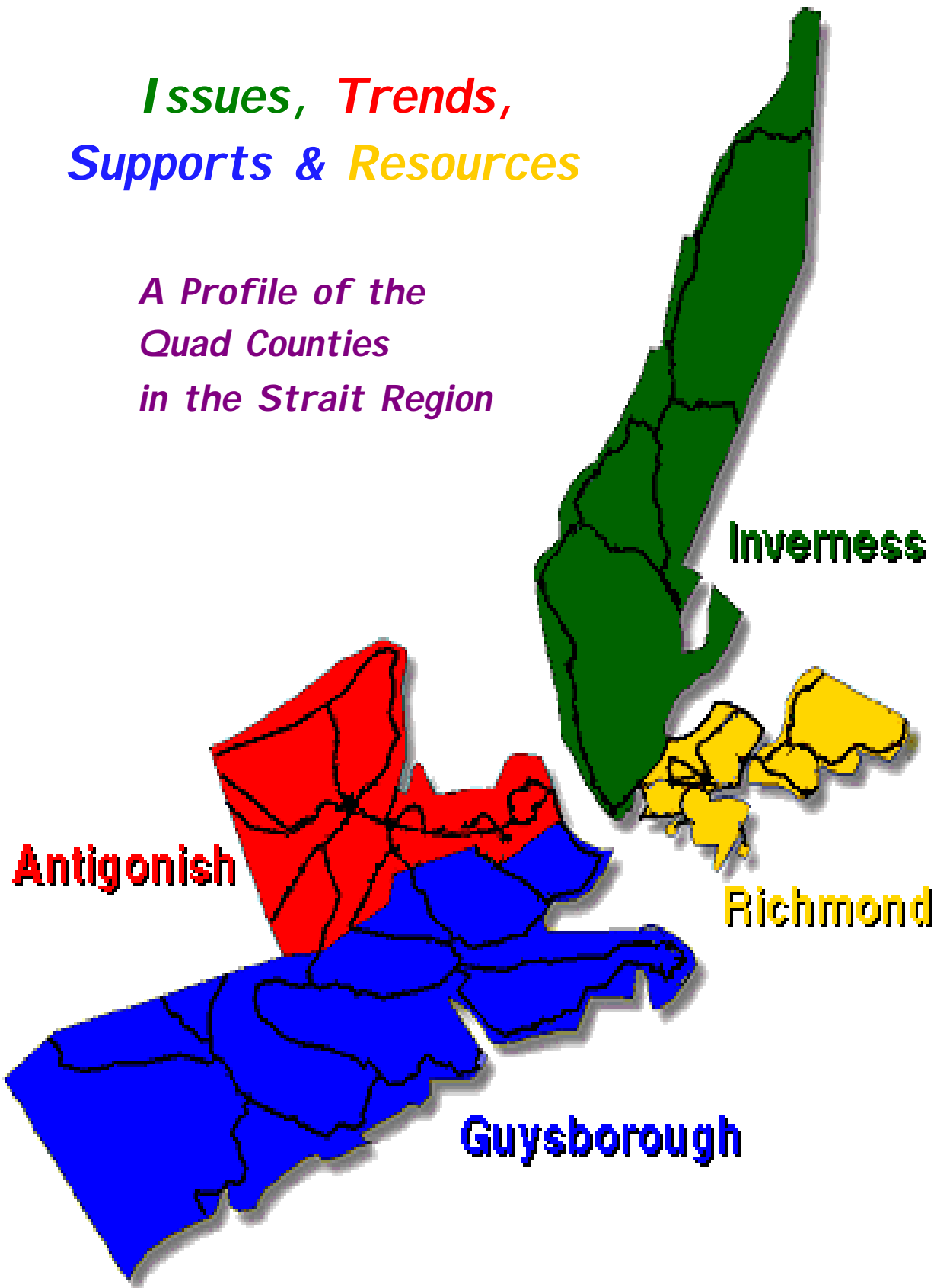


*Issues, Trends,
Supports & Resources*

*A Profile of the
Quad Counties
in the Strait Region*



Issues, Trends, Supports & Resources

***A Profile of the Quad Counties
in the Strait Region***

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~ Section 1 ~

Introduction/Background

Issues, Trends, Supports and Resources: A Profile of the Quad Counties in the Strait Region, is Phase One of the Partners & Pathways Two Project. The research compiled in this document will provide background information for Phase 2 -- a Spring Forum scheduled for May 26, 2004. The Forum, "Partners & Pathways...Bridging the Skills Gap" will allow participants to discuss the issues, trends, supports and resources leading to the development of an action plan to address the skills and labour market challenges facing the Strait Region. The action plan will constitute Phase 3 of the process and Phase 4, the final component, will establish a strategy for the implementation of the action plan developed from the Forum.

Partners & Pathways 2 is an articulated response to recommendations arising from the Strait Regional Planning Team Conference (Partners & Pathways...The Education Connection), held on May 28, 2003.

Participants in attendance explored recent labour market trends as they relate to employability in the Strait Region where a growing and changing economy requires a skilled and available workforce. Presentations about this changing environment provided participants with an understanding of what federal and provincial frameworks have been designed to address the challenges we face in our communities to ensure a co-ordinated continuum of career/life planning programs and services.

The goal of Phase 2 is to implement recommendations from the conference by:

- ▶ Exploring opportunities for a coordinated continuum of career/life planning programs and services as it relates to the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)
- ▶ Identifying the availability of learning opportunities which enhance employability skills and the labour market/career supports required by adult learners to facilitate access to the labour market.
- ▶ Developing a co-ordinated strategy for the Strait Regional Planning Team to enhance its capacity to address the needs of the targeted audience.

The target audience for this project will be anyone in the Strait Region with a vested interest in knowing more about the NSSAL -- adult learners, service providers, community or government representatives, members of the business community, etc.

Partners & Pathways 2 is an initiative of the Strait Regional Planning Team of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. The project was sponsored by the Richmond County Literacy Network and funded by the National Literacy Secretariat.

~ Section 2 ~

*Community Profile
Strait Region*

The Strait Region encompasses four counties which covers a vast geographic area from Meat Cove in Inverness County to the western end of Guysborough which borders Pictou County. In addition:

- ▶ All four counties were severely affected by the downturn in the fisheries. Each county is unique in its population, industry base, and future growth.
- ▶ Inverness County is comprised of a large rural area plus the Town of Port Hawkesbury
- ▶ The Town of Port Hawkesbury is largely a “retail town”, with a call centre as its major employer. It is also the location of the Nova Scotia Community College Strait Area Campus.
- ▶ Richmond County is the site of the industrial base for the Strait Area. Stora Enso, the largest employer in the strait area, is located in Richmond County. Stora invested \$90 million in an expansion in 2003 and has just recently confirmed the elimination of 76 positions.
- ▶ Antigonish County takes in the Town of Antigonish which is home to St. Francis Xavier University and has a highly educated population. The Town of Antigonish is an important service centre for the Strait Region in the areas of retail trade, financial services, health, and education.
- ▶ Goldboro in Guysborough County is the site of the Natural Gas Plant for the Sable Project. The annual Stan Rogers Folk Festival has bolstered the tourism industry in the county and many German nationals have bought land there for possible tourism development.

~ Section 3 ~

A Detailed Look at the Region

Table 1: Profile -- Strait Region

Region & Counties	Population	Land Area (km ²)	EI Rate
Strait Region			
Antigonish	19,580	1,458	12.9
Guysborough	9,825	4,044	22.9
Inverness	19,935	3,830	20.1
Richmond	10,225	1,244	25.6
TOTALS	59,565	10,576	20.4

Statistics Canada, 2001 Community Profiles

3.1 Population

The Strait Region is comprised of four counties -- Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness and Richmond. The region has a combined population of 59,565 and covers an area of 10,576 square kms. Three of the four counties in the region experienced a population decline from 1996-2001 with Antigonish the only county experiencing an increase in population for the same period. In 2001, Richmond County had the third highest percentage of First Nations people in the province (4.4%).¹ Fifty-eight percent of the entire population of this region is between the ages of 20 and 64, which also represents the working age population in the Strait area.

Table 2: Population Profile

	<i>Richmond</i>	<i>Guysborough</i>	<i>Inverness</i>	<i>Antigonish</i>
Population	10,225	9,825	19,935	19,580
Male	5,040	4,905	9,790	9,500
Female	5,185	4,925	10,145	10,075
% change (96-01)	-7.2%	-10.0%	-4.7%	0.1%

Statistics Canada 2001 Community Profiles

3.2 The Economy

The Strait Region has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Nova Scotia with an average of 20.4%. Richmond County has the highest rate at 25.6% and Antigonish County the lowest at 12.9%.² The experienced workforce in the Strait Area numbers approximately 13,600. These workers transcend all industries, with the three major labor force sectors being: Trade (16%), Education and Health Services (16%), and Manufacturing (13%). These three industries employ 50% of the local labor force.³

3.3 Education

As outlined in the Table 3, 46% of the population in this region do not have a high school diploma and more than half of Guysborough County have not completed high school (59%). While the Town of Antigonish has high education levels with 37.7% of the population holding a university certificate, diploma or degree⁴ these same numbers do not hold true for the County. Thirty-four percent of Antigonish County residents do not have a high school diploma and only 17% has a Bachelor's Degree or higher.⁵

When we take a closer look at the numbers without a high school diploma, based on age, it is quite apparent that the highest number of adults without a high school diploma are in the 45-64 age group in all counties in the Strait Region with a high of 60% in Guysborough County to a low of 33.3% in Antigonish. While those between 20 and 34 years of age represent only 16.5% of the entire population of this region they are the highest educated group with approximately 84.5% having a high school diploma.

Table 3: Educational Attainment by Age

	Population	% of Total Population	Less than High School Diploma
Antigonish	19,580		34%
Age 20-34	3,580	18.3%	8.9%
Age 35-44	2,890	14.8%	19.9%
Age 45-64	4,810	24.6%	33.3%
Guysborough	9,825		59%
Age 20-34	1,380	14.0%	22.8%
Age 35-44	1,545	15.7%	41.7%
Age 45-64	2,760	28.1%	60.0%
Inverness	19,935		42%
Age 20-34	3,280	16.5%	13.1%
Age 35-44	2,880	14.4%	26.2%
Age 45-64	5,465	27.4%	37.7%
Richmond	10,225		49%
Age 20-34	1,610	15.7%	17.4%
Age 35-44	1,455	14.2%	21.6%
Age 45-64	2,840	27.8%	45.2%

Statistics Canada 2001 Community Profiles

~ Section 4 ~

Issues & Trends

4.1 Provincial Overview

Nova Scotia is a rural province located in Canada's most rural region. According to Census 2001, Atlantic Canada's population is more "rural" than that of any other Canadian region. Looking more closely at Nova Scotia, Statistics Canada indicates more than 44 percent of the province's population live in rural areas. On a county level, 14 of 18 counties have the majority of their population living in rural areas. The entire population of two counties in the Strait Region (Richmond and Guysborough) live in rural areas.

Twelve of sixteen rural counties have experienced population decline since 1986. The decline ranges from minor in scope, 2 percent in Yarmouth County to extreme, 24 percent in Guysborough County. Two of the three counties with an entirely rural population have realized the sharpest population decline. In addition to Guysborough experiencing a 24 percent decline, Richmond County has experienced a decline of 14 percent in its population since 1986.

While rural Nova Scotia's assets are many, it does share one fundamental characteristic with rural areas around the world - it is changing. Its population is aging, its youth are leaving and its economy continues to shift from the primary sector to the service and knowledge sectors. Counties experiencing these changes suffer from relatively low incomes, along with high unemployment.

In a study undertaken by The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 67 percent of small business owners in rural Nova Scotia highlight the out-migration of youth as a barrier to economic growth. Youth leave their community of birth for many reasons, the most notable being for study. Rothwell et al (2002) indicate that young adults aged 20-29 years are the most mobile during the study period with those aged 20-24 having the highest rates of Rural Small Town out-migration.

The median age of Nova Scotia's population is 38.8 years of age, the oldest median age in the country (Census 2001). The province's rural counties have a median age of 40.7 years, which is an increase of 3.4 years since Census 1996. While Nova Scotia is old and aging quickly relative to the rest of Canada, rural Nova Scotia is aging at

an even faster rate.

4.1.1 The Economy

Per capita income in Nova Scotia is less than the per capita income of Canada. The income of residents of rural Nova Scotia lags behind the rest of the province and, by extension, the rest of the country. Guysborough and Richmond Counties, with an entirely rural population, have the lowest average income in Nova Scotia. In contrast, Halifax County - the most urban in the province - has the highest per capita income across all levels of education.

Nova Scotia is broken down into five economic regions. The quad counties are in separate economic regions -- Northern (Guysborough and Antigonish) and Cape Breton (Richmond and Inverness). While the majority of Nova Scotia's rural counties have experienced population decline and higher unemployment levels than urban Nova Scotia, it is interesting to note that another - seemingly contrasting - phenomenon is underway: employment in rural and small town Nova Scotia has increased as a percentage of total employment since 1987.⁶ The falling unemployment rates in regions such as Cape Breton and Northern regions must be considered within the context of counties such as Guysborough and Richmond losing 24 percent and 14 percent, respectively, of their population.

Looking at employment in Rural Nova Scotia, there has been a gradual trend toward employment in the service sector over the past 12 years. There has been a transition from the old economy sectors -- fishing, forestry and agriculture -- to new economy sectors, ones based on knowledge. The service sector has provided a new source of economic growth in Nova Scotia. However, this sector is dominated by Distributive services, which includes retail trade, and employed 34.8 per cent of all those employed by the services sector in 1999 in rural Nova Scotia. On the other side, Producer services (business services such as computer services) make up only 10.9 percent of all service sector employment. One explanation for the lack of employment in the producer services may be due to the fact that rural areas tend to have a lack of skilled labour (Pezzini, 2000, Fairburn, 1998, Ilouz-Winicki et al, 1998). The Government of Nova Scotia has acknowledged this as an area in need of addressing and has opened a skills division within the Department of Education with a

mandate to address skills needs in the province.

4.1.2 Skills & Labour

Results of the CFIB Survey on the Shortage of Qualified Labour (February 2001) indicates that one in two (46%) business respondents have difficulties finding qualified labour to meet their staffing needs in 2000. In Nova Scotia, concern about labour shortages has reached an all-time high.

According to CFIB's *Hard Facts* survey, conducted in October to November 2000,

Hiring Difficulties by Occupations

Agriculture: agriculture related occupations, drivers and other transportation occupations

Primary: fishers, forestry workers, and skilled workers in other related occupations

Manufacturing: workers in manufacturing occupations: skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled

Construction: workers in construction area: skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled

Transportation and communication: drivers, occupations in transport trades, warehousing and materials handling

Wholesale: sales and account representatives, sales and customer service clerks, warehousing and materials handling workers

Retail: sales and customer service clerks, sales and account representatives

Finance, Insurance and Real Estate: sales and account representatives, sales and customer service clerks, clerical occupations, occupations in management area and professionals

Business services: computer specialists, occupations in management area and professionals, science graduates, engineers, sales and account representatives

Education, Health and Social Services: occupations in medicine/health, and the management area, professionals, and clerical occupations

Hospitality, Personal and Other Services: occupations in food serving and preparation field, sales and customer service clerks, occupations in hotel, tourism and recreation area

respondents reported that about 1 out of every 20 jobs remains unfilled because of an inability to find suitably skilled labour (4.7%). This rate conservatively represents about 250,000 to 300,000 vacant jobs among Canada's million of so small and medium sized employers.⁷

The highest rate of unfilled jobs is found in the construction and business service sectors.

Hiring difficulties appears at both ends of the job spectrum and are not restricted to any particular occupation. The level of difficulty finding people in a particular occupation varies by sector. The following table provides the occupations in which employers have the most difficulties hiring by sector.

Source: CFIB, results of *Hard Facts* Survey, Oct.-Nov. 2000

Three quarters of respondents believe that lack of people with the right skills in their area is the number one reason for hiring difficulties. More than 83% can't find skilled workers because of the lack of people with appropriate skills.

The issue of skills supply and demand has been studied for decades (Employment and Immigration Canada 1983; Dodge, D. 1981). What is new is the speed and complexity of technology and workplace skill shifts, demanding higher levels of competence from youth and adults alike. Moreover, in addition to a general increase in the demand for skills, the labour force is growing at a slower pace than in previous decades, with small youth cohorts. (A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada: Learning

Nova Scotia is experiencing declining employment in traditional, full-time, male-dominated, resource-based work. **There is increasing employment in non-standard, service-oriented, female-dominated, technology-dependant work.** Non-standard is defined as self-employment, contract and part-time.⁸

According to Stuart Gourley, Senior Executive Director of Nova Scotia's Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch, "Nova Scotia's skills shortage problem involves both a shortage of workers in different sectors of the economy - a number of which are new, like oil and gas - and the looming issue of an aging workforce that will soon have to be replaced".⁹ Additionally, Nova Scotia has moved from a resource-based economy. This means that many people must be trained to function in the new economy.

4.1.3 Education/Literacy

Employers have long regarded educational qualifications as proxies for skills. Educational qualifications tend to increase employers' comfort level that the bearer of a given academic credential is more likely to have certain employability skills.¹⁰

The issues affecting Nova Scotia's Economy, as outlined in "*Rural Nova Scotia Means Business*", are echoed by employers, economic development organizations,

community groups, equity groups, employees and people looking for employment. In addition, they consistently mentioned low levels of literacy in Nova Scotia as the barrier to social and economic development of the province.

Literacy has become a critical issue in national and international labour markets. Information technology and the global economy demand workers with increasingly complex literacy and numeracy skills. Job prospects are dismal for people without at least a high school diploma. **In Nova Scotia, like elsewhere, occupations that require high literacy levels are growing; occupations that require low literacy levels are in decline.** Over the 10-year period ending in 2002, the province lost 19,500 jobs for workers with a high school education or less, while 77,500 additional jobs were created for workers with some post-secondary education.¹¹

A significant number of Nova Scotians do not possess a high school diploma. Approximately 22 percent of adult Nova Scotians (aged 25-54) have less than a high school diploma. In addition, the Nova Scotia Department of Education estimates that 52% of Nova Scotians have serious difficulties with reading, writing, understanding and using documents.¹²

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), which is now Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, estimates that about **50 percent of EI recipients have not completed high school.** Likewise, the Department of Community Services estimates that **60 percent of social assistance recipients have not completed high school. These figures suggest that low literacy levels are a significant factor preventing many Nova Scotians from succeeding in the labour market.**¹³

Skills and knowledge are important because:

- ▶ Most new jobs require higher levels of knowledge and skills that change quickly. People must have the ability to continually develop their skills and knowledge.
- ▶ Higher levels of education and literacy levels are linked to longer-term employment, and higher per capita income.

- ▶ Better-educated people tend to be healthier, live longer, and are more likely to participate in civic and community affairs.¹⁴

As the labour market changes Nova Scotians need to develop new skills, improve their literacy, and upgrade existing skills. It is not enough just to provide access to programs, we need to ensure that Nova Scotians participate in these programs.¹⁵

4.2 Regional Perspective

The Strait Region faces a number of economic and social challenges: high unemployment, low education levels, out-migration, aging population, business closures, health issues, declining infrastructure, and dependency on government.

Table 4: Strait Region vs Province

	Nova Scotia	Antigonish	Guysborough	Invernes	Richmond
Population	942,691	19,580	9,825	19,935	10,225
Median Age (years)	38.8	37	43	40	42
Education					
% Less than High School	22	34	59	42	49
% with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	13	17	4	9	6
Average Income	25,970	25,240	20,340	23,360	21,340

Statistics Canada Community Profiles 2001

Traditionally, the economy of the Strait Region has been resource-based, consisting of agriculture, mining, forestry and fisheries. This is no longer the situation and **current statistics show that trade and service industries offer 77% of employment in the area¹⁶.**

Table 5: Employment by Industry

	Antigonish	Guysborough	Inverness	Richmond	Total
Experience Labour Force	9,395	4,230	9,100	4,175	26,900
Resource-Based	1,090	820	1,235	380	3,525
Manufacturing & Construction	1,480	1,170	1,840	1,050	5,540
Wholesale & Retail	1,395	480	1,410	570	3,855
Finance & Real Estate	300	65	250	135	750
Health & Education	2,455	590	1,490	850	5,385
Business Services	925	375	855	385	2,540
Other Services	1,750	730	2,020	800	5,300

Statistics Canada 2001 Community Profile

Table 6: Major Employers in the Strait Region

Richmond	Inverness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stora Enso • Clearwater Limited • Municipality of the County of Richmond • Premium Seafoods • Richmond Academy • Richmond Villa • Strait Richmond Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDS Customer Interaction Centre • Atlantic Superstore • Wal-Mart • Bayview Education Centre • Cheticamp Packers • NSCC - Strait Area Campus • Sobeys Inc.
Antigonish	Guysborough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Francis Xavier University • St. Martha's Regional Hospital • Arisaig Fisheries Ltd. • Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional School • Sobeys Inc. • Scott & Stewart Forestry Consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sable Offshore Energy Inc • Seafreez Food Inc. • Guysborough Academy • Ocean Nutrition • Mulgrave Machine Works

Nova Scotia Department of Finance, Statistics Division

The Strait Region has one of the highest percentage of the population in Nova Scotia without a high school diploma (46%) as well as one of the highest unemployment rates (20.4%). If a high school diploma represents the minimum educational requirement for today's labour force, then these figures suggest that almost half of the working age population in this region may not be well placed to compete in many sectors of our economy.

The fact that there is a strong correlation between low levels of education and unemployment is undeniable. According to *Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan*, only 6% of jobs will be held by those who have not finished high school and 70% of jobs will require some form of post-secondary education.

Ensuring that persons with literacy challenges and low levels of education have access to programs and support that facilitate their participation in society and their participation in the changing labour market is of paramount importance.

Access to programs remains a challenge in the Strait Region with only one campus of the Nova Scotia Community College serving the four counties, no Adult High School in the area and the Strait Regional School Board does not offer NSSAL credits. For many learners in this region, the Community-Based Learning Initiative remains the only game in town. Many adults in the Strait Region face the same barriers to participation in adult literacy programming as those identified in national studies. A study undertaken by ABC Canada found that less than half of those who contact a literacy group actually enrol in a program and of those who do enrol, 30 percent drop out.¹⁷ Transportation and childcare are two of the greatest barriers to participation and in the Strait Region adults have limited access to educational institutions to obtain their high school diploma.

Even though the number of GED tests administered in Nova Scotia decreased by 30% between 1995 and 1997¹⁸, adult learners enrolled in programs through the CLI Networks in the Strait Region indicated their reason for enrolling in the program was to obtain their GED Certificate. Richmond County Literacy Network has 29 adult learners enrolled and 20 indicated this preference while 46 out of 62 adult learners with the Antigonish Adult Learning Network will attempt to get their GED certificate. By contrast only 9 adult learners in Richmond and Antigonish intend to pursue their Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults.

Table 7 CLI Enrollment Statistics 2003-2004 - Strait Region

	ACALA	GALA	RCLN	PHLC	Inverness
Enrollment Statistics					
# of learners in programs	62	51	29	21	31
Gender					
Male	26	20	12	9	12
Female	36	31	17	12	19
Age Range					
Under 20	12	1	6	4	3
21-29	7	10	12	5	6
30-39	15	13	5	5	9
40-49	17	19	4	4	11
50-59	9	5	2	2	2
60 and over	2	3	0	1	0
Income Source					
EI Benefits	3	11	5	0	13
Employed Full-Time	21	2	0	9	4
Employed Part-Time	16	8	1	3	10
Social Assistance	10	18	15	9	4
Disability Pension	4	2	1	1	4
Other	10	10	7	0	4

CLI Adult Learner Profiles

In comparison to other areas of the province, the Strait Region does not have the same level of resources and support that is available to adult learners in other regions of the province. For example, the Southwestern Region which comprises four counties (Yarmouth, Shelburne, Lunenburg and Queens) is serviced by two regional planning teams -- Yarmouth/Shelburne and Lunenburg/Queens. Yarmouth/Shelburne combined has a lower population (44,510 vs 59,565) as well as a lower unemployment rate (12.3% vs 20.4%). While 51% of the population of this region do not have a high school diploma, there is a Community College Campus in both Yarmouth and Shelburne and an adult high school located in the town of Yarmouth. In the Lunenburg/Queens region, both the population and percentage without a high school diploma are

comparable to that of the Strait Region and the unemployment rate at 10.4% is half that of the Strait Region. The Lunenburg Campus of the Nova Scotia Community College is located in Bridgewater and there is an adult high school in both Lunenburg County and Queens County.

Table 8: Strait vs. Southwestern

Region & Counties	Population	Land Area (km ²)	EI Rate	% Without High School Diploma
Strait Region				
Antigonish	19,580	1,458	12.9	34
Guysborough	9,825	4,044	22.9	59
Inverness	19,935	3,830	20.1	42
Richmond	10,225	1,244	25.6	49
TOTALS	59,565	10,576	20.4	46
Southwestern Region*				
Yarmouth	27,573	2,123	10.4	46
Shelburne	16,937	2,465	14.2	56
TOTALS	44,510	4,588	12.3	51
Lunenburg	49,602	2,908	9.5	43
Queens	12,213	2,392	11.3	48
TOTALS	61,815	5,300	10.4	46

*The Southwestern Region is comprised of 4 counties - - Yarmouth, Shelburne, Lunenburg & Queens. However, there are 2 Regional Planning Teams in this region (Yarmouth/Shelburne & Lunenburg/Queens)

~ **Section 5** ~

Support & Resources

"500 older workers are enrolled in programs to return to the workforce; 10,000 people are participating in counselling and job development services; 4,000 adults are upgrading their skills or working toward a Nova Scotia high school graduation diploma; 110 workplace education programs are being delivered to 1,200 people at 55 sites; and the community college system is being expanded to accommodate 2,500 more students."

*~ Report released July 14, 2003
(Chronicle Herald, August 1, 2003)*

5.1 Community Learning Initiative

The Community Learning Initiative (CLI) was introduced by the Nova Scotia Department of Education in 1994 as a province-wide response to the literacy and upgrading needs of adult learners. Literacy and upgrading programs are supported through a system of 30 community-based networks. Approximately 40 programs served over 2,100 learners in 2002-2003.¹⁹ Many CLI Networks are regionally based and develop programs that reflect the needs of their geographic areas. They also develop a wide variety of literacy and upgrading opportunities that target every segment of society. In 1994, when the program was introduced, annual provincial funding for CLI was \$1.6 million. In 2002-2003, \$2.5 million was provided by the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) to community-based programs for adults at Level I and II.

There are four CLI Networks in the Strait Region:

- ▶ Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA)
- ▶ Guysborough County Adult Learning Association (GALA)
- ▶ Richmond County Literacy Network
- ▶ Inverness County Literacy Network & Port Hawkesbury Literacy Council

Each of the Networks offers Level I and II programs to adult learners in their counties and until 2001, Level III programs were also offered in the community. With the introduction of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning the responsibility for the delivery of Level III programming was transferred to the Community College. However, because of the rural nature of the area served by the CLI Networks in the Strait Region, GALA provided Level III programming for the past 2 years, and ACALA is providing Level III in Antigonish Town and County in 2003/2004. As of February of 2004, 287 adults are currently enrolled in CLI programs in the Strait Region and over the past 2 years approximately 500 have participated in community-based programming in this area.

The success of the CLI Networks in the community is directly related to the partnerships they have forged. Strong alliances with municipalities, the private

sector, non-government organizations, schools, and community groups have contributed to the success of the Networks. This support has allowed many of these organizations to diversify and expand their mandates to include initiatives other than Level I and II adult learning programs. By incorporating and expanding their services the Networks have attempted to ensure a more inclusive and functional society in their communities.

5.2 Nova Scotia Department of Education

In the fall of 2002, the Department of Education announced the creation of the Skills and Learning Branch. The branch is comprised of the Adult Education Division, Apprenticeship Training Division, and Skill Development Division, Labour Market Partnerships Division, Labour Market Development Secretariat and Youth Services Division. The role of the branch is to provide co-ordination and supports to the Skills Nova Scotia operational structure. The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning is an administrative body of the Department of Education which awards the NS High School Diploma for Adults and also administers GED testing across the province.

5.3 Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)

In November 2000, the Nova Scotia Department of Education announced the creation of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) which is an administrative body within the Department of Education. The NSSAL is part of a major new adult learning initiative aimed at creating a more co-ordinated, articulated system for adults seeking to upgrade their skills and/or complete their high school or secondary education.

Working in partnership with program deliverers and funding agencies such as school boards, colleges, community-based organizations, Community Services and Human Resources Development Canada, the School strives to meet the following goals:

1. Develop a coordinated system and continuum of educational programs to meet the learning needs of adults beginning with basic literacy to high school graduation.

2. Provide adult learners the opportunity to acquire a new credential, the Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults, which recognizes learning from both public school and adult learning programs, as well as that obtained through prior learning and recognition assessment.
3. Ensure that adults have improved accessibility to and mobility among educational programs within the province, and that the learning achieved is recognized and transferable among programs and provinces.
4. Ensure that quality standards for program delivery are met and that programs reflect adult learning principles.

Adults who qualify for the NS High School Graduation Diploma for Adults pay no tuition fees. Students are eligible to receive the diploma if they are 19 years of age or older, have been out of public school for one full year, and do not already have a Department of Education recognized high school graduation diploma. Students who have an Academic Upgrading Level IV certificate or a GED Certificate are also eligible.

According to the Department of Education Business Plan (2003-04), the number of adult Nova Scotians participating in literacy and upgrading through the Nova Scotia School for Adult learning was 3,700 for the year 2001-02. In addition, 154 adults received the NS High School Graduation Diploma for Adults in the same year. In 2003, more than 4,000 Nova Scotians were enrolled in programs supported by the school at 174 sites across the province. In June more than 410 graduated with the adult diploma, which was more than double the number of graduate in the previous year.²⁰

5.4 Strait Regional Planning Team (SRPT)

To meet the goals of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, the Department of Education established seven regional planning teams in six regions of the province: Cape Breton, Metro, Northern, Southwestern, Strait and Valley. The Strait Regional Planning Team represents the four counties of Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness and Richmond and is comprised of representatives from:

Program Deliverers

- ▶ Community-Based Learning Organizations (CLI Networks)
- ▶ Nova Scotia Community College (Strait Area Campus)
- ▶ School Board
- ▶ Collège de l'Acadie

and;

Government Departments

- ▶ Department of Education
- ▶ Department of Community Services (DCS)
- ▶ Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

The mandate of The Strait Regional Planning Team partners is to work together to develop a comprehensive plan for adults, beginning with basic literacy through to high school completion. The plan will ensure a seamless transition among programs, acknowledgement of individual needs/goals and strengthen regional program delivery.

The objectives of the SRPT are:

1. To achieve improved coordination among multiple program deliverers and supporting government partners.
2. To develop and support innovative learning partnerships aimed at delivering a quality, cost-effective and streamlined service for the learner.
3. To increase public and stakeholder awareness of the range of learning options for adult through the co-ordination of referral and counselling services.

5.5 Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)

The Nova Scotia Community College has 13 campuses across the province with more than 8,400 full-time and 12,000 part-time students pursuing learning opportunities. In addition to its regular programs, the NSCC offers Customized Training Programs and is responsible for the delivery of the Adult Learning Program (ALP) Levels III and IV leading to the NS High School Diploma for Adults. The Strait Area Campus

of the Nova Scotia Community College is located in Port Hawkesbury and is the only NSCC campus in the Strait Region. It is also home to the Nautical Institute and the School of Fisheries which combine to meet the training needs of the commercial marine and fish harvesting industries. Enrollment stands at more than 2,500 students with 550 full-time, 800 part-time, and 1,200 in the marine programs.

Table9: ALP Statistics NSCC Strait Area Campus

	Level III	Level IV
# of Learners in Programs	22*	51**
Gender		
Male	9	17
Female	8	23
Age Range		
18 and under	2	3
19-20	2	8
21-29	6	20
30-39	2	2
40-49	5	7
50-59	0	0
60 and over	0	0
Income Source		
EI Benefits	7	11
Employed Full-Time	0	1
Employed Part-Time	1	6
Social Assistance	5	15
Disability Pension	0	0
Workers' Compensation	1	0
Other	2	3

*5 students did not complete profile form

**13 students did not complete profile

As reflected in Table 9, approximately 73 students are enrolled in ALP programs at the NSCC Strait Campus (February 2004) with 22 in Level III and 51 in Level IV. Enrollment to the ALP Program is on a continuous intake basis; therefore the enrollment numbers change over the course of the academic year. The ratio of males to females participating is evenly split (26 males vs 31 females) and while there is very little variance in the numbers enrolled by age in Level III, almost 50% of those in Level IV are between the ages of 21 and 29. More than half of Level IV students are either Community Service clients or EI Recipients while 12 of the 22 in Level III rely on the same source of Income. Eighteen of the learners enrolled in the ALP Programs reside in Antigonish County, 6 in Guysborough, 13 in Inverness and 9 in Richmond County. Thirty-three students were self-referred to the program, while 10 were referred by HRDC, 9 by Community Services and 8 by a Counsellor.

5.6 Strait Regional School Board (SRSB)

Regional School Boards throughout the province deliver Public School Program (PSP) credits through their Adult High School system. The Adult High School system is intended to provide adult learners in remote or rural areas with an avenue to work towards their high school diploma. While the Strait Regional School Board is a partner in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, as well as a member of the Strait Regional Planning Team, they do not operate an Adult High School in any of the Counties throughout the Strait Region. While Public School Credits may be used toward the NS High School Diploma for Adults, the level of service available to adults needing to upgrade their education is not on an equal footing with other regions of the province. In effect, the Strait Regional School Board is a non-entity in terms of offering the NSSAL credits leading to the NS High School Diploma for adults and their non-participation remains a barrier to adult learners in this region.

5.7 Department of Community Services (DCS)

As a partner in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, the Department of Community Services provides financial and human resources support to adult learners who need to upgrade their education and skills.

In Nova Scotia, Employment Support Services (ESS) is part of the Income and Employment Support Services Division and is administered by the Department of Community Services. ESS is responsible for the development of employability related initiatives for individuals in receipt of income assistance throughout the province.

The vision of ESS is “to encourage and empower individuals in moving toward employability and increased self-sufficiency”. The objective of ESS programming is to support income assistance recipients to increase employability and promote self-sufficiency by facilitating access to upgrading, training programs and job opportunities. Specific activities covered by the program either directly or through referral to community services providers include:

- ▶ adult basic education/literacy training, and;
- ▶ high school completion

In keeping with the Department’s objective to provide active employment benefits and measures in order to support labour market attachment and place a stronger focus on self reliance/self sufficiency, the focus of employment support services has broadened from facilitating a short-term attachment to employment to a longer term commitment to supporting individuals to enhance employability skills.²¹

5.8 Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

In December of 2003, Human Resources Development Canada, was split into two new departments: Social Development and Human Resources and Skills Development.

The Department of Social Development will focus on social policy and The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) is responsible for providing all Canadians with the tools they need to thrive and prosper in the workplace and community. They support human capital development, labour market development and are dedicated to establishing a culture of lifelong learning for Canadians. Among their clients are employees, employers, individuals receiving Employment Insurance benefits, students and those who need focused support to

participate in the workplace. HRSD provides federal-level management of labour and homelessness issues, and supports students through the Canada Student Loans Program.

5.9 Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)

The Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on a Framework for Strategic Partnerships (LMDA), signed in April 1997, provides a framework for joint work to benefit Nova Scotians. The agreement commits both governments to collaborate and coordinate efforts to improve labour market programs and services. In addition, the agreement recognizes the linkages between labour market development, economic development and social policy development. Similarly, the Canada-Nova Scotia Protocol on Youth Employment recognizes Youth as a federal-provincial priority and activities to support priority Youth can be undertaken through the LMDA process. The priorities of the LMDA going into 2002-2003 included Youth, Information Technology, Literacy, and Employability.

In the fall of 2002, the Canada-Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework (CNSSLF) was developed as a partnership between the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia to support skills and learning initiatives for Nova Scotians. Four priorities identified for collaborative action include:

- ▶ Apprenticeship, Learning and Earning
- ▶ Employability, Career Development and Employment Counselling
- ▶ Immigration
- ▶ Labour Market Information

5.10 Career Resource Centres

The Career Resource Centre, funded by Human Resources Development Canada, is an employment and resource centre that provides FREE access to programs and services related to finding work, career development and self-employment. Career Resource Centres located in the Strait Region include:

- ▶ Antigonish Career Resource Centre
- ▶ InRich Career Resource Centre (Inverness & Port Hawkesbury)
- ▶ Guysborough Career Resource Centre
- ▶ Canso and Area Career and Job Counselling Centre

5.11 Regional Development Authorities/Agencies

Regional Development Authorities (RDAs) were established in 1994 as the coordinating bodies charged with leading economic development at the local level. To solidify this new policy of government, the House of Assembly passed the Regional Community Development Act. This policy approach was funded under the Community Economic Development Program of the Canada/Nova Scotia COOPERATION Agreement on Economic Diversification.

The RDA approach is based on regional leadership in the core areas of: community economic development, community enterprise development, business development, human resources development and communications development. RDAs provide leadership and coordinating role in the activities of local development groups, and in some cases undertake initiatives to accomplish regional goals.

Regional Development Authorities based in the Strait Region include:

- ▶ Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency
- ▶ Antigonish Regional Development Authority
- ▶ Guysborough County Development Authority

5.12 Literacy Nova Scotia

Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) evolved from a province-wide coalition established in the early 1990s. LNS provides a forum for provincial and regional organizations and individual members to work together to ensure every Nova Scotian has equal access to quality literacy education. LNS supports a movement of people and organizations involved in adult literacy, works to make governments and the public more aware of adult literacy issues and supports the adult/student learner voice in Nova Scotia.

5.13 Community Access Programs (CAP)

The Nova Scotia Community Access Program (CAP) is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, through Industry Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia, managed by the Technology and Science Secretariat.

The Community Access Program (CAP) aims to provide Canadians with affordable public access to the Internet and the skills they need to use it effectively. With the combined efforts of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, community groups, social agencies, libraries, schools, volunteer groups and the business community, CAP helps Canadians, wherever they live, take advantage of emerging opportunities in the new global knowledge-based economy. Under CAP, public locations like schools, libraries and community centres act as "on-ramps" to the Information Highway, and provide computer support and training.

CAP is the key component of the Government of Canada's Connecting Canadians initiative, whose goal is to make Canada the most connected nation in the world. CAP started in 1994 in rural communities with populations up to 50,000. Then in December 1999, following a successful pilot program in urban communities, CAP is now being rolled out to larger population centres of over 50,000. By March 31, 2001, Industry Canada's goal was to establish public Internet access sites in up to 10,000 rural, remote and urban communities across Canada

The goal of the program in Nova Scotia was to fund up to 240 sites in schools, libraries and other community centres before March 31st, 2001 and to provide communities with affordable public access to the Information Highway. There are currently 276 CAP Sites in Nova Scotia and in 2003 CAP sites across the province saw 1,000,000 visitor hours.

5.14 Additional Resources/Supports

The Resources and Supports discussed in this section is by no means an exhaustive list of what may be available in the Strait Region. However, those listed could provide a starting point to explore opportunities for a continuum of career/life

planning programs and services for those who need skills upgrading.

~ ***Section 6*** ~

Conclusions

There are many challenges facing the Strait Region as outlined in this report. As the statistics and research indicate:

- ▶ the region has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Nova Scotia
- ▶ almost one half of the population do not have a high school diploma
- ▶ the entire population of two of the four counties in the Strait Region live in rural areas
- ▶ the region has a declining and aging population
- ▶ the average income of the region lags behind that of the provincial average
- ▶ there has been a transition in the economy from resource-based sectors to knowledge-based sectors
- ▶ access to upgrading programs and skills training remains a challenge to many in the region

The issues and trends discussed in this report reflect the changing environment of the province as a whole. The effect on the labour market in the Strait Region has become more evident recently with the announcement that the largest private sector employer in the Strait Region (EDS Canada) would be needing more than 300 additional employees. Recruiting employees with appropriate skills to fill these positions will be a challenge. However, with the high levels of unemployment in the Strait Region, one would have to wonder if there is not an untapped labour pool needing to upgrade their skills to successfully re-enter the labour market.

The rural nature of the Strait Region is a major barrier to adults who need skills training or access to education programs. With only one university (St. Francis Xavier) and one community college (NSCC Strait Area Campus) in the region, residents are limited in educational opportunities and skill training programs. Ensuring that persons with literacy challenges and low levels of education have access to programs and supports that facilitate their participation in society and their participation in the changing labour market is of paramount importance.

While there are a number of supports and resources available in the Strait region, the question becomes how to co-ordinate these resources to enhance employability skills and ensure a skilled and available workforce. By utilizing the resources in our community, the growing and changing economy will have a growing and changing population to meet the demands of employers and the labour market in our region.

~ ***Section 7*** ~

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