

St. Anthony-Port au Choix Regional Council Vision Development



Croque Waterfront

What is a Vision?

A Vision for 2020 was developed by the St. Anthony – Port au Choix regional council of the Rural Secretariat. It outlines how the region could look in the year 2020 when long-term, sustainable planning is used to guide development. This document was developed through a series of facilitated discussions that the council had engaged in over a one year period.

Through this visioning process, as with all of its work, the council determined that its vision of the future was one that is sustainable, achievable, realistic and affordable. This document is intended to be a working document that will be modified as things change and evolve. It will continue to play an instrumental role in assisting the council in identifying priorities that need to be further explored in order to move toward a more sustainable region.

The St. Anthony – Port au Choix regional council is tasked with taking a holistic approach to planning thereby looking at economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects that affect our everyday lives. This holistic approach is reflected in this vision document.

Our Vision for 2020

The region of St. Anthony to Port au Choix extends from St. Anthony in the North to River of Ponds in the South and includes all of White Bay Central on the Eastern side of the peninsula. The area includes approximately 56 communities, 17 of which are incorporated towns. There is a population of 14,300 people currently living in this region. The following document outlines a vision for the region for the year 2020.

A Culture of Thinking Regionally for Innovative and Sustainable Development

In 2020, residents and businesses alike have a renewed sense of ownership and responsibility for the region. Over the past decade and a half, this region like many others has had a drastic change in attitude and thinking. People have become more open to change and new and innovative ways of being sustainable.

Sustainability was and still is a key word that is frequently used. The region has sustained a population, a culture and an

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economy. This was in no small part due to a culture of thinking regionally for the benefit of all. The decrease in population and the change in demographics that was seen in the decades following the cod moratorium made people aware of the fact that not every community could have a fish plant or be a service center. In order to maintain and grow the services and industries that could be viable, people came together and decided collectively where the main centers would be and where the services would be located.

The confidence and self-esteem people have today is something that was lost 20 years ago. At present, this region is proud, strong and committed to success. The majority of people within labour force age are employed for most, if not all, of the year. We have a smaller population than we had in 1991, but it is a population that is thriving with job opportunities and less reliance on income support initiatives.

Promote, Produce, and Sustain an Educated Population That Utilizes Its Unique Cultural Heritage

Newfoundland and Labrador is a very unique place to live. There is a sense of pride in the heritage of this province. This region realized that with the changing demographics much of our heritage would be lost if something was not done to preserve it. Many efforts were made to record the information and as the information got collected it in turn was used in venues such as schools, conferences and workshops.

The schools themselves were able to develop curriculum around the natural and cultural environment of the area that promoted sustainability and stewardship. Children became more aware of their surroundings and also felt the sense of pride that many in the region do today.

Today, this region recognizes and supports the importance of life long learning. The schools in the region are K-12 but they also house the library, Community Access Program (CAP) centers, family resource centers, 50+ clubs, and array of other activities that take place in the region. Literacy has been a priority for a number of years and the rate has increased dramatically. There is now a focus on life long learning and adaptability of the skilled workforce so that if there is a

shift in the economy, people can adapt and move forward.

Provision of Opportunities For Youth to Stay, or Return, to Meaningful Employment and Have a Good Quality of Life

As a province, out-migration is an issue that has always been evident. Over the past three decades, this coupled with very low birth rates has led to the change in demographics that is evident today. Even though the population has stabilized, today there is more than double the number of seniors as compared to 1991. In order to provide the services needed for these seniors and to make the region more sustainable as well as having a tax base to support the infrastructure needed, measures were taken to ensure youth had the opportunity to stay in the region.

As the region approached a crossroads, where the amount of people entering the labour force was much less than the amount of people retiring, the magnitude of the situation became more apparent. There needed to be a massive influx of skilled labour.

Things like hiring practices, sponsorship programs, wages, childcare and incentives were reviewed and changes were made where necessary in order for the region to be a more attractive place to be employed and have a quality lifestyle. The region took measures to ensure it was well placed to take advantage of immigration initiatives that were undertaken 15 years ago as well the region had a number of ex-patriots that were willing to return if conditions were suitable. This was considered and a regional approach was undertaken to attract these ex-patriots back. The region now has more young families than was originally projected with a higher degree of education and skill than had been in the past. There is an emphasis now to ensure support systems are put in place in order for working mothers to have the opportunity to have more children and work. Today, the region has more double income families with full time employment than ever before.

Create an Atmosphere for Regional Business Growth Utilizing Natural Resources and the Local Labour Force in an Economically and Environmentally Sustainable Manner

People now have acceptable access to and a shared control of natural resources that are present in the region. This region is abundant in many natural resources. In the past, these resources were either underutilized or not utilized at all. Some of this was due to not having control over the resources we had. Groups and individuals in the region undertook a collaborative effort to ensure the resources are utilized to everyone's benefit. Reinvestment of profit from natural resources back into the region played a big role.

Government's commitment to rural sustainability lead to changes such that a realistic percentage of profits from the resources could be invested into more research, development and sustainability of potential and existing businesses. This ensured viability of the industries of the region.

In the past, much of the resources that were harvested here were transported off the peninsula. In order to create an atmosphere for growth in all industries, secondary processing was a key factor. As well, full utilization of as much of the product was a determining factor in the sustainability of the region. Research and development proved that there were feasible ways of maximizing the usage of raw material. These efforts were an integral part in the development of the industries that are now present on the Northern Peninsula.

Business creation and sustainability is



the cornerstone for economic viability and regional sustainability. A region with an atmosphere for business growth is sustainable. Over the past number of years, the region has become an encouraging place for new business investment and providing support to existing businesses. Diversification from the traditional industries of the fishery and forestry is now apparent with more emphasis being placed on both the tourism and IT sectors. While the fishery and forestry are still major components of the economic stability of the region and have within themselves diversified, tourism and IT have grown leaps and bounds. The tourism industry, while mostly seasonal in nature, does have a number of businesses that operate year round catering to winter adventurers. In the past, the tourism industry had a very short season and very low wages. These issues contributed to very high turnover rates. Today, the industry has become more professionalized which has contributed to increased wages in turn decreasing turnover rates.

The IT sector has been thriving since the introduction of broadband and satellite service that covers the entire region. The youth of the area found this sector provided a way for them to contribute to their community and also assist them to stay in the area and earn a living. As well, the marketplace for any business in the region has become more global. Each business relies very heavily on marketing and the most cost effective way to operate. IT as well as transportation has played an integral role in developing these markets.

Manufacturing has grown since the early 21st century with introduction and growth of a number of small scale businesses. These operate year round and provide skilled individuals with an opportunity to remain and work in the region.

As indicated, the integration of industry that is evident in 2020 is sustainable and productive employing fewer but more skilled people. Even though the population is not what it once was, the standard of living is higher and the people who still remain are able to do so without fear of someday having to leave.

To Develop Transportation, Communication, Health, and Education Services to Accommodate the Changing Demographic Needs and Future Development

In order to have a sustainable region, acceptable levels of services need to be available. Today, we have access to a multitude of services but in a very different manner. Due to the changing demographics, these services have become multifunctional. They include such things as having centers that house many services. In 2000, there was a move in that direction with many of the Family Resource Centers being located at schools. In 2020, our education system is much broader and provides more access to lifelong learning services.

Health care services have also changed. With an increase in the number of seniors in the region, there has been more emphasis placed on preventive care. More access to fitness centers, nutritionists, as well as other specialists is very evident on the peninsula. Today, seniors are healthier and for the most part are able to take care of themselves. There are however, a number of private businesses providing the services that some seniors do need.

As the population aged, the need for a more developed transportation system increased. The centralization of services increased the need to keep Route 430 in good condition as people had to drive to access health care and educational services as well as recreational services. Also, the completion of the lower North Shore highway ensured that the transportation of freight as well as visitor traffic to the region increased significantly. This development ensured that the marine infrastructure particularly in St. Barbe had to be in excellent condition.

In order for the region to become sustainable, it had to consider alternate means of energy. The rising fuel costs of the early 21st century did not seem to be going to decrease. The region, therefore, considered other forms of energy sources such as the development of local hydro sources and wind power that we now have access to today.

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For additional information on the Rural Secretariat please visit the website at

www.gov.nl.ca/rural

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

To view a current list of the members, please visit the Rural Secretariat website.

Prepared December 2007

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Flower's Island Lighthouse
(Pg 2) – Nina Mitchelmore