

# Information and Activity Report

*Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network  
Richmond County and Port Hawkesbury*

Q4 – FY 2024/25  
(January - March 2025)

**Subject:** ..... CBREN Information and Activity Report

**To:** ..... Municipality of the County of Richmond and the Town of Port Hawkesbury

**Date Prepared:** ....April 23, 2025

**Prepared by:** .....Rachelle Samson, Economic Development Officer - Richmond County and Port Hawkesbury

---

## Background:

The Cape Breton Partnership provides economic development support to the Municipality of the County of Richmond and the Town of Port Hawkesbury under the Regional Enterprise Network (REN) model in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia.



The Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network (CBREN) includes the Municipalities of the Counties of Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, as well as the First Nations communities of We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, Eskasoni and Membertou. The CBRM is part of a larger network of Regional Enterprise Networks across Nova Scotia. The Cape Breton Partnership maximizes the value of the CBREN's funding partners, leverages that investment to have a greater impact, and collaborates with other partners, funders, and projects that it is responsible for (like the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership) to deliver operational synergies across Unama'ki – Cape Breton and to benefit the Municipality of the County of Richmond and the Town of Port Hawkesbury.

## 2023/24 CB REN Board

- **Co-Chair** - Jen Ryan, Quincy Street Market
- **Co-Chair** - Adam Bateman, Business Development Bank of Canada
- Pearlene Cormier, East Coast Credit Union
- Capt. Vivek Saxena, NSCC Strait Area Campus
- Kelsea MacNeil, Membertou Corporate
- Gioia Usher, We'koqma'q First Nation band-owned businesses

## 2023/24 CB REN Liaison Oversight Committee:

- **Chair** - Keith MacDonald, CAO, Municipality of the County of Inverness
- Warden Bonny MacIsaac, Municipality of the County of Inverness
- Warden Lois Landry, Municipality of the County of Richmond
- Troy MacCulloch, CAO, Municipality of the County of Richmond
- Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, Town of Port Hawkesbury
- Terry Doyle, CAO, Town of Port Hawkesbury
- Chief Terry Paul, Membertou First Nation
- Jennifer Deleskie, Membertou First Nation
- Warden Jackie Organ, Municipality of the County of Victoria
- Leanne MacEachen, CAO, Municipality of the County of Victoria
- Chief Norman Bernard, Wagmatcook First Nation
- Donald Hanson, CEO, Wagmatcook First Nation
- Wagmatcook First Nation
- Chief John Leonard Bernard, We'koqma'q First Nation
- Gioia Usher, CEO, We'koqma'q First Nation
- Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni First Nation
- Steve Parsons, General Manager Corporate, Eskasoni First Nation
- Evan Williams, Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development
- Donald Ferguson, Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills & Immigration

## Reporting Period:

Your CBREN team and the Cape Breton Partnership are pleased to share highlights, milestones achieved, and metrics from **January 1 to March 31, 2025**.

## Highlights & Events

- The Cape Breton Partnership recognizes the importance of a stable trade relationship with our long-standing partners in the United States. Read full statement and collected resources and supports here: [Statement on the US Tariff Response](#)
- The Municipality of the County of Richmond and the Town of Port Hawkesbury have launched of the *Strait of Canso Sustainable Infrastructure Strategy*, positioning the region as a future hub for renewable energy industries, including onshore wind, offshore wind, and green hydrogen and ammonia production. Read full strategy here: [Strait of Canso Sustainable Infrastructure Strategy](#)
- **Le Marche International de Professionnels de l'Immobilier (MIPIM) in Cannes, France** – The Cape Breton Partnership's Director of Communications attended this conference, which brings together real estate professionals and economic development organizations from 90 different countries. Invited by the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors to join the Canadian delegation, and the Partnership helped host the Canadian booth, attended seminars and participated in networking events.

## Project Updates – Economic Development:

### Events and Conferences:

- Cross-Sectoral Housing Summit, Halifax
- Sea Farmers Conference, Halifax
- EverWind Special Announcement Event, Point Tupper
- Centre for Woman in Business Networking Event, Port Hawkesbury
- State of the Strait Business Update, Port Hawkesbury
- Green Future Summit, Pictou

### Associations and Committees:

- Richmond County Collaborative Network
- Everwind Community Liaison Committee
- Growing Port Hawkesbury Committee
- Richmond Multi Use Facility Community Engagement Sessions
- St. Peters Economic Development Organization Meeting
- Strait Richmond Housing Matters Coalition Meeting

### ACTivate Program

- Successfully completed the ACTivate Program, which provided valuable insights into rural tourism and community development. As a follow-up, hosted the “Activate Richmond” session—a food industry

networking and collaboration event aimed at fostering connections and sparking ideas within the local culinary and hospitality sectors.

### **Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) Project**

- To explore whether the Aquaculture Development Area (ADA) Program is a suitable fit for Richmond County, I, along with CAO Troy MacCulloch, toured the Université Sainte-Anne Marine Research Centre in Petit-de-Grat. During our visit, we met with biologist Michelle Thériault, who provided valuable insights into the region's aquaculture history, including its successes, challenges, and overall potential.
- Additionally, I attended the Sea Farmers Conference in Halifax to deepen my understanding of the aquaculture industry. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to engage with industry leaders and government representatives, assess the current state of the sector, and evaluate the economic development opportunities associated with establishing an ADA in Richmond County.

### **Client Support & Engagement**

- Throughout the quarter, I supported a range of clients exploring new business opportunities, expansions, and investments. Activities included showing clients available properties, business consultations, and meetings related to transportation services, financial institution closures, tourism assets, mental health services, and small business financing. Engagements also included coordination with external partners such as SEATAC and NRC IRAP, as well as support for investors and consultants seeking to establish or grow their operations locally.

### **Ocean Innovation Centre**

- Held a strategic meeting to discuss the status of the Ocean Innovation Centre. Identified areas requiring improvement and began planning next steps. Work is now underway to develop marketing materials to support promotion and attract potential partners and tenants.

### **Developer Resources**

- In collaboration with EDPC, I contributed to the development of a Municipal land database website, which showcases municipal properties, their zones, services and property information. Additionally, collaborated on a Developer Guide—a comprehensive resource containing insights, surveys, and reports designed to encourage investment and simplify the permitting process for prospective developers. All to be launched to the public this spring.

### **Strait of Canso Website**

- Advanced into Phase II of the Strait of Canso website project, focusing on the development of a targeted marketing strategy. New features include an interactive map highlighting port profiles and industry-specific content to better showcase the region's assets and attract investment.

### **Business Insights Program**

- The Cape Breton Partnership's BRE program is called the Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Program. Launching April 1, 2025 the goals of the program are to:
  - **Assess the needs** of businesses;

- **Provide assistance** to business to help them navigate through economic difficulties and challenges;
  - **Provide guidance and support** to help business grow and expand their products, services and workforce;
  - **Build cooperation and consensus** among business, government, and economic development organizations, resulting in collective action to improve the local business and investment climate.
- The BRE Program will result in an annual **Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Report**, providing a snapshot of the current business environment, the business supports offered, and the recommendations made to support policy and program planning.

#### **CanExport Community Initiative**

- Prepared Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage consultants for the development of a Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) strategy. The initiative emphasizes collaboration with economic development officers across Cape Breton Island to ensure a cohesive, region-wide approach to attracting international investment.

## **Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program:**

#### **Electricity Sector Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Team**

- Participated in the Community of Practice to collaborate on a knowledge hub for climate adaptation in the electricity sector in Nova Scotia. The event was in Cole Harbour, attended by Tyler Mattheis and Jennifer MacNeil, and organized by CLIM Atlantic on behalf of the Electricity Sector Climate Adaptation Strategy Team, which was launched by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. We had a focus group session with people from HRM, Dept. of Environment, Clean Foundation, Nova Scotia Power, Michelin, Ecology Action Centre, Valley REN, and others. The work on this team is ongoing with an engagement planning strategy for the public as well.

#### **Canada's Ocean Supercluster Ocean Artificial Intelligence and Technology Foundations Course**

- Participated in a 19-week course to learn about fundamentals in digital transformation strategies, cloud for business, data science and analytics, data management, cybersecurity, AI and machine learning; AI in productivity and business practices; ethics, policy and governance; and emerging technologies

#### **KMNKO Symposium**

- After meeting with KMNKO to discuss opportunities to collaborate on Indigenous engagement for the energy transition, the Partnership is sponsoring the Mukk Nqa'Itultuk: Community Connections Symposium.
- This Symposium will bring together First Nations Economic Development Officers, Indigenous Employment Officers and Industry partners in Nova Scotia to connect, share ideas, and explore the opportunities in procurement, energy, and tourism. These sectors present an opportunity for Mi'kmaq communities to become leaders in the transition to a greener, more sustainable economy. All EDOs from the Partnership will be attending the event to

### **Net Zero Atlantic Ports Study**

- The Cape Breton Partnership is involved in Net Zero Atlantic's [\*Assessment of Atlantic Canadian Ports to Support Offshore Wind Development\*](#). The kick-off webinar was held this quarter, and ports are submitting technical details to the consultant independently to highlight capabilities, identify gaps, and provide conclusions and recommendations related to potential involvement by Atlantic Canadian ports in offshore wind development.

### **Department of Natural Resources Funding**

- Worked collaboratively with the Department of Natural Resources to identify activities to be undertaken by the GEEP that could be supported by funding from the Department.
- Secured \$47,000 to hire an Indigenous summer student to help with Indigenous engagement focused on the energy transition, with additional funding to do engagement with fishers about OSW, as well as bring representatives from another jurisdiction to Unama'ki – Cape Breton to have discussions with fishers locally about best practices in their regions.

### **Development of Ocean Technical Capacity with African Nations – Woman and Youth Technical Capacity**

- Signed an MOU with the Development of Ocean Technical Capacity with African Nations (DOTCAN), a non-profit based out of Dalhousie University.
- MOU outlines how the Partnership will act as a partner hub for their Women and Youth Technical Capacity for the Blue Economy (WYTEC) program in Unama'ki – Cape Breton.
- WYTEC focuses on trans-Atlantic innovative training co-designed, co-developed, and co-delivered by partner hubs. It's supported through GoC/DFO and endorsed by the UN Decade Action.
- The goal of the program is to identify and assemble a network of local stakeholders in Nova Scotia and West African partnering countries. The work would identify key topics in ocean technology and maritime safety/security that are of common interest in all participating countries, and will prepare women and youth for sustainable livelihoods in the ocean economy space. Curricula is co-developed by subject matter experts and co-delivered at knowledge exchange hubs in Halifax, Unama'ki – Cape Breton, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.

### **Green Futures Summit – Pictou County**

- The Green Energy Engagement Coordinator, Jenn MacNeil, participated in a panel discussion about engagement and social acceptance of renewable energy at the Green Energy Summit. Tyler Mattheis and Rachelle Samson also attended on behalf of the Cape Breton Partnership. The Summit's keynote speaker was Premier Tim Houston with Minister Trevor Boudreau from the Department of Energy also participating in a separate panel. Of note, the Summit's overarching message was workforce readiness for renewable energy, the gaps that exist in Nova Scotia, and the urgency to focus on building our local workforce with the skills and training needed to deploy large-scale renewable energy projects.

### **Participation in:**

- Nova Scotia Power's Climate Adaptation Strategy consultation meeting with key stakeholders
- State of the Strait

## **Project Updates – Creative Economy Development Officer:**

## **RICHMOND COUNTY**

### **Richmond Artists Alliance**

- The CEDO has provided consultation, connections, and served as a catalyst for this new organization with a focus on coordination, collaboration, communication and promotion of local visual artists and makers in Richmond County, Port Hawkesbury and Cape Breton. Details on Scrape Magazine here: <https://thescrapemagazine.ca/raa>

### **Cape Breton Comedy Festival**

- Providing consultation and connections for the Cape Breton Comedy Festival with events planned for Richmond County in 2025; the festival is in its' 3rd year.

### **“Doors open” Museum/Cultural**

- This new project aims to connect and promote local museums and cultural centres, also working in conjunction with Heritage Cape Breton and the Beaton Institute.

### **Cape Breton Futures in Film Presentation and Networking Sessions: March 25-27**

- An island wide roadshow including a stop at Telile Community TV in Arichat (sold-out), which was recorded in front of a live studio audience for future broadcast. The sessions were attended by over 250 people, who were able to learn from and connect with industry personnel from leading guilds, organizations, associations, and businesses including Screen Nova Scotia, IATSE 849 (trades union), IATSE 667 (Camera Industry Union from Toronto), Director's Guild of Canada (which also oversees Production Assistant, Locations, and other duties beyond Director), ACTRA (for actors and background extras), Sunbelt Rentals (Canada's largest equipment supplier to the Motion Picture / TV industry) which brought a variety of impressive industry equipment to the sessions including cameras, lighting, and a 15-foot crane which they demonstrated for the attendees, and NSCC which provided a summary of their Film Industry programs offered (in both Sydney and at their other locations) including the two-year Screen Arts Program, the one-year Applied Media and Communication Arts Program, and other related programs such Accounting, Cosmetology, and the potential for new, film industry-specific Micro-Credential including Set-Building.

## **PORT HAWKESBURY**

### **Cabin Fever Concert Series**

- Provided consultation and support to the local “Cabin Fever” concert series, which provides work for local musicians, and much-needed live entertainment in the colder months to residents in Port Hawkesbury; draws attendees from other communities; currently in its 2nd year and continues to grow.

### **Creative Careers Symposium**

- Working with Nova Scotia Works to develop a Creative Careers Symposium, delivered to Port Hawkesbury students, based on the template developed at the Dalbrae Academy event, highlighting both the mental health benefits and potential economic opportunities offered by the creative industries.

### **Telile on the Road: Port Hawkesbury**



- Working in conjunction with Telile TV and local journalist Adam McNamara, a new episode of “Telile on the Road” highlighting Port Hawkesbury music, arts and scenery is in the development stages.

#### **The Futures in Film Information and Networking session**

- A Futures in Film Information and Networking session is in the works for Port Hawkesbury which will provide insights into opportunities in the local film industry, as described at the top of this document.

## **Project Updates – People and Labour Force Attraction:**

### **IMMIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICES**

The Cape Breton Partnership continues to support employers and newcomers through both *Immigration Advisory* and *Immigration Representation* services.

#### **Advisory vs. Representation**

- Both of our staff dedicated to immigration provide Advisory services. Kelly MacKinnon, a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC), can also act as the legal immigration representative for employers – submitting applications and communicating directly with government partners on their behalf. This added level of support reduces the administrative burden for employers seeking to strengthen and retain their work force.
- Dani Mombourquette successfully completed the Entry-to-Practice licensing exam on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and is expecting to become licensed as an RCIC in the coming fiscal year.

#### **Immigration Metrics, at end of Q4**

- 5 individuals received immigration-related support.
- 11 active immigration advisory files in Port Hawkesbury; 2 in Richmond County.

#### **Community Engagement**

The team was also active in community and employer engagement, delivering sessions to raise awareness about provincial pathways to permanent residency:

- Participated in a Services Fair and Career Fair at CBU, reaching approximately 900 students and 70 employers/service providers. While this is not a Richmond County event, international students choose to settle and live in all areas of Unama’ki-Cape Breton, and retention and promotion of communities and immigration pathways is integral to their success.
- Held a focused retention session with local employers in Port Hawkesbury who employ a high number of foreign workers. We had meaningful discussions on how IRCC and LSI programs can support retention, the role of local settlement providers in promoting workplace diversity and community integration, and how the Cape Breton Partnership can contribute to improving newcomer retention on the island.

### **CAPE BRETON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (CBLIP)**

In Q4, the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) continued its collaborative work to foster welcoming and inclusive communities for newcomers.

- Members engaged in the development of a new Theory of Change for the CBLIP.



- New representatives were welcomed to the CBLIP Council to represent Inverness County (Councillor Claude Poirier), CBRM (William Roy, Community Development), Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Écosse (Denise Bantegeyeko, Sydney-based settlement staff), and the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce (Megan Penney, CEO).
- The CBLIP Program Manager attended the national Metropolis Conference in March, connecting with colleagues working in the immigration space across Canada.
- Under the guidance of the CBLIP Mi'kmaq Advisory Committee, the CBLIP continues to deepen its work to build stronger newcomer-Mi'kmaq relationships.

## CAPE BRETON WELCOME NETWORK

The coordinator attended an **ARAISA professional development session** in New Brunswick focused on supporting **LGBTQ+ newcomers**, and promoted the Welcome Network through **Coastal Radio**, reaching new audiences and potential volunteers across Unama'ki. Ongoing collaboration with other Welcome Networks across the province ensures the continued exchange of best practices and resources.

### Buddy Program

- In preparation for the upcoming changes to the Cape Breton Welcome Network, further development of the new Buddy Program took place. This included refining intake forms, advancing branding work, and planning for a soft launch in Q1 of 2025.
- The Buddy Program will aim to match newcomers with volunteers in Unama'ki-Cape Breton based on a number of factors. They will be matched based on location, lifestyle preferences, and meeting preferences. For example, a newcomer with young children in the Sydney area may be matched with a volunteer in a similar situation who is open to connecting. All volunteers will be required to obtain a criminal record check.

### Community Engagement

- Port Hawkesbury: A Coffee & Connect networking session was held at BaRyKin Café, connecting newcomers, locals, and service providers—while supporting local small business.
- Richmond County: A planned event in Arichat was postponed due to weather, but relationship-building continues with local service providers, volunteers, and settlement staff.

## CONNECTOR PROGRAM

The Connector Program continues to strengthen newcomer inclusion and professional networking opportunities throughout Richmond County. Through a variety of initiatives, the program has fostered community engagement, a sense of belonging, and meaningful professional connections for participants. Highlights include:

- Participated in the Newcomer Film Project at Eltuek Arts Centre, where the Connector Program Coordinator was interviewed about the newcomer experience and the importance of networking. The program was also featured in the final film.
- January 15: Promoted the Connector Program on-air during a Coastal Radio segment, increasing public awareness and engagement.

- Delivered a Resume Writing Workshop as part of the Lunch & Learn series, providing participants with practical tools to enhance their job readiness.
- Facilitated the Understanding Culture Workshop, also part of the Lunch & Learn series, focusing on intercultural understanding in professional and community settings.
- February 27: Led a Virtual Networking Workshop in partnership with EduNova and the Halifax Partnership, supporting newcomers in developing effective networking strategies in virtual environments.
- February 28: Hosted a Coffee & Connect networking event in Port Hawkesbury, creating space for informal conversation, community building, and professional connection.

## LABOUR MARKET SUPPORT

In preparation for the Unama'ki-Cape Breton Job Fair Series, the team focused on employer outreach and partner collaboration throughout Q4. The Port Hawkesbury Job Fair scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup> at the Civic Centre, and the D'Escousse Job Fair scheduled for April 14<sup>th</sup> at the Civic Improvement Society Hall.

### Cape Breton Job Board

- There are currently 31 Richmond County employers registered on the Cape Breton Job Board. 4 new job posts in Q4 brought the YTD total to 12.
- There are currently 15 Port Hawkesbury employers registered, with 12 new job posts in Q4, for a YTD total of 40.

## Upcoming Events:

### 2025 Unama'ki - Cape Breton Job Fair Series: April 1 – 14

- This job fair series provides a platform for employers and jobseekers to come together and explore exciting career prospects. From 11am to 1pm at the following locations:
  - Tuesday, April 1 – Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, Bear Head Room
  - Tuesday, April 8 – Joan Harriss Cruise Pavillion, Port of Sydney
  - Wednesday, April 9 – La salles des retraites, Cheticamp
  - Monday, April 14 – D'Escousse Civic Improvement Society Hall

### 2025 Safety First Symposium

- The Safety First in Cape Breton Network, together with the Cape Breton Partnership invites you to join us for the 2025 First in Cape Breton Symposium, happening **Wednesday, May 14, 2025, from 8:30am – 3pm at Membertou Trade & Convention Centre.**

### Mukk Nqa'Itultuk: Community Connections Symposium

- Members of the CB REN team will attend this symposium on May 22 and 23. The event will bring together Economic Development Officers, Indigenous Employment Officers and Industry partners in Nova Scotia to connect, share ideas, and explore the opportunities in procurement, energy, and tourism.

## Additional Information:



**CB REN Website:** Additional Information on the CBREN can be found on the CB <https://capebretonpartnership.com/initiative/cape-breton-regional-enterprise-network/>



**Welcome to Cape Breton Website:** Additional Information on Living, Working, community profiles and economic data - can be found on the Welcome to Cape Breton website: <https://welcometocapebreton.ca/invest/invest-in-cape-breton-unamaki/cape-breton-unamaki-community-profiles/>



**TheStraitofCanso.ca Website:** [www.theStraitofcanso.ca](http://www.theStraitofcanso.ca) website is managed by the Cape Breton Partnership, content built in collaboration with the Cape Breton Partnership, the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, InvestNS, ACOA, and the Guysborough District Business Partnership.

- **News and Updates** – Elevate Magazine, and articles from Pulse Newsletter, new podcasts, news releases and more can be found on our website here: <https://capebretonpartnership.com/cbp-news/>



**Want news in your inbox? Subscribe to Pulse!**

<https://capebretonpartnership.us14.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=5a27bb58874a3faa869009652&id=aaae9f5ca0>

Respectfully submitted by:

*Rachelle Samson*

Rachelle Samson  
Economic Development Officer  
Richmond County and Port Hawkesbury  
Cape Breton Partnership

Tyler Mattheis  
President and CEO  
Cape Breton Partnership

## Addendum(s):

- **CB REN Richmond County and Town of Port Hawkesbury Metrics (January 1 – March 31, 2025)**
- **Cape Breton Partnership Communications Report (January-March 31, 2025)**

---end report---

## Addendum 1 - Richmond County/Port Hawkesbury – CBREN Metrics

(January 1 – March 31, 2025)

	Richmond County/Port Hawkesbury Metrics						YTD
	January 1 - March 31, 2025						Since April 1
Activities	Total Started		Total In Progress		Total Completed		Total Completed
<b>Business Support, Sustainability, &amp; Growth</b>	Total:	4	Total:	8	Total:	7	Total: 47
Business Planning	0		1		0		1
Business Productivity & Growth Services	0		4		0		7
Business Quick Support					3		8
Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory	1		1		1		15
Succession Planning	0		0		0		9
Micro-Lending	1		1		0		4
Creative Economy	2		1		3		3
<b>Economic Development Projects &amp; Strategic Sector Support</b>	Total:	3	Total:	9	Total:	1	Total: 11
Economic Development Projects	3		9		1		11
<b>Addressing Talent Needs (Labour &amp; Population)</b>	Total:	0	Total:	2	Total:	0	Total: 263
Human Resources Advisory Services	0		0		0		0
Immigration Advisory for Businesses	0		2		0		218
Business Immigration Consultancy	0		0		0		45
<b>Retention Activities</b>	Total:	8	Total:	4	Total:	0	Total: 47
New Connectors	1						4
New Connectees	7						11
Welcome Network - Newcomers Welcomed	0		4				18
Welcome Network - Welcomers/Volunteers	0		0				14