both the Gaelic College and Highland Village promoting the Gaelic heritage, arts and culture, and the North Highland Museum is much loved by tourists and local visitors alike. The Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site is a venue for workshops, performances and films, and there are good small venues for performing arts in Dingwall, Ingonish, North River and Baddeck. The new school at Boulardarie will have a large performance space, as will the Enterprise Centre in Wagmatcook.

The County has three well-known instrument makers and numerous writers, actors and musicians, as well as a local theatre company. The Artists' Loop at St. Ann's and the North Shore craft studios, as well as galleries North of Smokey are destination points for many visitors. The Gaelic College houses the South Haven Weavers, Spinners and Dyers Guild.

Festivals such as the Celtic Colours, the former Centre Bras d'Or, and the earlier Summertime Revue are critical for the growth of new talent, are a marketing opportunity, and are socially beneficial. They are also both a cultural and a tourist event. Individuals who attend festivals spend an average of \$560. Government pressure for festivals to become self-sufficient belies the fact that they provide infrastructure for other sectors, given the very strong spin-offs for tourism and business. According to standard tourism figures, Celtic Colours attracted 6000 visitors from off-island in a nine-day period in 1999 and had a \$4.4 million economic impact from an investment of approximately \$200,000 in government funding and a tremendous amount of volunteer labour. Revenues and benefits went to community halls and others involved in organising the event.

The cultural fabric is essential if other parts of the economy are going to thrive; it requires support so the rest can grow.
-Interviewee

Organisations and institutions that support County artists include the University College of Cape Breton (UCCB) with its excellent stage in the Boardmore Playhouse, a library, press, the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre and the Beaton Institute archive. UCCB's Art Gallery offers exhibit space and support for local artists and craftspeople, as does Silicon Island Arts and Innovation Centre and some of the smaller galleries.

ArtsCape Breton, a not-for-profit society, represents the sector and is composed of members of the cultural community, while the Cultural Heritage Advisory Group (CHAG) involves the cultural community at large. Recently there has been a school partnership piloted between artists, art institutions and organisations. Although the Summertime Revue offered a launching pad for some of Cape Breton's best known performance talent, nothing has come to take its place, and there is little formal training available for the culture sector in Cape Breton. Rave Entertainment, a for-profit business, supports local artists and informally gives advice and training.

Issues

The standard measure of success that requires a company to be self-sustaining in a short time does not work in this sector where real development takes a long time. A small infusion of cash, as was exemplified by Celtic Colours' success, can go a long way.

Underfunding of arts, culture and heritage is a major problem for the sector, as is the disparity for funding between Halifax and Cape Breton. The eight provincial cultural federations that represent the provincial cultural sector are all in Halifax. Many have minimal or no Cape Breton representation on their boards, and with operational funding and year round staffing, they provide minimal services to Cape Breton and offer most activities and networking in Halifax. Of the nineteen arts organisations that receive operational funding through the Nova Scotia Arts Council, none is in Cape Breton.

Very few cultural workers, either individual artists, crafts people, managers, publishers, or film crews, are "employees". Most are self-employed or work on a contract basis. The sector is labour intensive and requires a very high level of skills (training in creative arts can take ten to twenty years). Since traditional government programs are designed for workers who are employees, and since programs are geared towards creating full-time employment that no longer requires government help, cultural workers are left out.

Baddeck, with 800 tourists a night, has no adequate performance space or gallery. Centre Bras d'Or, which filled that need, has closed because of volunteer burn-out, leaving the Gaelic College as the only location for large events.

Although local festivals seem to be holding their own with volunteer labour, for larger events, trained festival and event organisers are needed. Under-funded events run entirely by volunteers often result in a poorly marketed, poorly received product.

Financial cutbacks have taken local craft fairs from juried events to glorified sales. There is a lack of locally available education and training in art, music and craft production.

Although not a factor for most of the sector, transportation is a constraint for the film industry targeted at the international market. The Sydney airport has limited service and is five time zones from California, the North American film capital.

Opportunities

The higher the education, the greater the consumption of cultural products. As well, an older population leads to higher attendance at arts-related activities. Given the visitor profiles indicating an older, better-educated, wealthier tourist population, the market is increasing for high quality cultural products.

Tourists come for the culture, and they'll soon catch on if all they're getting is tacky teddy-bears in tartan.
-Interviewee

A small weaving industry and a machined sweater knitting industry could be developed, complemented by a juried sales outlet for small producers. A fully staffed gallery in Baddeck offering examples and sales of fine Cape Breton arts and crafts could encourage visitors to visit studios and would promote the County's talent.

Recording studios need available studio musicians, producers and engineers, who are often, by necessity, engaged in other economic activities. Film crews are looking for desirable locations. Victoria County is replete with such, if the logistical problems such as power and parking are solved, and the film industry could provide significant financial benefits.

Strategy

- Encourage a model for measuring success based on “paid work”, and support those activities that highlight cultural workers.
- Put money and energy into cultural events and festivals, recognising the dollars they bring to local business. Develop high quality, unique, festivals (such as a Wind Festival with the A.G. Bell Museum). Support training for festival organisers.

- Focus on our unique advantage in Gaelic culture, language, and genealogy for research and education, integrating research at the Highland Village with Gaelic College programs and festivals.
- Consider ways to partner with Wagmatcook First Nations to produce complementary festivals and events.
- Support the development of a Cape Breton Culture Sector Investment Fund to allow vital cultural organisations to draw on the interest from such a fund to supplement their operating budgets, and to provide a small projects fund.
- Join with other counties and Wagmatcook First Nation to support a Commissioner of Film to promote Cape Breton.

7) Information Technology

Overview

Information technology (IT) crosses into and affects all other sectors. In Canada, the software and computer services industry is made up of small to medium sized enterprises and is one of the fastest growing industries, with an increase in revenues of 10.9% between 1990 and 1996. Global competition is forcing companies to use improved technology in all aspects of their operations. The industry, dominated by the US, operates in a global marketplace, with business generally unhindered by borders. Workers must be able to find niche international markets.

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council recently estimated that Nova Scotia produced \$125 million from Atlantic companies in the IT sector. The past ten years has seen rapid development on Cape Breton, beginning with the Technology Advisory Group (TAG) that grew out of a Memorandum of Understanding between ECBC and UCCB in 1990. The goal of TAG was to search out local technical talent and set up a forum for getting people together. TAG now has between 600 and 700 members who exchange information and networking. ECBC is still involved in virtually all aspects of the research and development support to the IT industry in Cape Breton. Multi-media

development requires teamwork and collaboration between producers, researchers/writers, technicians and graphic artists.

Silicon Island, a high-tech business facility, grew out of TAG and currently houses 22 firms and organisations involved in IT and multimedia. MacKenzie College teaches classes in Silicon Island, collaborating with other institutions to offer Associate Degree Programs, and producing graduates that are readily employed and are setting up their own firms. UCCB has instituted the Department of Economic and Technological Innovation. The Department includes the CAD/CAM Centre, the GIS/GPS Centre and the Technology Enterprise Centre, an incubation facility providing assistance to new firms.

The Community Access Program (CAP) through Industry Canada has established sites across the island, considerably improving Internet access for local communities. Victoria County has seven sites developed and two more approved, providing public access and communication and support to new users. There are three Internet service providers in the County: Auracom, the North of Smokey Community Network (NSCN) and Sympatico. Part of UCCB's Centre of Excellence, Information Technology's mandate is to assist community access programs. The Strait East Nova Community Enterprise Network (SENCEN) is working to support rural communities in Northeastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton.

Despite many external and internal factors holding Victoria County back in technology, the County has continued to make strides in the Internet and information technology sector. Three major conferences/workshops have been hosted since 1997, including Internet-Making it Work for You, CAP Sites Workshop, and Smart Access '99. For three years Baddeck has been the location of a major North American event that attracting international participants, the Atlantic Canada Media Digital Festival (now called the Baddeck Festival).

Morandan in Baddeck was the first web design company in Cape Breton. The Victoria County CAPS Sites Association (VCCAPS) was formed in 1998 and has become recognised as a leader with its InfoCAP project that accesses government services on-line through its portal page, and currently the municipality provides on-line information, services and programs. Currently involved in Volnet, connecting volunteer organisations to the Internet, VCCAPS is developing projects in literacy, GED, community portal pages and

E-commerce. VCCAPS and the municipality were active partners in the Smart Strait Cape Breton region bid for the Smart Community demonstration project.

Issues

Problems exist with the quality of telecommunication service. Lack of access to two-way high-speed broad band telecommunication equipment and limited Internet service providers are definite constraints in Victoria County. Distance from other major centres of production where small companies can network and build strategic partnerships for marketing projects is also a problem here.

Auracom is available South of Smokey with the exception of St. Ann's, Englishtown, and North Shore, where it is a long distance call. NSCN is available only North of Smokey. Sympatico was the last Internet service provider to enter Victoria County, and Victoria County was the last area in the province to have digital switching stations, the last area to get private lines, and to have fibre-optic lines installed.

There is intense competition in this industry as numerous areas of the world have vowed that the IT industry will be the backbone of their economy. These include several areas in the US as well as India, Australia and Ireland.

Financing or venture capital for projects and products (such as CD ROMS) is a problem, both on Cape Breton and across Atlantic Canada. Since assets are often intangible (expertise, skilled workers), lenders have difficulty comprehending value.

Lack of standards among providers of certificates and diplomas is a concern in the industry, and there are questions about educational facilities' ability to keep up with the demand for graduates. As well, the entire IT sector still comprises a relatively small part of the overall economy, although it has experienced impressive growth.

CAP sites in Victoria are dependent on volunteers or short-term contract workers who themselves are often learners unable to assist others adequately. Qualified, technically experienced staff is needed.

Opportunities

IT is a young, vibrant industry that is growing rapidly. Advance in computer hardware and software technology creates ongoing demands for new and updated products and improved systems. Customers want immediate solutions to system problems, and they prefer local suppliers. There is room for trained service and instructional personnel. E-commerce is expected to grow dramatically, with increasing numbers of products sold via Internet. This would offer opportunities in technical support and design.

<i>The sky's the limit with information technology! - Interviewee</i>

According to the *Cape Breton Sector Profiles*, there are unfilled jobs vacancies in the province for several hundred IT workers. The number is expected to increase to 5000 by 2002.

The industry is dependent on intellectual resources rather than purchased inputs, which means high labour but relatively small capital. The main resources required are human.

IT related work can be outsourced, and as industries are finding it difficult to recruit and retain qualified employees, there will be more opportunities to work from rural Cape Breton, once the infrastructure is fully in place. This will also facilitate contract work for other sectors.

Strategy

- Hasten appropriate infrastructure throughout the County and find funding for permanent staff and technical education positions at CAP sites.
- Support CAP sites in providing rural residents and businesses the opportunity to access information about employment, government services, and distance education.
- Educate other sectors about the relevance of IT to their work. Use CAP sites to keep fishing ports connected, for example, and set up affordable video conferencing for fishers who are unable to travel to provincial/regional meetings.
- Promote greater use of GIS/GPS in conjunction with UCCB.

8) Health Care

Overview

At 35% of the current provincial budget, health care is changing in Nova Scotia. In 1996, the provincial government announced its 18-month plan to restructure health care. It established four Regional Health Boards and followed with the creation of Community Health Boards that replaced local hospital boards. Hospitals were downsized, with 1700 beds lost, Home Care Nova Scotia was expanded.

The eligibility age for the Children's Dental Program was reduced from 12 to 10 years old, and a number of medical procedures were de-insured such as the removal of non-cancerous warts, and surgical assistance for cataract removal. Emergency Health Services Nova Scotia was created, and communities scrambled for essential life-saving equipment and faced the loss of local ambulances.

Massive fund-raising efforts led to new hospital facilities in Baddeck (Victoria County Memorial) and Neil's Harbour (Buchanan Memorial), representing over \$12 million in capital costs. In January 2000, it was decided that the two hospitals would change their affiliation from St. Martha's Hospital in Antigonish to the Cape Breton Health Care Complex in Sydney. Three doctors work out of each medical clinic (Neil's Harbour and Baddeck), and a Health Clinic serves Wagmatcook. Public Health Services has one nurse based in Buchanan Memorial and one in Victoria County Memorial who provide a variety of services throughout the County, including immunisation, mother and baby assessment, education and referrals.

The current government has dismantled the Regional Health Board system with volunteer Boards of Directors and replaced it with nine District Health Authorities. The Community Health Boards remain, and the Victoria County Community Health Board, consisting of sixteen volunteer community representatives, will appoint an undetermined number of board members to the District Health Authority. The advisory Provincial Health Council of twelve volunteers has been reactivated. It reports directly to the Deputy Minister.

Many health services for County residents as well as most social and mental health services are provided out of Baddeck or in North Sydney, Sydney or Port Hawkesbury. This includes Community Services, Family Services, the Children's Aid Society, Mental Health Services, Transition House, the Hearing and Speech Clinic, the Orthoptic Clinic, and Nova Scotia Correctional Services. There is an

Addiction Services Community Health Worker North of Smokey who provides outpatient counselling, and until April of this year a Community Outreach Social Worker served Victoria

Economic progress will not come from an unhealthy, poorly educated, badly motivated, socially fragmented population. Slashing government expenditures and downsizing workforces may indeed improve the economic bottom line today. But they sow the seeds of long-term costs. – David Ross

County, dividing time between North and South of Smokey. Responsibility for that position was to move from Children's Aid to the Eastern Regional Health Board and a second position was to be offered, but both are now on hold. At the moment there is no Outreach Social Worker in the County.

Seniors' housing exists in Dingwall, Iona, Ingonish and Baddeck. There are two nursing homes: Highland Manor in Neil's Harbour and Alderwood Rest Home in Baddeck.

Health Canada's current Population Health approach asks people to look at what determines individual and community health. A number of projects have taken place in the County with support from Health Canada, including the Hospice Project that set the foundation for palliative care in Victoria County. The People Assessing Their Health (PATH) and Supporting Our Seniors projects led to the establishment of the St. Ann's Bay Community Health Centre. As well, the provincial Nova Scotia Gynaecological Cancer Screening Programme conducted a three year pilot project on Cape Breton that promoted regular cervical screening and education for women and supported Well Woman's Clinics.

Programs on diabetes and other health concerns are promoted by Victoria County Memorial and the hospital is part of an interagency association in the community. Access to Telehealth video conferencing is available for physicians.

Issues

Both Buchanan Memorial Health Centre and Victoria County Memorial hospital are facing severe budget reductions in keeping with the 10-15% reduction within all government departments. \$100,000 must be cut from Victoria Memorial's budget this year alone. The two new facilities cost much more to run than the facilities they replaced. For example, in the old facility in Baddeck, a \$1.2 million budget supported 23 beds (approximately \$52,000 per year per bed, or \$1,000 per week), while the new facility costs \$1.9 million for 12 beds (approximately \$156,000 per year per bed or \$3,000 per week), in other words, three times as much. The fixed costs of electricity, heating and building maintenance have increased dramatically (Victoria County Memorial now pays \$70,000 a year for power, ten times more than in the old facility), but the budget is shrinking. Consequently cost reductions are coming out of staff and services. Positions are being lost, and there is increasing dependence on casual staff who have no benefits and who are easily lured away to full-time positions elsewhere.

There is no shortage of RNs; the shortage is in permanent, full-time positions for them.

- Interviewee

For example, acute care staff at Buchanan has been reduced from three to two daytime and night-time staff, one RN and one LPN, making it impossible to adequately care for inpatients and properly run the Emergency Department. With lack of clerical help, nurses are responsible for much administration. In addition, security has been eliminated and janitorial staff has been reduced although the new hospital is 19,000 square feet larger than the old medical facility. Some areas are only being cleaned every two weeks and floors are not being adequately sealed or waxed.

Poverty is a key component of ill health. Health improves as social and economic status improves. There is abundant statistical evidence that family income has a major effect on children's well-being. The data show that as family incomes rise, children's chances of developing to their full potential increases steadily. The high unemployment and dependency rates in Victoria County translate into generally poor physical and mental health, and the native population, with demonstrably lower income levels, is most at risk. Seasonal workers often become the working poor, either on ever-shrinking E.I. or on Social Assistance, unable to adequately take care of their health needs.

The needs of seasonal workers must be addressed. Seasonal work will continue in Victoria County, as all major sectors demand it, and those who do

it should be respected and must be supported so that they can maintain self-esteem and contribute fully to their communities.

As the population ages, so will the health care needs of residents. The trend in Victoria County towards an increasing number of retired people on fixed incomes will mean more medical care needed and fewer younger people to provide it.

A number based system means that rural communities are disadvantaged, with a large land area needed to make up requisite population numbers for services. It costs more to have medical care in a rural area. Geographic barriers and lack of transportation affect the County's health care. The majority of health and community services are close to two hours away from most people in the County. This is a particular problem for seniors, for the disabled, for those who need weekly services, tests at the Cape Breton Health Care Complex., or prenatal check-ups. Expectant mothers are often forced to find accommodations in Sydney for the last weeks of pregnancy, now that no deliveries are done in the County.

Although there is a definite need for human resources, nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, home economists, and others, as well as education programs, clinics, and support for caregivers, there appears to be no budget for such. In spite of higher taxes, residents are paying more user fees. Private companies must now do water and air quality testing, for example, and there are fees for some vaccines. Cuts to services are forcing privatisation of the system.

The problem? A financial imperative where people are the ultimate consumable.
- Interviewee

Few Cape Bretoners are enrolled in the Dalhousie Medical School. Doctors are recruited across Canada and world-wide in order to fill positions here, while the number of Canadian medical school graduates falls 800 short of the national demand. Because of their smaller numbers and the rising demand for services, Cape Breton Doctors are faced with more emergency room service, too many 24 hour days and weekends on call. It is difficult for local practitioners to find a locum for replacement when needed, and they may not find the professional back-up they need as they would in a major urban area.

Opportunities

In spite of the grim picture above, opportunities exist, particularly in light of the current in-migration of older residents and the interest in health maintenance. Psychiatrists and psychologists are needed. There is no dentist North of Smokey. An optical business could be supported in the County, particularly in Baddeck, where there is a two day a week eye clinic. Physiotherapists and chiropractors are needed. Massage therapy, reflexology, and other complementary health services will find an increasing number of customers.

There is a current demand for medical doctors in industrial Cape Breton; specialists in emergency care, ENT, geriatrics, ophthalmology, plastic surgery and orthopedic surgery. There is also an immediate need for ten primary care practitioners. In North Sydney, there have been recent turnovers in two pathologists, a cardiologist, an obstetrician and two family doctors. At this time, several doctors live in Victoria County and work elsewhere, and there is obviously a need for more. Doctors who stay on Cape Breton may have strong family roots or a deep satisfaction from the local environment, people, culture and lifestyle, and there are many examples of stable medical careers built from these things.

Seniors facilities will be increasingly needed. A new Alderwood multi-purpose community facility could be designed, with natural lighting, alternative water and heat sources, outdoor space and room for clinics. There could also be one or more high quality retirement villages in the County financed by those who buy space, with assisted living facilities and geriatric services. Home based seniors' facilities or guest homes and small options homes could be integrated into existing communities with geriatric support facilities.

Strategy

- Lobby to maintain staff and services of healthcare workers. Provide full-time work and benefits to keep from losing those who are currently working in Victoria County. Determine ways to provide benefits for casual and part-time labour, both within the health care system and elsewhere.

- Encourage training and use of nurse practitioners, health promotion, community health centres, and support for training and equipment for First Aid, CPR, and First Responders.
- Increase the number of County students in medical school by early identification of interested candidates and the establishment of career paths. Consider incentives (tuition help for service agreements) and foster ongoing relationships between medical students and local doctors.
- Work to maintain and enhance the Palliative Care and Home Care programs, and encourage geriatric services.
- Recruit health care workers and providers of complementary health care.
- Support educational and training opportunities including literacy courses, GED, distance education, and adult learning, recognising that education is directly linked to income production and to health.
- Establish more pre-schools to enhance early education and to encourage young adults to remain in this area.

9) Infrastructure

Overview

Businesses are established, jobs are created and tourists come to communities that have hospitals, schools, accommodation, postal service, financial services, water and sewage systems, waste disposal, transportation and communication systems, fire departments, entertainment and recreational facilities. In other words, where there is adequate infrastructure. As well, community halls, churches, libraries, and organisations, are the infrastructure that maintain the vibrant Victoria County communities that are cherished by local residents and attractive to others. Infrastructure has been mentioned already under other sectors such as fishery, tourism, information technology and health, but there are other opportunities and issues that must be noted here.

Victoria County suffers from a small population and tax base in a large geographic area. Maintaining physical infrastructure is a challenge. Public water systems only exist in Dingwall, Neil's Harbour, Baddeck and Little Narrows. Baddeck has the only sewage treatment system, and it is being studied for upgrading. A sewer bylaw has been drafted for Baddeck including new regulations and a user-pay system.

By 2003, the County must make plans for a 2nd generation landfill with a lined bed and a leaching system to be in place by 2005. Currently, Dingwall is a transfer site for waste that is taken to the Baddeck landfill. Recycling depots exist in Neil's Harbour and Baddeck. A composting site is being developed at the Baddeck landfill. Although the population is insufficient for a self-supporting recycling depot, 580 tons were sold last year from the landfill.

*By the time we're six years old, we've generated more waste than the average 3rd World person in a lifetime.
- Interviewee*

The last Federal budget announced a strengthening of Federal, Provincial and Municipal Infrastructure in recognition that the needs of rural communities are the same as those of urban Canadians. A multi-year plan is to be in place by the end of this year, allowing \$350 million for 2001-02 and \$550 million for the next four years, \$400 million of which will be allocated for municipal infrastructure including affordable housing and "green" infrastructure, and up to \$150 million for highways.

Social infrastructure includes health, education and recreation and the facilities that support them. Victoria County has two new hospitals and three new schools with a fourth being planned. Besides Ski Cape Smokey, there are cross country ski trails and facilities such as the North Highlands Nordic Ski Trails (from the Canada Winter Games) and Ski-Tuonela in St. Ann's, two arenas, one in Baddeck and one in Cape North, a new curling rink in Baddeck and three golf courses.

Issues

Recent government divesting of wharves and public lands has been increasingly onerous for local communities. In the case of land, there have

been concerns about public shorefront being sold privately with little or no notice, and maintenance of wharves has been a burden to communities who have little expertise in running the wharf as a business. The situation has caused divisions in some places and undue stress on the fishing sector in others.

Local residents and industry are dependent on road travel and are well aware of the need for basic road improvement. Meat Cove students lost two weeks of school because of washouts on the Meat Cove road. The lack of an all-season road between Route 105 to Orangedale and across the Portage Road to Little Narrows Gypsum is a severe impediment for the industry. The crusher/screener plant makes a finished product, and truckers from Sydney can backhaul to New Brunswick and PEI, but the roads are a limitation.

As has been noted elsewhere, public transportation is extremely limited. There are no local taxis or regular service to the airport, and air access is not competitive. Acadia Lines travels on Route 105 twice a day, stopping in Baddeck. Van service can be arranged to Halifax on a daily basis, and a bus travels from Bay St. Lawrence to Sydney. However, central Cape Breton has no access to mass transportation although the rail is still in place, and a re-established Sydney to Halifax run would be useful for passenger service and a freight rail to the gypsum plant might help transport product.

In order to attract and retain workers, there must be adequate provision for health, educational, commercial, and recreational services. There must also be the social and organisational networks which sustain them and make the community an interesting place to live.

*-Thomas Beckley and William Reimer
in The Forestry Chronical*

At one time Cape Breton had seventy-two ferries. Only two remain, however both are in Victoria County, and both are subject to doubling rate increases. The one at Englishtown is closed part of the year, adding thirty-five kilometers each way for northern travellers going to Sydney. To attend a hall supper in Little Narrows, visitors have to add \$6 in ferry fees to the cost of dinner.

One of the challenges on the Iona Peninsula is the lack of access to affordable, serviced, land. If homes were available, those who work in Port Hawkesbury or Sydney could settle on the peninsula, thereby increasing school

enrolment and community services. A similar problem is experienced in Baddeck and in other communities in the County, particularly where land is priced for the European market.

Access to potable water also presents a difficulty on the Iona Peninsula; the water system in Little Narrows is yet to be completed. Once complete, the need for continued testing has been made clear by incidents in Ontario and concerns on Cape Breton.

Baddeck is facing a possible shortage of potable drinking water. A larger pipe is needed between Peter's Brook and the cement reservoir. As it is, at times of high usage the Village occasionally must return to the old system. Results of the second of a four part testing survey of twenty municipal water supplies shows improvement in the trihalomethane (THM) levels in both Dingwall and Baddeck, bringing them both below maximum allowable levels. Test results are expected to vary seasonally with runoff varying the amount of organic matter in the water supply. THMs, known to increase the risk of bladder cancer, are found when the chlorine used to disinfect drinking water reacts with organic compounds. It is more of a problem when the water supply is from surface rather than ground water. THMs can be reduced by reducing chlorine loading and by chlorinating only after filtration to lower the concentration of organics. Chlorine can be replaced with an ozone disinfecting system that would eliminate the THM problem. Otherwise, improved filtration systems or dissolved air flotation technology (DAF) would help.

As noted above, the costs of maintaining hospital facilities has increased dramatically, and the costs of running the new schools, including increased bussing, are yet to be known.

Lack of access to two-way high-speed broad band telecommunication equipment and limited Internet service providers are definite constraints in Victoria, making it difficult for local business to compete with other areas, or for residents to take advantage of educational opportunities. Although the service cost is the same or higher than that of urban areas, the quality of service is lower.

Opportunities

The Baddeck wastewater treatment plant offers a major opportunity to create a model tertiary treatment facility and to take the lead in creating a co-operative wastewater improvement plan with all other stakeholders who affect the water quality of the Lakes. An efficient method of tertiary treatment would be a biological system contained in a greenhouse environment called a solar-aquatic system. The system works in a concerted manner to consume organic wastes and nutrients and therefore crosscuts the conventional primary, secondary and tertiary lines. The technology employed would make Victoria County and Baddeck a Cape Breton demonstration site for this new technology, and could prove an attraction for year-round visitors, as has happened in Bear River, Nova Scotia. Sewage outflows affect other coastal areas in the County, and a County-wide clean water focus would be a worthwhile initiative for the municipality.

*This County brings money to the province,
but until we get the infrastructure we need,
nothing more is going to happen.*

- Interviewee

The SeaMount Waterfront Development plan in Ingonish Harbour is a community initiated and supported project that could increase population and diversify use of that area. It could include summer use of the ski hill as a day camp for children, a pub in the ski lodge, information and cultural heritage centres, and housing. Some private support already exists for the project.

The concept of a Marine Aquarium and Laboratory at Barra Strait-Iona has been endorsed by many communities around the lakes. The project would assist in conserving the Lakes by serving as an educational focal point for the dissemination of environmental information and as an instrument to raise public awareness about the vulnerability and complexity of the Bras d'Or ecosystem. The permanent crossing at the Barra Strait provides easy vehicle access, and the site could be used for research, monitoring of the Lakes, and as a focal point for eco-tourism. The project would work with the new school in Iona, providing a marine laboratory, and would use the newly acquired wharf and link with Highland Village. It would affiliate with the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources at Eskasoni.

The Bay St. Lawrence Harbour Authority has recently completed the first phase of its development plan to ensure the long-term viability of the harbour after a thorough feasibility study was commissioned from consulting engineers. On-going development would provide marina services for recreational boaters through more efficient utilisation of the existing facilities. These would coexist with the fishing sector and generate additional income in

the community as well as revenue for the Harbour Authority. Bay St. Lawrence has a 60 vessel fleet with 180-220 fishers, and is an integral part of the reduced harbour system that may be redesigned to support the commercial fishery and coastal communities. There is currently no marina on the North Eastern side of Cape Breton, and there is a need for proper tour boat docking facilities and associated services.

Wharves offer excellent tourism opportunities, as mentioned earlier, with seafood restaurants, displays, farmers' markets, and activities. Existing wharves in Boulardarie, the Iona Peninsula and North and South of Smokey offer potential for such development, as do lighthouses, such as the Man-O-War light on Boulardarie.

Kidston Island in Baddeck in addition to safe beach activities provides an opportunity for a day camp for children and development of nature walks. It would complement the wharf and waterfront development in Baddeck.

Cycling shoulders and trails are part of the County's infrastructure, as are those facilities that exist at local beaches. Establishing trails can be part of a joint effort between communities and the municipality, and gradually building a safe bike paved shoulder on the Cabot Trail with each road improvement project would make the Trail safer and greatly enhance tourism.

The wilderness hiking trail system proposed for Polletts Cove-Aspy Fault would be developed and operated at the local community level, and would provide access to dramatic scenic highland landscapes. Indirect economic benefits would come through the provision of goods and services, and there would be recreational, health and social benefits to local residents.

The Enviro-Centre at the Baddeck landfill and the Recycling Centre in Neil's Harbour have potential to establish "free stores" similar to the active store found on Hornby Island, B.C. This would help recycle still useful items such as old furniture, clothing.

The Alexander Graham Bell Museum has history and potential to be an ideal location for a major centre of communications technology. Working with the community, it could be a think tank and conference centre and would provide an economic base for the area.

Strategy

- Keep a close watch on the federal infrastructure fund, and present projects such as the marine museum and the tertiary sewage treatment plant in Baddeck as green initiatives.
- Look for projects that are initiated by communities and that create partnerships among communities, between communities and government, and between communities and business.
- Support social as well as physical infrastructure projects, and seek projects that do both.

VIII. Governance and Finances

The Municipal Government System began when Simon Holmes was Nova Scotia's Premier. The Victoria County Municipal Council now consists of eight Councillors with a \$5,600,000 budget, 80.8% of which comes from taxes. Of this, the two largest items are residential taxes (70.8% of the tax revenue), and commercial taxes (17.8%). Business occupancy taxes follow at 4.5%. The Municipal Council sets the tax rate, and the municipality is not allowed a deficit as, in theory, it has unlimited revenues in taxes. It must, by law, have a reserve for uncollectable taxes.

The largest expenditure is for Recreational and Cultural Services at 34.3%, with \$1,218,220 paid to the District School Board in 1999. This is followed by Protective Services at 25% and General Government Services at 17%. (See Appended Tables 19 and 20 for complete figures.)

The Council operates under the Municipal Act, and takes care of planning, streets, policing, and waste. It owns the water systems (except in Baddeck) and the sewage systems and is a member of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. The Minister of Municipal Affairs represents the Council in the provincial government, and the Member of Parliament for Cape Breton-Victoria is its voice in the Federal Legislature.

Victoria County never developed towns or town councils because it was too rural. Baddeck, incorporated in 1908, was the only place to establish a Village Commission, now called “the Village of Baddeck”. A village meeting elects five unpaid Commissioners and a chairperson. The Village levies taxes and sets water rates. It maintains the sewer system and cleans sidewalks (both of which are owned by the Municipality). The Planning Advisory Council is composed of two Baddeck Councillors, two Village representatives, and two members at large.

Victoria County is part of the Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency (S-HRDA), legislated in 1996 to “encourage and facilitate community-based planning for economic, social and institutional change”. RDAs are funded by three levels of government and occupy the middle ground between government and communities to support, promote, and co-ordinate activities designed to advance the Nova Scotian economy. According to the Minister of Economic Development last October, RDAs can provide technical and project support to partners, promote their regions and co-ordinate the formulation and execution of regional strategic economic development plans and priorities. Their work must contribute to the growth of the economy.

With \$325,000 in core funding, S-HRDA works within two economies (rural and the Strait), and with 30,000 people. (Compare to Antigonish with \$300,000 and 18,000 people.) It is not a funding body, but rather it co-ordinates and integrates regional economic development to avoid duplication of effort, and it supports development that has significant, measurable, economic benefit. The County contributes \$30,000 a year to the S-HRDA, and a Community Development Officer works out of Baddeck with community organisations and the County Council. Once Victoria County has project priorities in place, S-HRDA can help locate resources.

For long term success, the community must be given the skills, authority and final responsibility to direct and control their own development goals.
- Phil MacDonald, S-HRDA

The Community Economic Development Committee has been set up by the Council and provides a communications link between the S-HRDA Board and County Council as well as between the community and business groups in the county. The Committee includes representatives from the S-HRDA board, from each of the two umbrella community group organisations, NOSEDA (North of Smokey Economic Development Association and SOVICDA (South Victoria Community Development Association), from the Baddeck and Area

Business Tourist Association (BABTA), the Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce, the Grand Narrows and District Board of Trade, and up to two members at large.

There are over 140 community organisations in the County, based on a recent S-HRDA inventory, including three community development associations that have done a community strategic planning process. The St. Ann's Bay Development Association (SABDA), established in 1993, initiated a community survey that was followed by a strategic plan. It has been responsible for the establishment of the St. Ann's Community Health Centre, which has received some support from the Eastern Regional Health Board. SABDA is currently maintaining an old church structure in North River as a centre for performing arts.

Little Narrows and the Iona Peninsula have been part of an active Central Cape Breton planning process since 1985. The current marine aquarium and laboratory project came from the early studies and is now supported by Central Cape Breton Community Ventures Inc., an expanded community organisation.

NOSEDA, the North of Smokey Economic Development Association, created its five-year strategic plan in 1996. Originally, a Community Advisory Committee had been established to assess proposals submitted under The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS).

Finally, the Baddeck and Area Business Tourist Association (BABTA) sponsored a US/UK/CN Countryside Stewardship Exchange in 1992. Its final report provides strategic directions and action opportunities for the Baddeck area. Currently the RDA is trying to establish a parallel organisation, the South Victoria Development Association (SOVICDA) as an umbrella organisation for groups in the southern part of the County. But so far, this effort has not taken root.

Throughout Nova Scotia, grassroots community development action has gained support from all three political parties. Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) has been a major support with 96% of their projects having gone well. Industry Canada support for CAP sites has made community based Internet access possible. However, with increased budget cuts, it is now necessary for community projects to seek other sources of

funding. The provincial tax base is small, and government's priority is to pay off the debt.

Two things are evident for a municipality where money is becoming scarce: Other money must be found to support essential programs and projects, and the governing Council must know its priorities and be able to lead.

Concerning Money

Given that the tax base is too small for the geographic area and that the County is losing its youth, closing schools and losing services, a strategy should be developed not only to encourage local youth to remain or to return, but to encourage immigrants in the 30-45 year old age group. According to an analysis by Rick Williams of GTA Associates, significant selling points exist for the Atlantic Provinces, including Cape Breton. Some of these are: available land in attractive locations below world market prices; culturally rich community life; relatively low crime rates; a relatively safe and clean natural environment; infrastructure to support knowledge-based industries.

There also exists a sizeable group of middle aged and younger individuals and families who are leaving congested urban areas and high stress life-styles as well as an unknown number of knowledge industry entrepreneurs who can locate their businesses wherever there are adequate communication infrastructure. Both groups may be interested in places with lower living costs and a better quality of life than is possible in a metropolitan area. The strategy would be to target these people, encouraging those who can move their work anywhere, and to suggest to head offices of corporations and businesses the benefits of locating high-level staff and satellite offices in Victoria County, where life is generally less expensive and young families can thrive. Such immigration would provide work for those already in the County (teachers, mechanics, construction workers, computer technicians, others), would encourage County youth to return and settle here, and would bring in new personal skills and ideas.

I can achieve more in a day here than I can in a week in Toronto!

- Interviewee

\$600 million a year leaves Nova Scotia in RRSPs. The Provincial Investment Tax Credit has been set up to try to capture some of this money and has been used successfully by BCA Holdings in Sydney. The County should

investigate setting up a Community Economic Development Investment Fund from which the municipality can pay its share in federal/provincial/municipal cost-sharing agreements on projects. Such a fund could encourage community benefactors, i.e. those who enjoy the community on money made elsewhere, and would like to invest financially in the community's future.

The business occupancy tax is based on the assessed value of a building, but the federal government does not pay it. Eliminating it and raising the commercial rate could potentially bring in more money to the municipality without changing the amount that local businesses pay overall.

Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NSPI) and MT&T pay taxes only on revenue. An agreement of sale when they were privatised was that they would not be taxed on assets, including infrastructure. This year MT&T's taxes in the County are \$87,570, up from \$67,487 last year. NSPI, on the other hand, only increased \$200, from \$36,644 to \$36,844, although record profits were reported this year. It is incumbent upon the municipality to create good communication with the Public Utilities Review Board (PURB) around this situation. As this is a province-wide issue, and one that may become more serious as the liquor stores and other provincial assets are sold should they have similar agreements, it is essential to have a strong voice through the Union of Municipalities to come to an equitable solution.

A municipality can not grant a tax concession or other form of direct financial assistance to a business or industry, according to the Municipal Act. However, with the power to levy taxes, absentee landowners could justifiably be asked to pay more than residents do. Taxes might then be decreased if land were allowed to be used for agricultural or community purposes.

In terms of the costs of Baddeck water, sewage, waste disposal and waterfront renewal, a surcharge on hotel rooms could create new money, although this would have to be carefully considered in terms of the potential for discouraging visitors or adverse publicity. However, assuming 1200 rooms are filled for only 60 nights a year, \$5 on each room would bring in \$360,000; \$2 per room would be \$144,000. There will be a toilet installation fee in the new municipal sewage bylaw, as well as a flush tax added for water use. This will have the additional benefit of discouraging excessive residential use of water.

Ready money exists for the Province as well. A four-day workweek for the 6,000 provincial public service employees would put the province \$600 million ahead. This would pay down the deficit with \$50 million left over.

The deferred year option available to public service employees and teachers has remarkable, though largely unused, potential. An example of how the option works comes from the Nova Scotia Teacher's Union Deferred Salary Year Plan (DSYP): If 450 full-time teachers in the Cape Breton Victoria School District signed up for the four out of five year plan, 20% more jobs would be created immediately. By staggering the deferred years evenly, there would be 90 new jobs created every year. If there were full participation throughout Nova Scotia, 2000 new high paying jobs would be delivered at no new cost to the Province. The economic spin-offs of these jobs would be high, the experience, talent and energy of currently unemployed and new teachers would be used, and fully employed teachers would have an opportunity for rest, travel, and personal growth.

Typically, a teacher on the DSYP defers the payment of 20% of his/her gross salary for each of four years into an account to be drawn on in the fifth year when s/he does not work. Taxes on the deferred portion of the salary are deferred until the fifth year, putting the teacher into a lower tax bracket. Taxes are paid on the interest of the deferred portions of salary as accrued. Teachers pay their union dues, medical insurance and pension deductions in the fifth year and are able to count those years for their pension. The school board can hire a replacement teacher at no extra cost with the salary normally budgeted for the teacher on leave, and may save money if the replacement teacher is less senior than the one being replaced, as is often the case. Given these benefits and the possibility of more provincial money being made available to municipalities, pressure might be put on the province to encourage all public service employees and teachers to take advantage of the program.

The Council could also lobby to move government jobs to rural area. For example, 75% of the Economic Development staff is in Halifax. As government cutbacks remove jobs from the area, there are solid arguments for decentralising government offices. The appeal may parallel that used to encourage new immigrants and satellite offices.

The Northside Economic Development Assistance Corporation (NEDAC) has loaned \$2.3 million to businesses in Victoria County since 1992, yet its services are not as well known as they might be here. NEDAC's

philosophy is to either create or maintain a job for each dollar it spends. Its loan repayment rate is excellent, and it brings in enough on its portfolio to cover costs. Having begun with \$1.5 million in 1985, it now has \$2.8 million in its portfolio. Existing or new businesses in the County should be encouraged to look to NEDAC for support or seed money.

Cost-sharing arrangements for joint initiatives such as trails or environmental monitoring should be made with Wagmatcook First Nation and other municipalities.

Finally, according to the Municipal Act, the Council may establish/maintain an electrical distribution system in the municipality. The Council should consider developing micro-hydro and wind power to electrify Victoria County and to sell outside of the Province. There are examples of both in the County that could provide a model for development. Other jurisdictions are already doing this (for example in Nova Scotia's Annapolis, in Alberta and Germany).

If we can become self-sufficient in power and food, we won't have a worry in the world – people will be flocking to our door.
- Interviewee

Concerning Leadership

The Council's role is to support good ideas and carry forward concerns. Authority brings with it commensurate responsibility. In this case, the Council is not only responsible for the infrastructure noted above, but for getting federal and provincial support for the municipality. The Council has both a leadership and a lobbying role. It is not simply advisory and managerial. In the case of privatisation of provincial assets such as NSPI, municipal councils must be at the bargaining table.

Victoria County attracts people to the province. To continue to act as the provincial magnet for tourism, the province must ensure that necessary infrastructure is in place. It is the Council's responsibility to make this message heard.

The Council can lead in building communities of interest with other jurisdictions. For example, it is not enough for Baddeck to have a model tertiary sewage system if sewage continues to flow into the Lakes from other sources. Council and the Village can promote a network of stakeholders throughout the Lakes' watershed, using technical assistance available from

Environment Canada's Community Animation Program (CAP) and the Bras d'Or's designation with the Sustainable Communities Initiative under the Federal Economic Development Committee. Natural partners initially would be the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, the Bras d'Or Preservation Foundation, and Central Cape Breton Community Ventures Inc. (CCBCVI), followed by Community Development Associations in the rest of the County as the initiative spread to other watersheds.

Council can also work with Inverness County and Highlands National Park to strengthen a community of interest around the Cabot Trail, developing signage, linking hiking and Nordic skiing trails, and creating a biking trail. Many municipalities are becoming creative in their work with communities. Canso moved its entire staff to work on community economic development.

Open planning processes are essential. Without transparency, inclusion, and collaboration, governing bodies and organisations become dysfunctional. In terms of the Council, this means encouraging more democratic input from residents. As well as putting either draft minutes or highlights from Council meetings on the Victoria County WEB site, Councillors need to have more community meetings to demonstrate their interest in public opinion and to recognise communities' abilities to offer solutions to County problems. Council needs to recognise community interest as well and check with communities and organisations when it is approached regarding federal sale of assets such as wharves or lighthouses.

Council meetings and agendas must be advertised, and the public encouraged, not just allowed, to attend. Similarly, Council should insist on being consulted in any development project in the County. CAP sites could develop on-line video conferencing, and Council meetings could be held on-line allowing interested district residents to be able to attend the meetings. Some transportation costs could be diverted to help set up the video conferencing. In addition, given the existing CAP sites, there should be no reason why all Councillors are not available on e-mail to all County residents.

Communication throughout the County is difficult for others than the Council. Print, radio and cable tv announcements do not reach everyone, nor do community and church bulletins or the CAP sites. There is a need to identify "communication centres" in communities throughout the County, whether bulletins, CAP sites, local stores, notice boards, or other, and to make these known for County-wide communication purposes. A directory of

residents with e-mail might be developed, and the community WEB page can be more thoroughly advertised.

Council Policies are in the process of a much-needed revision, having been basically unchanged since 1991. A thorough policy examination and consolidation is necessary. At the same time, the structure of the Council may need to be re-evaluated. Council members are elected by area, and are understandably supportive of local initiatives. However, this does not always encourage countywide development nor take into consideration the advantages for one area of another area's advancement. To overcome this, it might be useful for Councillors to be given countywide portfolios or responsibilities, for example, for waste, transportation, environment, etc. The Council might also consider increasing its size in order to bring in skills that may be lacking and to work for a balance of interests, as well as social and gender balance.

The Village of Baddeck should consider changing its structure for more equitable representation. Currently, only Village residents can vote for or become Village Commissioners, which eliminates those who run businesses in the Village but who live outside the Village limits. Election at a one-time Village meeting can also lead to potential stacking for the purposes of swaying an election. Responsibilities of the Commissioners should be increased, with some financial compensation provided.

Although financial pressures make this a difficult time for municipalities, the new Municipal Act allows for initiative and creative thinking. Opportunities exist for collaboration with other municipalities, with Wagmatcook First Nation, with the National Park and the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site and with communities. If used, these opportunities could build a stronger Victoria County and the Council could become the responsive governing body envisioned in the Municipal Act. Ultimately, the Municipal government must be willing to take responsibility for the future of Victoria County.

IX. Implementation and Conclusion

Recognising the short period of time for its initial development, this document will be advertised and made available throughout the County for

further reading and discussion until early fall of 2000, at which time the CED Committee will host a public workshop. Copies of the document will be available from Councillors, in libraries, at CAP sites, on-line through e-mail and www.victoriacounty.com, and on request from organisations to the CED Committee (in care of Tom Wilson, 295-3664, fax: 295-1864, e-mail: vcrdt@auracom.com).

A strategic plan is a valuable tool provided it is not done just as an academic exercise, but is used to check development proposals to see if they match the goals and objectives outlined. If a match does not exist, it is possible to determine what adjustments are needed and to negotiate changes. This plan is meant to be a living document, a starting point for further development. It should be seen as a major working document in which to refine those items that need refining and to implement those that are clear. The plan allows communities to understand the work of the Council and to measure progress in the County, and it assists individuals and sectors to move forward.

It is understood that without strong leadership from the County Council, no action will occur. Volunteers and organisations have been asked to take on increased responsibilities with increasingly limited financial and human resources. They can not be expected to implement the County's strategic plan without support. On the other hand, it is up to community organisations to work with Council where possible, and to monitor the plan's implementation.

It is recommended that a Municipal Director of Development be hired for a five-year period to implement this plan. The job profile and terms of reference would be developed by the CED Committee to whom the Director would report, and a process would be developed to determine how s/he relates to the S-HRDA and Council. S/he would be responsible for establishing a team that would include the County Clerk, the S-HRDA Development Officer and others to work with those named in the Strategic Plan and the Council to ensure that the objectives are reached on schedule. Such a person would have an extensive background in planning, evaluation and implementation in a rural context and a proven ability to achieve objectives in collaboration with community groups, municipal governments, provincial and federal agencies. S/he would not come from the local municipal or regional government agency, but would be able to work with both. The position would be well advertised through universities such as Mount Allison, UCCB, St. Mary's, St. Francis Xavier Extension Department, and others who have successful community

development programs, as well as through Environment Canada, the Economic Development and Tourism Department, ECBC, NEDAC, S-HRDA.

A progress report should go to the Council and to all County residents every two years. Progress evaluation would include the results achieved through the actions listed under each objective. Suggested changes and additions to the plan would be solicited at the time of each report following sufficient time for discussion.

If followed, this Strategic Plan can join community interests and individual skills under a sound government. It can ensure the social and physical infrastructure to support sustainable communities, and can strengthen Victoria County: a place where people choose to live.

X. Action Plan

Examples exist of economies in worse condition than Victoria County's that have made dramatic improvements. Ireland is currently the best known of these.

The Irish economy was in crisis in the mid-eighties, with public finances in disarray, high national debt, falling employment, low business confidence, low morale among job seekers, continued out-migration and a very high dependency ratio. In 1993 Ireland made a national policy shift that led, among other things, to stronger support for its small business sector, focusing on developing indigenous industry. Irish analysts stress the need for a partnership of diverse interests that can achieve consensus on local economic needs and command the necessary funds to address these needs from government and other stakeholders.

Improved educational levels in the population and attention to both the education participation rates and the quality of the education system have been important elements in facilitating the resurgence of economic growth. Ireland, which had demoralising levels of net out-migration in the 50's and 60's, now absorbs a net in-migration of about 7,000 per year. Those who leave tend to be better educated than in the past and much more likely to return to Ireland after a period abroad. As well, women have become more active across the political and economic spectrum. The demand for unskilled labour has decreased, but Ireland is prepared with skilled labour as the need for it increases. Dependency levels are falling and are likely to be lower in thirty years than they were over the past thirty years as the demographics change.

This is only part of Ireland's success story, but it is relevant to Victoria County in terms of changes needed in education and demographic patterns. Out-migration of youth is not in itself a problem, providing they can return and lead productive lives here, both economically and socially. If the County attends to its infrastructure, including health and education, if it supports local business and develops niche markets, it will begin to be a place where more young families can choose to live.

Seven Principles

Attention paid to the following principles will help ensure that this can happen. They come from the research and interviews that created this Strategic Plan.

- Define what we need to live well in Victoria County, not what is needed by someone else in some other place. Recognise our own “defining life-style”.
- Develop what we do well and what we like. Maintain community control and ownership of projects; plan carefully, and include everyone who will be affected in the planning process.
- Encourage niche products in all sectors, small inns and bed and breakfast accommodations, home-based seniors’ facilities, small institutions, home restaurants and farmers’ markets.
- Emphasize quality over quantity. Plan unique trails, viewpoints, exhibits, festivals and activities. Promote attractive signage. Promote value added goods and services.
- Diversify the economy and be realistic about seasonal employment; it is necessary for all our major industries. Seek to expand the season in fishing and tourism, to develop complementary seasonal employment, to find opportunities for “paid work” rather than “jobs,” and to encourage entrepreneurs and artists.
- Recognise that our interests go beyond county lines. Think in terms of watersheds and bioregions, such as the Bras d’Or Lake system and the Greater Highlands Ecosystem. Protect the natural and cultural environment on which all our economic sectors are based.
- Take the time to seek understanding and agreement between communities on long-term goals. Think interdependence as well as independence, and balance sector interests. Recognise that all

*As communities, we fight over crumbs.
If we worked together we could share
the whole banquet.*

- Interviewee

development is not beneficial. Analyse risks and benefits openly to be sure the latter outweigh the former.

XI. Goals, Objectives and Actions

Six Goals are presented below, followed by those Objectives and Actions that can best be achieved in the next five years. All come from the planning exercise and are based on the details given in the plan above. Recognising that some changes are not within the power of the County Council or community groups, an attempt has been made to outline realistic expectations. It is believed that the following are achievable. All actions are addressed to the Council and are to be initiated by the Council or its designate in partnership with others, some of whom (although certainly not all) are mentioned in brackets.

I. Health and Education

To ensure that all Victoria County Residents can meet their health needs and can access the education and training necessary to develop the skills needed in the new workplace.

“ . . . good communities attract people and industries . . . These are communities with solid social and physical infrastructures . . . in other words, healthy communities.” Page 3

a) Objective: To increase the percentage of the labour force that has high school equivalency education from 49% to 60% by 2005, and encourage post-secondary work.

- Actions:*
- 1) Encourage all literacy, GED and Adult 1,2,3,4, programs.
(Home and School, CAP Sites, UCCB, HRDC, CLANS)
 - 2) Find ways to honour and encourage all secondary school graduates who continue their education.

(Home and School, community organisations,
Victoria Standard, local business/industry)

3) Sponsor distance education and adult training courses.

(CAP Sites, UCCB, HRDC, local business/industry)

4) Identify and encourage students interested in studying medicine.

(local healthcare workers, Dalhousie Medical School, CB/Victoria District School Board)

5) Recognise the benefits of early childhood education and increase the number of preschool facilities in the County.

(Family Place Resource Centre, Baddeck Nursery School, District School Board)

b) Objective: To expand the CAP sites' service and education capabilities by the end of 2001.

Actions:

1) Bring in qualified instructors, train-the-trainer programs and technical support for individuals and community and sector groups such as fishers, CED groups, etc.

(CAP sites, ECBC, UCCB, HRDC, NSCC, Little Narrows Gypsum (LNG))

2) Ensure that all members of the municipal government, including Councillors are fully connected to the Internet and use it regularly for municipal business. Implement a cost-recovery system for CAP sites, and use saved Council travel money to help set up video conferencing for Council meetings.

(CAP sites, S-HRDA)

3) Educate the public on the benefits of using technology in all sectors and communities.

(VCCAPS, S-HRDA, HRDC, ECBC, LNG)

4) Educate businesses on the importance of E-Commerce and its benefits to the economy, and get 10 businesses a year involved in E-Commerce.

(S-HRDA, ECBC, NS Dept. of Education, NS Tourism and Culture, HRDC, VCCAPS)

c) Objective: To increase educational and recreational opportunities for youth and adults throughout the County.

- Actions:*
- 1) Maintain and enhance youth centres as places where youth can develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills.
(existing youth centres, RCMP, CAP sites, Youth Speaks Up, Peer Literacy)
 - 2) Promote apprenticeship and internship programs with performing artists, craftspeople, mechanics, carpenters, cultural institutions, others.
(local people and institutions as listed)
 - 3) Encourage community youth recreational ventures initiated by County youth.
(Recreation and Tourism, local youth, UCCB)
 - 4) Provide training in those skills needed for local jobs.
(local business/industry, RITC, ECBC, UCCB, NSCC, HRDC, Cape Breton Island Skills Training Council)

d) Objective: To maintain staff and services in Victoria County Memorial Hospital and Buchanan Memorial Health Centre over the next five years.

- Action:*
- 1) Join others to insist on replacing casual healthcare positions with permanent positions with benefits.
(Community Health Board (CHB), District Health Board, hospitals and the Cape Breton Health Care Complex)

e) Objective: By the end of 2003, access funding and recruit 2 full-time healthcare workers and 3 complementary healthcare providers, and to ensure 2 outreach social work positions in the County.

- Actions:*
- 1) Advertise the merits of Victoria County as a place for professionals through in-house newsletters and magazines for dentists, physiotherapists, opticians and others.

(local professionals, Baddeck and Area Business Tourist Association (BABTA), S-HRDA, ECBC)

2) Work with Community Services, Health Boards and the hospitals to put in place two Outreach Social Workers, one each North and South of Smokey.

(CHB, District Health Board, hospitals, Community Services)

f) Objective: To improve Alderwood Rest Home's full-care capability over the next five years.

Actions: 1) Build on services already provided, improve the existing physical plant providing better wheelchair access, enhance rehabilitation services.
(Alderwood staff and administration, Alderwood Support Association)

g) Objective: To recognise the economy's dependence on seasonal workers and secure their well-being through programs and benefits initiated by 2002.

Actions: 1) Join the efforts of provincial and federal governments to address concerns of seasonal workers. Contact the PEI Development Minister, who is the co-chair of the joint working group.
(S-HRDA, St. Ann's Bay Development Association (SABDA), North of Smokey Economic Development Association (NOSEDA), BABTA, HRDC)

2) Initiate discussion among local employers on appropriate wages, benefits and subsidies for long-term seasonal employees.
(S-HRDA, BABTA, CBTA)

3) Promote the development of complementary seasonal industries encouraging the tradition of crofting.
(current producers, S-HRDA, ECBC)

II. Infrastructure

To provide the physical and social infrastructure that will support and expand existing activities, provide employment for local people, and bring new residents to Victoria County.

“Businesses are established, jobs are created and tourists come to communities . . . where there is adequate infrastructure.” Page 51

a) Objective: To bring 10 new or returned residents in the 30-45 year old age group to Victoria County by 2004.

- Actions:*
- 1) Create a recruiting team consisting of County residents who have contacts and can sell the county to business owners and entrepreneurs. Develop marketing strategy.
(BABTA, interested individuals, Community Development Associations (CDAs), ECBC)
 - 2) Develop a tasteful, high quality brochure to advertise benefits of relocating in Victoria County.
(local graphic artists, BABTA, national parks, ECBC, CDAs, S-HRDA))
 - 3) Persuade corporate leaders and entrepreneurs to transfer existing work to Victoria County.
(recruiting team, BABTA, CDAs, S-HRDA)

b) Objective: To ensure potable water and to increase appropriate housing throughout the County by 2003.

- Actions:*
- 1) Locate funding and complete the Little Narrows water system.
(S-HRDA, MP, local industry/construction, CCBCVI)

- 2) Increase water testing throughout the County.
(CDAs, provincial depts. (Health, Agriculture, Environment), business/industry)
- 3) Inventory and advertise the need for new housing in the County, map potential locations, available land, contractors and builders.
(S-HRDA, CDAs, local business/industry, property owners)

c) Objective: By 2005, to have completed four major infrastructure projects that have existing plans and partners and are supported by their communities.

- Actions:*
- 1) Investigate ways to access the federal government's infrastructure fund for appropriate infrastructure projects, emphasising "green" initiatives.
(Central Cape Breton Community Ventures Inc. (CCBCVI), Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, Village of Baddeck, S-HRDA)
 - 2) Lobby for the Barra Strait-Iona Marine Aquarium and Laboratory initiative.
(CCBCVI, Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, Bras d'Or Preservation Foundation, ECBC, S-HRDA)
 - 3) Install a tertiary wastewater treatment plant in Baddeck using new technologies that will create a model facility for the Bras d'Or. Invite Environmental Design and Management Ltd. (EDM) to give a public presentation on solar aquatic systems.
(Bras d'Or Preservation Foundation, Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, Village of Baddeck, Environment Canada)
 - 4) Advocate the SeaMount development initiative in Ingonish Harbour.
(Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce, NOSEDA, Highlands National Park, S-HRDA, ECBC)
 - 5) Support the completion of the Bay St. Lawrence Harbour development.

(Bay St. Lawrence
Harbour Authority, S-HRDA)

d) Objective: By 2003, begin to build trails for hiking and bicycling.

- Actions:*
- 1) Support the Polletts Cove-Aspy Fault wilderness hiking trail system under community management.
(Department of Natural Resources, Polletts Cove/Aspy Fault Stewardship Association, NOSEDA, S-HRDA)
 - 2) Initiate action on a paved safe cycling shoulder on the Cabot trail, drawing together potential partners and creating a proposal for the Infrastructure fund.
(Dept. of Transportation and Public Works, Highlands National Park, Tourism Cape Breton, Middle River Development Association, SABDA, NOSEDA, local trail committees, S-HRDA)
 - 3) Support the White Point-New Haven Hiking Trail.
(New Haven Development Association)
 - 4) Expand the hiking trail system, linking with PATHways and local hiking and cross-country skiing groups.
(Department of Recreation, SABDA, NOSEDA, Middle River Development Association, Highlands National Park, Polletts Cove/Aspy Fault Stewardship Association, PATHways, Victoria Trails Federation, Neil's Harbour-New Haven Development Association)

e) Objective: To initiate a transportation system plan by 2002 to ensure that roads necessary for industrial use are all season and that road surfaces are adequate for driving at the posted speeds.

Actions:

1) Continue to lobby the provincial government for an all season road that can take a 5 axel, 500,000 kilogram truck between Route 105 to Orangedale, across the portage to Little Narrows Gypsum Plant, and from Route 105 to the ferry crossing.

(LNG, local residents)

2) Institute and maintain a steady process of rebuilding the Cabot Trail, including a paved safe cycling shoulder, over the next ten years.

(Dept. of Transportation, Highlands National Park, S-HRDA, Inverness County Council, Tourism Cape Breton)

3) Repair the Meat Cove and White Point to New Haven roads, the road through Big Bras d'Or, Route 223, and the Bras d'Or Scenic Drive.

(Department of Transportation, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, N.S. Dept. of Highways)

4) Assess the feasibility of expanding the local van system, to transport visitors between communities in the summer and to provide service for local residents in the winter.

(Northeast Shuttle Service, Department of Transportation, North of Smokey Chamber of Commerce, Highlands National Park, Inverness County Council, S-HRDA, BABTA, TIANS)

5) Join with others to lobby for improved air service through the Sydney Airport with reasonable rates as essential for all Cape Breton business and tourism.

(S-HRDA, BABTA, North of Smokey Chamber of Commerce, CCBCVI, ECBC)

6) Lobby for bridges at Little Narrows and Englishtown.

(CCBCVI, Dept. of Highways, Englishtown Development Association)

7) Lobby for rail service on existing rails, and expanded freight service.

(CCBCVI, Transport 2000, Cape Breton Tourist Association, ViaRail)

f) Objective: To have high speed, two way internet connectivity “always on” by 2002 so that Victoria County residents will have access to on-line courses, video conferencing, on-line meetings, telework, etc.

- Actions:*
- 1) Work with users, CAP sites and others to assess needs.
(CAP sites, Smart Strait Cape Breton Committee, ECBC, UCCB)
 - 2) Lobby MT&T to upgrade infrastructure and Sympatico service.
(CAP sites, S-HRDA)
 - 3) Develop a Victoria County Portal page as well as community portal pages, a regularly updated electronic bulletin board for sharing transportation and listing volunteer organisations by March 31, 2001.
(VCCAPS, CAP sites, CDAs)
 - 4) Continue to upgrade and expand InfoCAP to add more services for the residents of the County.
(VCCAPS, Provincial and Federal Depts.)
 - 5) Promote greater use of GIS/GPS.
(UCCB)

g) Objective: To maintain physical plants of new schools and hospitals, and to find appropriate uses for school buildings that are no longer in use.

- Actions:*
- 1) Lobby the Provincial government for appropriate budget provisions.
(Home and School Associations, School Board, CHB, S-HRDA)
 - 2) Consult with communities regarding potential for no longer used school buildings and assist with transfer to community organisations.
(CDAs, School Board, community organisations, Home and School Associations)

h) Objective: To begin to make Victoria County self-sufficient in power production by 2005.

- Actions:*
- 1) Investigate the potential for power from wind, micro-hydro, photo voltaic, solar thermal and biomass for Victoria County and do a cost-benefit analysis.
(local private power producers, NSPI, other jurisdictions such as Annapolis, Ecology Action Centre, Environment Canada)

III. Niche Products and Services

To develop and market specialty products and services, increasing value-added products in all sectors, and establishing small-scale quality institutions.

“Niche markets are increasing, as is the development of value-added goods, providing strong opportunities.” Page 29

a) Objective: To encourage at least 3 new products marketed by 2003.

- Actions:*
- 1) Ensure wood supply for small and medium sized lumber operations and encourage “green” and value-added products.
(wood products’ manufacturers, Baddeck Valley Wood Producers Co-op, Route 223 Co-op, Stora Enso, Forest Stewardship Council ECBC, S-HRDA, LNG)
 - 2) Study the feasibility of using sawmill wastes for mulch for strawberry farmers, chipboard, pallets, composting, etc.
(sawmill operators, organic producers, greenhouse operators)
 - 3) Invest in product development and marketing to expand capabilities in seafood processing to level 3, higher value-added products.

(Victoria Co-op Fisheries, fishers, Harbour Authorities, ECBC)

4) Encourage organic produce, value-added products (such as jams, pesto, specialty items and seasonal farmers' markets, providing assistance for high season, short term, labour needs.

(organic producers, Co-op stores, ECBC, HRDC)

5) Study the feasibility of an organic fertiliser plant.

(fishers, mussel producers, farmers)

6) Sponsor a yearly New Product Development meeting as a multi-sectoral County gathering to brainstorm potential for new products.

(key contacts in sectors, S-HRDA)

b) Objective: To highlight specific local enterprise, crafts and cultural products over the next five years.

Actions:

1) Promote the expansion of wharves with seafood cafes and outlets, shops, displays, information centres, lobster fishing tours, etc.

(Harbour Authorities, fishermen's organisations, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, CDAs, community organisations, ECBC)

2) Investigate setting up a "sea taxi" on the Bras d'Or and along the Northern Coast for summer travel.

(Northeast Highlands Chamber of commerce, BABTA, CCBCVI, ECBC, S-HRDA)

3) Encourage local development of quality tourism packages that cluster experiences (boating, hiking, dining, golf, arts, music, culture). Market through the Internet.

(CDAs, entrepreneurs, local businesspeople, ECBC, Department of Economic Development and Tourism)

4) Develop one new, outstanding, shoulder season festival using trained organisers. Review the success of

Celtic Colours, and the Tatamagouche German Beer Fest.

(ArtsCape Breton, local performing artists and craftspeople, business owners, CDAs, Cape Breton Tourist Association)

5) Support performing arts in a variety of venues, including the Octagon, Keltic Lodge, North River Centre, Boulardarie School, Wagmatcook Enterprise Centre.. Produce a yearly schedule each April of County arts events listing venues and events.

(the venues listed above, Tourism Cape Breton, ArtsCape Breton, SABDA, Band Council)

6) Spotlight areas such as “The Artists’ Loop” from St. Ann’s to Smokey, “Heritage Links” (including the Gaelic College, Highland Village, Alexander Graham Bell Museum, Cape North Museum, Little River Museum, Giant MacAskill Museum, others), lighthouses and wharves, etc. on the Internet and in a well-presented advertising brochure.

(artists on the Loop, museum directors, Harbour Authorities, CDAs, ECBC)

7) Establish a fully staffed art gallery in Baddeck displaying local, high quality, arts and crafts and a year-round juried sales outlet for weaving and knitting.

(BABTA, South Haven Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, Artists’ Loop, Village of Baddeck, ECBC)

8) Promote Victoria County as a venue for film.

(ECBC. ArtsCape Breton)

9) Increase the days tourists stay through value added tourism encouraging less driving, more activities and fly/drive holidays.

(CBTA, ECBC, TIANS, Park, Historic Site, museums, Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce)

c) Objective: To encourage home-based service industries including food and accommodations, home-based seniors’ facilities, small options homes.

- Actions:*
- 1) Inventory who is currently providing such services and who might be interested.
(Cape Breton Bed and Breakfast, Cape Breton Tourist Association, hospitals, Community Services, seniors' facilities)
 - 2) Determine the feasibility of small options' homes and seniors' facilities including legal constraints, anticipated costs and benefits. Investigate models in existence elsewhere.
(Department of Health, Community Services, Health Canada, Community Links, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, the Nova Scotia Centre on Ageing at Mount St. Vincent University)
 - 3) Train a local work crew to refurbish homes so that seniors can remain at home longer.
(HRDC, NSCC)

d) Objective: To ensure potential for new development by examining existing liquor laws and funding possibilities by 2001.

- Actions:*
- 1) Review the liquor laws, considering the potential for pubs, and set a countywide referendum for the end of 2001.
(Nova Scotia Liquor Commission, Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs)
 - 2) Support the development of the Cape Breton Cultural Sector Investment Fund, investigating the rumoured \$5 million for Cape Breton culture.
(ArtsCape Breton, local artists, ECBC, Department of Economic Development and Tourism)

IV. Finance

To provide additional funds for infrastructure, business, project and program development, and services in Victoria County.

“Given that the tax base is too small for the geographic area and that the County is losing its youth . . . a strategy should be developed not only to encourage local youth to remain or to return, but to encourage immigrants in the 30-45 year old age group.” Page 59

a) Objective: Within the next four years to provide additional revenue, preferably without increasing residents' property taxes.

- Actions:*
- 1) Lobby the province to rescind land and infrastructure tax agreements on privatised corporations.
(Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities)
 - 2) Using the power granted in the Municipal Act, increase taxes on absentee landholders.
(Department of Housing and Municipal Affairs)
 - 3) Approve the new Baddeck sewage by-law and flush tax.
(Village of Baddeck)

b) Objective: To establish a Community Development Fund by 2002 in order to support County projects and programs.

- Actions:*
- 1) Study the Provincial CED Investment Fund Program and its potential for the municipality.
(Dept. of Economic Development and Tourism, S-HRDA)
 - 2) Consider a 2% nightly sur-charge on all tourist rooms in the County to go to the Fund.
(hotel, inn and B&B owners, tourism associations)
 - 3) Advertise for private investors.
(private individuals, local business/industry)
 - 4) Establish a Board of Directors and guidelines for use of the Fund.
(NEDAC, CDAs, Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce, BABTA)

c) Objective: To provide more funding province-wide for education and social services.

Action: 1) Lobby to increase use of the deferred year program within the Department of Education and the Public Service.
(Dept. of Community Services, Board of Education)

d) Objective: To increase awareness about current funding assistance for initiatives.

Actions: 1) Ask NEDAC about the possibility of increasing its limit in Victoria County, and about regularly scheduled, advertised, visits in the County.
(NEDAC)

V. Governance

To strengthen the municipal government so that it better represents and supports all areas and sectors of Victoria County and to increase its leadership

“The Council has both a leadership and a lobbying role. It is not simply advisory and managerial.” Page 63

a) Objective: to restructure the County Council to balance skills, sector and gender representation within the next eighteen months.

Actions: 1) Plan and implement a Council retreat for evaluation and professional development. Engage a professional facilitator skilled in board development.
2) Create portfolios for Councillors, giving specific responsibilities for aspects of County development.

These actions must be taken by Council on its own behalf.

3) For the next election, encourage voters to assess the entire Council when selecting their representative and to look for a balance of necessary skills. Publicise background, abilities and interests of all candidates.

4) Elect the Warden County-wide. Consider having the entire Council elected Countywide, with two or more candidates nominated from their Districts, with all voters allowed to cast eight votes, but with no more than one vote in each District. Again, the emphasis would be on selecting a balanced Council.

5) Revise the Council Policy Manual before 2002.

b) Objective: To strengthen the community base and to encourage active public interest and participation in the work of the Council by 2001.

Actions:

1) Engage communities in inventorying physical and social assets in their areas, building on the Coastal Mapping and People Assessing Their Health (PATH) projects.

(CDAs, S-HRDA, CCBCVI, local business/industry)

2) Identify communication centres in each community and make them known for County-wide communication.

(CDAs, local business/industry, individuals)

3) Publicise Council meetings and agendas in local bulletins, the *Victoria Standard*, the *Inverness Oran*, and on the County WEB page. Move Council meetings to various communities on a regular, more frequent, basis.

(CAP sites, Recreation Department, S-HRDA)

4) Facilitate community involvement in the implementation of this plan either through existing organisations or ones especially created on a limited basis to implement particular actions.

(CDAs, community organisations, local business/industry)

5) Encourage communities to do strategic planning with a view towards working with others within the County and with adjoining jurisdictions.

(CDAs, S-HRDA)

c) Objective: For Council to become a leader in building communities of interest with other jurisdictions within the next three years.

Actions:

1) Using the Bras d'Or Lakes' designation under the Sustainable Community Initiative and the new model sewage treatment plant in Baddeck, promote a network of stakeholders in all counties on the Bras d'Or Lakes' watershed to improve wastewater treatment, including from private septic systems, wherever they impact on the Lakes. Follow with a policy on all County watersheds.

(Environment Canada and Health Canada's Community Animation Program (CAP), Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, Bras d'Or Preservation Foundation, CDAs, S-HRDA)

2) Meet with the Directors of Highlands National Park, the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site, Highland Village and the Wagmatcook Band Council to discuss joint community/park/First Nation initiatives around trails and to design a funding and implementation plan.

(Park and Historic Site, Highland Village, Band, CDAs, PATHways, trail associations, Polletts Cove Aspy Fault Stewardship Association, Dept. of Natural Resources)

3) Initiate a committee with the Inverness County Council and the Wagmatcook and Waycobah First Nations to look at ways to co-ordinate and strengthen joint economic development.

(S-HRDA)

4) A Genuine Progress Index is being done in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Bring Ronald Colman to Baddeck for a public presentation.

(GPI Atlantic)

5) Encourage community collaboration on joint initiatives. Bring residents from one end of the County to look at and discuss a project with those at the other end to develop mutual interests.

(CDAs, project proponents)

6) Bring senior bureaucrats into County planning processes. Invite Deputy Ministers and others to the County for public meetings.

(S-HRDA, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Fisheries, Natural Resources, Industry Canada, LNG)

VI. Sectors

To additionally strengthen the fishery, forestry and tourism sectors in Victoria County beyond what is suggested in the five Goals above.

“ . . . the economy has moved from goods-producing to service-producing . . . Consequently, ‘where people are working’ has changed dramatically over the past three decades.” Page 8

a) Objective: To expand the fishery by 2003.

Actions:

1) Lobby for a moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration.

(Fisherman’s Union, Environment Canada, DFO, Department of Fisheries, fishers)

2) Advocate the equitable distribution of the snow crab catch through the co-management agreement (Area 19).

(Association of Core Fishers Committed to Equitable Sharing of Snow Crab (ACCESS))

3) Encourage the re-opening of the blue fin tuna fishery in St. Ann’s Bay.

(local fishers, DFO)

b) Objective: To ensure proper management of the forest resource to maintain or improve wood supply.

- Actions:*
- 1) Insist on recognised uneven aged stand management techniques for hardwood development in Victoria County.
(woodlot owners and managers, wood product industries, DNR)
 - 2) Create a forest strategy recognising both timber and non-timber forest values.
(woodlot owners, wood co-ops, Forest Stewardship Council, Environment Canada, DNR)
 - 3) Lobby for timber agreements that create the greatest opportunities for local communities.
(woodlot owners, wood products industries, DNR)

c) Objective: To expand to a four season tourist industry by 2005.

- Actions:*
- 1) Continue to expand shoulder season tourism throughout the County by encouraging seasonal businesses to expand weeks and by developing and marketing shoulder season events.
(S-HRDA, Tourism Cape Breton, Highland Village, local businesses)
 - 2) Develop a Winter Get-Away Plan to be sold to tourists on the East Coast U.S. including winter solitude, spectacular ocean scenery, relaxation, fine food, local music.
(National Park and Historic Site, Bed and Breakfast owners, SeaMount, Northeast Chamber of Commerce, Nordic ski areas, ECBC)
 - 3) Work with all airlines to provide special four day get-away packages to Victoria County.
(ECBC, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Park and Historic Site)

4) Create awareness of year-round tourism potential in the Northeast Highlands.

(Tourism Cape Breton, S-HRDA, Northeast Chamber of Commerce, hotel, inn and B&B owners.)

d) Objective: To acknowledge the interdependence of sectors as well as competing interests, and to build a united approach to economic development by 2003.

Actions: 1) Reaffirm the Cabot Trail as an icon and Highlands National Park as a major contributor to that status..

(BABTA, S-HRDA, Cape Breton Tourist Association, tourism information centres, others,)

2) Create a clear policy on Park fee payments that does not penalise those who live and have businesses North of the Park. Consider a rebate for visitors who spend a night North of the Park and who currently must pay for two days to do so.

(Park, local businesses, Northeast Highlands Chamber of Commerce, CDAs)

3) Bring sectors together to discuss basic needs and shared interests in order to promote increased understanding.

(S-HRDA, CDAs, Community Animation Program)

Victoria County Strategic Plan

I. Contributors

The following people contributed their thoughts to this plan. There were others who are not named who spoke to us in stores, post offices, coffee shops, and on the roads and streets of the County. Many thanks to everyone.

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II. Groups and Organisations

St. Ann's Bay Community Health Centre
 Baddeck and Area Business Tourist Association
 St. Ann's Bay Development Association (SABDA)
 North of Smokey Economic Development Association (NOSEDA)
 Cape North Seniors Group
 Community Learning Association North of Smokey (CLANS)

MacKinnon's Harbour Greenhouse
Little Narrows Development Association
Middle River Historical Association
Middle River Garden Club
Victoria County Community Health Board
District Five Action Committee

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The following agency representatives deserve special thanks for their help throughout the planning process:

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