

# Information and Activity Report

*Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network –  
Richmond County & Town of Port Hawkesbury*

Q3 – 2025/26  
(October - December 2025)

**Subject:** CB REN Information and Activity Report

**To:** Municipality of Richmond County & Town of Port Hawkesbury

**Date Prepared:** January 28, 2026

**Prepared by:** Meghraj Solanki, Economic Development Officer – Richmond County & Town of 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 (CB REN) 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 CB REN is part of a larger network of Regional Enterprise Networks across Nova Scotia.

The Cape Breton Partnership maximizes the value of the CB REN'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.

## 2025/26 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 Corporate
- Daniel Lee, Port Hawkesbury Paper
- 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 CBREN team and the Cape Breton Partnership are pleased to share highlights, milestones achieved, and metrics from **October 1 to December 31, 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 Inverness or Victoria County)
- **LOC Meetings**
  - Last LOC Meeting: November 21, 2025 (Municipality of Inverness County, Port Hood)
  - Next LOC Meeting: April 22, 2026 (Location TBD)

## Highlights & Events

- **October 16: Waters Flowing Together - Two Eyes, One Ocean**
  - A storytelling event connected to three folkloric traditions - Mi'kmaq, Gaelic and Acadian, featuring Sierra McCarthy & Al Oakley, Ella MacDonald, Rachele Bouchard. Co-directed by Raymond Sewell and Matthew Thomas Walker.
  - Iona: Approximately 30 attendees
- **October 23: Annual Investor Summit**
  - The Investor Summit annually brought together more than 200 business, community, and government leaders from across Nova Scotia to network, collaborate, and hear from leaders building a strong economic future for Unama'ki – Cape Breton. From day-before activities such as the Social Cruise aboard the Amoeba Tours WinStar and dinner at The Lakeside Restaurant, to a full day of engaging presentations, updates from local and emerging businesses, and valuable networking opportunities, the event offered something for everyone and featured a keynote address from Michelle Cederberg, a recognized leader in health and productivity.
  - Inverary Resort, Baddeck, NS
  - Approximately 220 attendees
- **November 19: Business & Breakfast: Federal Budget Outlook – Updates & Insights**
  - The Cape Breton Partnership and Doane Grant Thornton LLP hosted a special Business & Breakfast session featuring Patrick Lahey, Partner, and Nick MacNeil, Senior Manager, who broke down the highlights of the Canadian Federal Budget announcement and provided practical insights to help business owners, managers, and entrepreneurs understand how new policies, tax updates, and incentives could affect operations, planning, and growth strategies in 2026 and beyond.
  - Civic Centre, Port Hawkesbury, NS
  - Approximately 55 attendees

- **November 28: Safety in the Strait: Learn at Breakfast – The Evolution of Safety**
  - The Safety First in Cape Breton Network, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, WCB Nova Scotia, and the Cape Breton Partnership hosted a breakfast event focused on strengthening workplace safety culture, featuring a hot breakfast, networking, safety updates, a keynote presentation by Calum MacPhee of LearnCorp International, and a roundtable discussion on topics including the evolution of safety, resilience, learning, psychological safety, and creating a just culture that empowers everyone to improve safety at work.
  - Civic Centre, Port Hawkesbury, NS
  - Approximately 46 attendees
  
- **December 12: Elisk+Nweyek - Weaving Together: CBLIP Partner Update**
  - The Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) hosted its sixth annual partner update event, *Elisk+Nweyek – Weaving Together*, on December 12, 2025, at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre and online. The event brought together local organizations supporting newcomers, shared updates on CBLIP’s work, and featured reflections from Mi’kmaq, newcomer, and service provider perspectives, fostering connections and collaboration through storytelling, dialogue, and hands-on activities.
  - Membertou Trade & Convention Centre, Membertou, NS
  - Approximately 100 attendees in-person, and 25 online attendees.

## Project Updates – Economic Development:

- **Unama’ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Program** – Business Insights interviews continue to take place throughout Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury. The Business Insights Program will help the Cape Breton Partnership identify key opportunities, challenges, strengths, and concerns that matter most to our local business community. Information collected through the program will be compiled in the *Unama’ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Annual Report*. This report will guide the development of programs and support offered by the Cape Breton Partnership and will be shared directly with policy and decision-makers.
  
- **Development Supports and Studies** – Your Economic Development Officer and Cape Breton Partnership team members continue to work on projects supporting economic growth, as well as promoting investment and development opportunities. A ***Municipal Planning & Development Guide*** is completed and the document is made available to developers and builders seeking information on municipal processes, land use regulations, and development opportunities in the area.
  
- **Business and Entrepreneur Supports** – Continue to provide customized support for small and medium sized businesses and exploring entrepreneurs across Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury. The CB REN team is also available to support and guide individuals considering Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury as a place to invest and to do business.
  
- **Growing Port Hawkesbury Committee** – Attended committee meetings to support initiatives aimed at fostering local business growth and community development.

- **Strait of Canso Website** – Advanced into Phase II of the project, with work now focused on creating a targeted marketing strategy. New features include an interactive map showcasing port profiles and industry-specific content to highlight regional assets and attract investment.
- **CanExport Community Initiative** – Finalized a consulting firm to create the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) strategy. The initiative emphasizes collaboration with economic development officers across Cape Breton to ensure a coordinated approach to attracting international investment.

## Project Updates – Green Energy Engagement Program:

- Onboarding with new EDC to highlight activities undertaken through the Green Energy Engagement Program and the energy sector more broadly.
- Facilitated the Manager, Energy Sector Development, to provide additional capacity and input for the QUEST Canada Net Zero Community Accelerator Program. This included participating in two Community Energy and Emissions Planning (CEEP) workshops, one in Port Hawkesbury and one in Richmond County, along with two virtual workshops focused on benchmark analysis for energy and emissions.
- Participated in the Canada Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator workshop (CNSOER) on the Call for Information NS25 – 1R.
- Ongoing participation as an Executive Committee member of the Strait of Canso Offshore Wind Task Force.
- Working with Forward Creative on the Partnership’s Foreign Direct Investment Strategy, as energy is a priority investment sector for our region.
- Participated in Community of Practice with NS Dept. of Energy, Net Zero Atlantic, COVE, Discovery Centre, Atlantic Centre for Energy, and Skills NS, to discuss engagement efforts related to the energy transition across Nova Scotia.
- Working with the Department of Energy to amend our grant to focus on supply chain and workforce development activities related to the energy sector; wrapped up the Indigenous Engagement piece of our grant funding.
- 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.
- Investor Summit – just include me broadly as working/attending the event in however you present that
- Attended the 2025 Marine Renewables Canada Conference in Halifax from November 12-14, with over 700 attendees. Highlighted the importance of clear policy, streamlined permitting, grid readiness and offtake, with the Premier and Minister Fraser emphasizing government commitments to create enabling conditions for private investment. Discussions about supply chain gaps, workforce development needs, port capacity, and the importance of meaningful Indigenous participation were also noted.
- Attended the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce Fall Awards Dinner and Gala with other representatives from the Cape Breton Partnership.
- 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 – Creative Economy Development Officer:

- Provided support to the St. Peter’s “Kitchen Rackets” organization during Celtic Colours, co-hosting 2 events at the Bonnie Brae venue, and successfully connecting them to funding partners.
- Working with Richmond County on the “Pianocean” floating concert experience, coming to St. Peter’s in late July 2026, for four events.
- Developing, planning, and negotiating with potential film/TV opportunities for Richmond County, including a TV series set in a small fishing village being pitched to CBC.
- November 6, 2025: Launched the first annual Cape Breton Creative Awards with CBU utilizing an island-wide panel of judges, performers, nominees (including Richmond Artists Alliance, who attended the event), and winners (including Friends of St. John’s Church from Arichat). The plan moving forward is to host this event in other communities starting in 2026.
- Developing the island-wide Local Heritage Celebration Initiative, highlighting local museums in 2026.
- Providing support to the annual “Cabin Fever” concert series in Port Hawkesbury.

## Project Updates – People and Labour Force Attraction:

- Our Immigration Engagement Coordinator was out on medical leave for a period of time in Q3. This resulted in fewer files being completed and less event engagement during this quarter. Despite this, we are still meeting targets across our immigration programs.
- The **Connector Program** and **Welcome Network** underwent staffing changes: The Connector Program Coordinator role was filled internally, and a replacement Welcome Network Coordinator began on December 22nd, 2025. Both positions currently end in March 2026, pending extension with funders.

### IMMIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICES

- We soft-launched Immigration Access + in Q3, a pay-for-service immigration representation option, including materials at events and signing employers who contacted the Cape Breton Partnership. In Q4, we will broaden advertisement and reach of this initiative, providing the option for employers to have their applications handled for a fee. Two events in Unama’ki-Cape Breton are planned to advise employers on immigration changes, hiring and retention options, and promote Immigration Access +.
- 2 applications were submitted on behalf of employers, with 1 underway. Advisory services were provided in 13 cases.

### CAPE BRETON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (CBLIP)

In Q3, the CBLIP implemented and moved forward with a number of events and initiatives, including:

- Finalizing the design and printing of the new CBLIP Theory of Change, Evaluation Pathway tool, and Year in Review document. The Year in Review can be found at [capebretonpartnership.com/cblip](https://capebretonpartnership.com/cblip).
- Attending the Pathways to Prosperity National Conference in Halifax, leading and participating in workshops on topics including: reconciliation in Mi'kma'ki, the CBLIP's work in Mi'kmaw-newcomer

relationship building, collaborative strategies in LIP evaluation, and building connection between francophone and anglophone service providers.

- The quarterly meeting of the CBLIP Council, held at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre, with a presentation from YREACH language services about the programs they offer.
- Hosting our sixth annual partner update event in Membertou: Elisk+Nweyek – Weaving Together – Tisser Ensemble. Event recording is available at [welcometocapebreton.ca/weaving-together](http://welcometocapebreton.ca/weaving-together)
- The quarterly meeting of the CBLIP Council, held in Sydney at the new Anchor Youth Space, with discussion on the upcoming biennial Immigrant Survey and the 2025 CBLIP Partner Update Event, scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup> in Membertou.

## CAPE BRETON WELCOME NETWORK

- Volunteers engaged in multicultural socials, service fairs, and recurring events.
- Buddy Program launched, supporting newcomer integration.
- Hockey Canada partnership offered cultural and recreational opportunities for newcomers.

## CONNECTOR PROGRAM

- Maintained ongoing engagement with regional stakeholders and employer networks.

## LABOUR MARKET SUPPORT

- Due to 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. 32 employers in Richmond County and 16 in Port Hawkesbury have active accounts.

## Upcoming Events:

- **Regional Enterprise Network Provincial Conference** – The Cape Breton Partnership is currently planning the annual provincial REN conference, which will be hosted by the CBRM REN this spring.
- To be kept informed of all upcoming events as they unfold, follow the Cape Breton Partnership’s social channels or [subscribe to the Pulse Newsletter](#).

## Additional Information:



**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) is managed by the Cape Breton Partnership, content built in collaboration with the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, Invest NS, 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:

*Meghraj Solanki*

Meghraj Solanki  
Economic Development Coordinator –  
Richmond County & Town of 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 (October 1 – December 31, 2025)**

---end report---

## Addendum I – CB REN Richmond County & Town of Port Hawkesbury Metrics

Activities	Q3 Metrics <i>Q3 October 1st - December 31st, 2025</i>		YTD <i>Since April 1</i>
	In Progress	Completed	Total Completed
<b>Business Support, Sustainability, &amp; Growth</b>	<b>Total: 4</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 6</b>
Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Surveys Completed		0	1
Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory Services	3	0	1
Business Quick Support		0	3
Succession Planning & Support	0	0	0
New Businesses Supported in Navigating Resources	1	0	0
Microloan Participants	0	0	1
Other Business Support Services	0	0	0

<b>Major Projects &amp; Strategic Sector Support</b>	<b>Total: 2</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>
Sector Development Projects	1	0	0
Major Economic Development Projects	1	0	0

<b>Addressing Talent Needs (Labour &amp; Population)</b>	<b>Total: 1</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>	<b>Total: 42</b>
Projects Assessing Local Labour Market	0	0	0
Cape Breton Job Board Advertisements		0	16
Immigration Advisory Services	1	5	20
Immigration Applications Submitted	0	1	3
Business Immigration Quick Support		1	3

<b>Newcomer &amp; Talent Retention Programs</b>	<b>Total: 0</b>	<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Total: 247</b>
Connector Program Matches	0	4	10
Newcomers Welcomed Through the Welcome Network	0	5	12
Local Immigration Partnership Members		0	217
Events Aimed at Talent Attraction & Retention		1	8
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 with the business community is broader, encompassing various supports like brief consultations and connections not always recorded in routine work.
- At times, CB REN Richmond County and Town of Port Hawkesbury 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.*

- *For the first half of 2026, two factors will affect the availability, accuracy, and format of metrics in Addendum 1 as we work to improve our service to Richmond County and Town of Port Hawkesbury:*
  - **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.
  - **Internal Process Strengthening:** The Partnership is working with Brad Jacobs of Charity Coach, who is on contracted as a fractional COO until early summer 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, will have a positive impact on the work we deliver to Richmond County and Town of Port Hawkesbury, as well as the way we measure the work we deliver to Richmond County and Town of Port Hawkesbury.