

Information and Activity Report

*Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network – Victoria
County*

Q3 – FY 2025/26
(October – December 2025)

Subject: CBREN Information and Activity Report

To: Municipality of the County of Victoria

Date Prepared: December 31, 2025

Prepared by: Curtis Tobin, Economic Development Coordinator, Victoria County

Background:

The Cape Breton Partnership provides economic development support to the Municipality of the County of Victoria 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 CBREN 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 Victoria.

2025/26 CB REN Board

- **Co-Chair** - Jen Ryan, Quincy Street Market
- **Co-Chair** - Adam Bateman, Business Development Bank of Canada
- Daniel Lee, Port Hawkesbury Paper
- Pearlene Cormier, East Coast Credit Union
- Capt. Vivek Saxena, NSCC Strait Area Campus
- Kelsea MacNeil, Membertou Corporate
- Gioia Usher, We'koqma'q Corporate
- Lee Fraser, Life in Tents

2025/26 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 Victoria County
- Leanne MacEachen, CAO, Municipality of Victoria County
- Chief Norman Bernard, Wagmatcook First Nation
- Donald Hanson, CEO, 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, CEO Eskasoni Corporate, Eskasoni First Nation
- Evan Williams, Nova Scotia Department of Growth and Development
- Donald Ferguson, Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills & Immigration

Reporting Period:

Your CB REN team and the Cape Breton Partnership are pleased to share highlights, milestones achieved, and metrics from **1 October – 31, December, 2025**.

CB REN Board and LOC Meetings:

- **2025 AGM** – The CB REN held its annual AGM virtually on August 19.
- **Board Meetings**
 - Last Board Meeting: October 21, 2025 (Virtual and Inverary Inn, Baddeck)
 - Next Board Meeting: January 28, 2026 (Virtual and Victoria or Inverness County)
- **LOC Meetings**
 - Last LOC Meeting: November 21, 2025 (Meeting 2 of 2 for 2025) (Inverness County Council Chamber)
 - Next LOC Meeting: April 22, 2026 (Meeting 1 of 2 for 2026) (Location TBD)

Highlights & Events

During the reporting period, Cape Breton Partnership staff supported and participated in a number of events and initiatives relevant to Victoria County's economic development priorities.

- **Quest Canada – Plan to Project** – The Victoria County EDO attended a two-day workshop in Halifax presented by Quest Canada. The workshop was based on bringing an idea from a plan to a project. The structure of the workshop offered an opportunity to work in a group setting with other individuals focused on similar projects with access to subject matter experts.
- **Baddeck Tourism Conference** – The Victoria County EDO attended a Tourism conference in Baddeck hosted by Destination Cape Breton. The event was well attended, including tourism operators from Victoria County allowing the opportunity for some new introductions and follow-up conversations with business owners from Victoria County.
- **Strait Area Chamber of Commerce Fall Awards** – The Victoria County EDO attended the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce Fall Dinner & Awards on November 27th. The Cape Breton Partnership sponsored the Outstanding Customer Service Award. This award is designed to put the spotlight on an employee that has demonstrated outstanding, “above and beyond” service to the citizens and customers for their employer over the last year. A Victoria County Business, Big Spruce nominated one of their employees, who was the winner of this award and celebrated during the event.
- **2025 Investor Summit** – The annual Cape Breton Partnership Investor Summit was held on October 23, 2025, at the Inverary Resort in Baddeck. The event brought together approximately 220 business, community, and government leaders from across Nova Scotia to network, share ideas, and learn about opportunities shaping the future of Unama'ki – Cape Breton. Hosting the Summit in Baddeck reinforced Victoria County's role as a regional convenor for business and investment discussions.

- **Waters Flowing Together** – Partnership staff attended the Waters Flowing Together event in Iona, hosted by Aros Na Mara in partnership with the Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Region Association, Celtic Colours International Festival, and Dalhousie University. The event featured panels on Indigenous knowledge, ocean science, and eco-tourism, as well as outreach activities with local schools, aligning with Victoria County’s environmental stewardship and cultural tourism objectives.
- **Marine Renewables Canada Conference** – Staff attended the 2025 Marine Renewables Canada Conference in Halifax from November 12–14. The conference highlighted the importance of clear policy, streamlined permitting, grid readiness, supply chain development, workforce readiness, and meaningful Indigenous participation in offshore renewable energy development. These discussions are directly relevant to long-term economic opportunities for coastal and rural municipalities, including Victoria County.

Economic Development Coordinator (Key Highlights)

- **Business Startup Support** - Provided direct support to several new business startups, offering tailored business advisory services to help guide their development and growth.
- **Victoria County Sustainable Tourism Growth Initiative** – supported Victoria County staff and other Partnership staff with the management of this first-of-its-kind-in-Nova-Scotia initiative which provided grant funding (up to \$10,000) to incentivize businesses to expand their service offerings beyond the traditional tourism season, creating year-round economic opportunities.
- **Municipal Planning & Development Guide for Victoria County** – prepared this guide to provide essential information for developers looking to invest in and grow within Victoria County, offering insights into municipal processes, land use regulations, and development opportunities. This document will be added to the Municipality’s website.

Project Updates - Creative Economy

Creative economy initiatives supported by both the Victoria County Economic Development Coordinator and the CB REN’s *Creative Economy Development Officer* continued to position Victoria County as an emerging location for cultural production and creative enterprise.

- **Film & Television Development** – The Creative Economy Development Officer is currently developing, planning, and negotiating with three feature film productions interested in shooting principal photography in Victoria County during 2026. Potential filming locations include Baddeck, Ingonish, Meat Cove, and sections of the Cabot Trail. Producers are based in Nova Scotia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with an estimated combined production value of approximately \$9.5 million.
- **Community Cultural Events** – On November 1, 2025, staff supported a fundraising event for Theatre Baddeck, featuring live entertainment and community engagement activities. Theatre Baddeck was also represented at the inaugural Cape Breton Creative Awards.
- **Cape Breton Creative Awards** – On November 6, 2025, the Cape Breton Partnership and Cape Breton University launched the first annual Cape Breton Creative Awards. The event celebrated artists,

educators, and cultural leaders from across the Island, including participants from Victoria County. The Partnership intends to rotate hosting of the awards to different communities in future years.

- **Film Hub Exploration** – The Creative Economy Development Officer provided consultation to Wagmatcook economic development staff regarding the potential use of the Wagmatcook Learning Centre as an indoor production space, and broader opportunities to position the surrounding area as a regional film hub linked to Baddeck, We'koqma'q, and communities along the Cabot Trail.

Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program

Green energy engagement activities in Victoria County focused on relationship-building, information sharing, and preparation for future opportunities.

- The Green Energy Engagement Program **continued onboarding and information sharing with municipal leadership**, including ongoing meetings with the CAO and discussions with energy sector proponents expressing interest in potential development within Victoria County.
- Staff participated in the **Canada–Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator workshop** related to the Call for Information NS25-1R, supporting municipal awareness of emerging regulatory and policy processes.
- Work continued with Forward Creative on the Cape Breton Partnership's **Foreign Direct Investment Strategy**, with energy identified as a priority investment sector.
- Participation continued in a **provincial Community of Practice** with the Nova Scotia Department of Energy, Net Zero Atlantic, COVE, Discovery Centre, Atlantica Centre for Energy, and Skills Nova Scotia, focused on engagement approaches related to the energy transition.
- **Grant activities** were advanced in collaboration with the Department of Energy, including amendments to emphasize supply chain and workforce development, and completion of the Indigenous engagement component of the program.
- Wrapped up the **Women and Youth Technical Capacity for the Blue Economy (WYTEC Blue)** with the DOTCAN Institute at the end of October, with final workshops being held at CBU.
- Events
 - Events noted above including Waters Flowing Together and 2025 Marine Renewables Canada Conference
 - Presented to Indigenous Youth at the **CEPI/UINR Sustainable Futures Youth Forum** in Membertou, with a focus on how the GEEP has been undertaking engagement with communities about offshore wind energy. Participated in panel discussion with Efficiency NS and Cape Breton University.
 -

Project Updates – People and Labour Market Team

People and labour market initiatives in Victoria County focused on workforce attraction, newcomer integration, and employer support.

- **Staffing and Service Continuity** – During Q3, the Immigration Engagement Coordinator was on medical leave for a portion of the quarter, which resulted in reduced file completions and fewer events. Despite this, immigration programs continued to meet service targets, and continuity was maintained through team-based support.
- **Cape Breton Connector Program** – Connector Program staff supported youth apprenticeship pathways through presentations at Baddeck Academy and Cabot Education Centre, and continued engagement with regional employers and partners. 
- **Cape Breton Welcome Network** – Volunteers participated in multicultural socials, service fairs, and recurring programs such as Coffee & Connect. The Buddy Program was launched to strengthen newcomer integration and retention by matching newcomers with local volunteers based on location and shared interests. 
- **Immigration Services** – Immigration Advisory and Representation services continued to support employers and newcomers. Immigration Access+, a fee-for-service immigration representation option, was soft-launched during Q3, with broader promotion planned for subsequent quarters. 
- **Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP)** – During Q3, the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership continued advancing initiatives that support inclusive and welcoming communities across Unama'ki – Cape Breton, including Victoria County. Key activities included finalizing the design and printing of the CBLIP Theory of Change, Evaluation Pathway tool, and Year in Review document. CBLIP representatives also participated in the Pathways to Prosperity National Conference in Halifax, contributing to workshops focused on reconciliation in Mi'kma'ki, Mi'kmaw–newcomer relationship building, collaborative evaluation practices, and strengthening connections between Francophone and Anglophone service providers. The sixth annual CBLIP Partner Update event, Elisk+Nweyek – Weaving Together, was hosted in December, bringing together service providers, Mi'kmaq partners, and newcomer-serving organizations. 
- **Labour Market Support** efforts during Q3 focused on employer outreach, workforce engagement, and preparation for future hiring initiatives. Engagement with employers and partners continued to inform planning for future Job Fair Series events. The Cape Breton Partnership also continued to support employers and job seekers through the Cape Breton Job Board and related labour market initiatives, recognizing that workforce mobility and recruitment are regional in nature and benefit communities across Victoria County. 
- **Cape Breton Job Board** - Due to an analytics display error on the Cape Breton Job Board, we are unable to report the number of jobs posted this quarter; updates and fixes are planned for Q4. 56 employers currently have active accounts. 

Upcoming Events:

- **Nova Scotia Growth and Development Conference (REN Conference)** – The Cape Breton Partnership is currently planning the annual provincial REN conference, which will be hosted by the CBRM REN this spring.

Additional Information:



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



Welcome to Cape Breton Website: Additional Information on Living, Working, Investing, Studying and Moving to Victoria County - including 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/>



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:

Tyler Mattheis
President and CEO
Cape Breton Partnership

Addendum(s):

- **CB REN Victoria County Metrics (October 1 – December 31, 2025)**

---end report---

Addendum I - Victoria County Metrics - Q3 October 1st - December 31st, 2025

| Activities | Q3 Metrics Q3 October 1st - December 31st, 2025 | | YTD Since April 1 |
|--|--|------------------|----------------------|
| | In Progress | Completed | Total Completed |
| Business Support, Sustainability, & Growth | Total: 0 | Total: 10 | Total: 0 |
| Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Surveys Completed | | 2 | 0 |
| Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory Services | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Business Quick Support | | 6 | 0 |
| Succession Planning & Support | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| New Businesses Supported in Navigating Resources | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Microloan Participants | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Business Support Services | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Major Projects & Strategic Sector Support | Total: 0 | Total: 0 | Total: 0 |
| Sector Development Projects | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Major Economic Development Projects | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Addressing Talent Needs (Labour & Population) | Total: 37 | Total: 6 | Total: 71 |
| Projects Assessing Local Labour Market | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cape Breton Job Board Advertisements | | 0 | 10 |
| Immigration Advisory Services | 2 | 3 | 12 |
| Immigration Applications Submitted | 35 | 2 | 47 |
| Business Immigration Quick Support | | 1 | 2 |

| Newcomer & Talent Retention Programs | Total: 2 | Total: 3 | Total: 233 |
|--|----------|----------|------------|
| Connector Program Matches | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Newcomers Welcomed Through the Welcome Network | 0 | 3 | 9 |
| Local Immigration Partnership Members | | 0 | 217 |
| Events Aimed at Talent Attraction & Retention | | 0 | 6 |
| Other Activities Addressing Talent Needs | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Notes on Addendum 1:

- The data provided is sourced from our Insightly CRM software, representing each business advisory with a file. However, our actual engagement is broader, encompassing various supports like brief consultations and connections not always recorded in routine work.
- At times, CB REN Victory County Metrics may be less complete than normal due to the schedule of data availability not matching the schedule of council meeting calendars, and CB REN Staff’s ability to input data prior to quarterly report production. If this is the case, year to date data in following quarterly reports will be adjusted to ensure accuracy.
- From January to June 2026, three factors will affect the availability, accuracy, and format of metrics in Addendum 1 as we work to improve our service to Victoria County:
 1. **HR Changes:** As Curtis Tobin departed prior to his 3 month probationary period and the role is in transition, metrics will not be accurate until a new representative is hired and familiarized with the program
 2. **CRM Upgrade:** The Cape Breton Partnership is transitioning from Insightly CRM to Monday CRM to improve operational effectiveness, accuracy, and workflow. During this time, some of the metrics may not be available until a new reporting matrix is created in Monday.
 3. **Internal Process Strengthening:** The Partnership is working with Brad Jacobs of Charity Coach, who is on contracted as a fractional COO until later spring 2026. Brad is helping the partnership strengthen its internal capacity, focus our mission, mandate and activities, and better organize the Partnership’s many services for the benefit of our partners. The continuation of this work, started in June of 2025, is likely to positively impact the type of metrics we track.