

Information and Activity Report

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

Q1 – 2025/26
(April - June 2025)

Subject: CB REN Information and Activity Report

To: Municipality of Richmond County & Town of Port Hawkesbury

Date Prepared: July 10, 2025

Prepared by: Rachele Samson, 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 Inverness 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 and to benefit the Municipality of the County of Inverness.

2024/25 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

2024/25 CB REN Liaison Oversight Committee:

- **Chair** - Keith MacDonald, CAO, Municipality of the County of Inverness
- Warden Bonny Maclsaac, 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 **April 1 to June 30, 2025**.

Highlights & Events

- **Unama'ki – Cape Breton Job Fair Series** – The Cape Breton Partnership, in collaboration with Nova Scotia Works, and Le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDENE) hosted the job fair series across the island during the month of April. The Port Hawkesbury job fair took place April 1st and Richmond County job fair took place on April 14.
- **Safety First Symposium** – The 2025 annual event took place on May 24 in Membertou and featured a full day of speakers, networking, panels, and a trade show for an audience focused on making Unama'ki – Cape Breton safer for workplaces and employees. Partners for this event include the Nova Scotia Department of Labour Skills and Immigration and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia.
- **Welcoming Workplaces Video Series** – This five-part series, a collaboration between the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership and Rogers TV, was released this spring. The series features local employers and newcomer employees across Unama'ki – Cape Breton. Each short video offers a snapshot of what happens when workplaces make space for diversity. The series includes voices from the Strait Richmond Hospital, Victoria Cooperative Fisheries Ltd., L'Arche Cape Breton, Rimeks Bags & Brands Inc., and NSCC Strait Area Campus. The series can be found here [Welcoming Workplaces](#).
- **The Future of Cape Breton Seafood Exports Podcast** – Episode seven of the Invest in Cape Breton podcast series explores the seafood industry's long and rich history in Unama'ki – Cape Breton. The island exports an estimated \$342 million worth of lobster, snow crab, and other species, much of it processed by one of the island's eleven active processing facilities. In this episode, Victoria Co-operative Fisheries General Manager Osborne Burke and Louisbourg Seafoods Sales Manager Shaowei Xu lend their insights about exporting seafood, current challenges, and potential opportunities. The Invest in Cape Breton podcast series can be found here [Invest in Cape Breton Podcast](#).

Project Updates – Economic Development:

- **Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Program** – The Business Insights Program, which officially launched on April 1, is the Cape Breton Partnership's revised Business Retention and Expansion Program. Through the Business Insights Program, Cape Breton Partnership team members will actively engage with the Island's business community to identify key opportunities, challenges, strengths, and concerns that matter most to our local business community. The Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Program will be an ongoing effort, with business interviews conducted year-round across the entire Island, engaging businesses from all sectors. Information collected through the program will be compiled into the *Unama'ki – Cape Breton Business Insights Annual Report*. This report will guide the development of supports offered by the Cape Breton Partnership and will be shared directly with policy and decision-makers.

- **Partners for Progress REN Conference** – Attended the 2025 provincial conference, which brought together business leaders, policymakers, and economic development professionals to explore strategic opportunities in growth, productivity, export expansion, and innovative financing. Conference sessions included Market Diversification & Export Growth, Making Housing More Affordable & Available, Renewable Energy Growth & Exports, Innovation & Growth in Strategic Sectors, and Productivity, Trade & Prosperity.
- **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.
- **Housing Matters Forum** – Supported the planning and participated in the forum held in Louisdale on May 14, focused on addressing housing challenges and exploring solutions in the Strait Area.
- **Hotel Viability Study** – Assisted in planning and participated in the event held in Port Hawkesbury to assess market potential for new accommodations.
- **Growing Port Hawkesbury Committee** – Attended committee meetings to support initiatives aimed at fostering local business growth and community development.
- **Ocean Innovation Centre** – Developed and launched the project’s webpage, which has already generated multiple inquiries from prospective tenants.
- **Developer Resources** – Finalized the draft Municipal Planning and Development Quick Guide, currently under internal review. The resource is designed to streamline the development process with EDPC by providing clear guidance, key contact information, permit acquisition timelines, and relevant links. This document will be made publicly available once approved.
- **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. This phase should be completed by September 2025.
- **CanExport Community Initiative** – Reviewing the proposals received for a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure consultants for the creation of a 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:

- **What We Heard Report:** Second series of Offshore Wind Community Information Sessions with Net Zero Atlantic. The report highlights the key themes that were identified in feedback obtained from communities, the top five being fisheries co-existence, marine species and habitat impacts, siting, technology, and supply chain. The WWH Report is available [here](#).
- **Electricity Sector Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Team** - Ongoing participation in the Electricity Sector Climate Adaptation Strategy Implementation Team, including working on public engagement pieces related to adaptation activities connected to the electricity sector (general storm preparedness, hurricane preparedness, winter storm preparedness, spring flooding, and heatwaves) which can be circulated once released publicly.
- **Muk Naq'itultuk: Community Connections** - Attended and exhibited at Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn's (KMK) Community Connections Symposium. The event brought together First Nations' Economic Development Officers, Indigenous Employment Offices and Industry partners to connect, share ideas, and explore the opportunities in procurement, energy, mining, and tourism.
- **Department of Energy Ministerial Meeting** - Meeting with Victoria County and the Minister of Energy in Baddeck to discuss pathways for potential development for onshore wind.
- **Marine Renewables Canada Supply Chain Session** - Co-hosted event with Marine Renewables Canada and Port of Sydney to bring information about the Atlantic Canada Wind Energy Supply Chain Assessment Report to CBRM. The event was hosted in conjunction with Sydney Ports Day and provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the recommendations related to supply chain, workforce, policy, leadership and communication, and innovation in both onshore and offshore wind sectors.
- **Community of Practice with Department of Energy** - Connected to the funding, the Green Energy Engagement Coordinator is part of a community of practice hosted by the Department of Energy for organizations who are undertaking engagement activities in the energy sector. The group is composed of Department representatives, the Cape Breton Partnership, Net Zero Atlantic, COVE, the Atlantica Centre for Energy, the Discovery Centre, and Skills Canada.
- **Indigenous Engagement Internship** - Recruitment and hiring process for a 15-week internship to undertake Indigenous Engagement activities related to the energy transition. This culminated in hiring Kelly Paul, as our Indigenous Engagement Intern, who will work with the Green Energy Engagement on relationship development and a needs assessment for engagement activities with Mi'kmaw Communities in Unama'ki – Cape Breton.
- **OffshoreWind4Kids with COVE** - Planning and collaboration on co-hosting two sessions with COVE (only funding/capacity for two events in CB). These will be held in July and provide families with an opportunity to build and launch model turbines to learn about renewable energy during beach demos. Events are July 19 at Point Michaud Provincial Park (Richmond) and July 20 at Dominion Beach (CBRM).

- **Dalhousie University’s Engagement Day with Guysborough Community Members** - Participated in two roundtables on behalf of the Cape Breton Partnership – one discussion was focused on community-based research needs and the other on hydrogen research. Connected with researchers, faculty and staff to discuss research needs and opportunities related to hydrogen development – the discussion focused primarily on the Strait Area with most in attendance being from the CB side of the Strait.
- **Canada – Scotland Collaboration: Coastal Futures Luncheon** - Discussion with Aros Na Mara, professors/researchers from Scotland and Dalhousie, the Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Association, and community members in Victoria County to identify opportunities for research initiatives in the Bras d’Or Lake. This included research but also the idea of research tourism and other economic opportunities for coastal protection, coastal tourism, and blue carbon sequestration.
- **DOTCAN-WYTEC**
 - Official agreement signed by the Cape Breton Partnership to be the partner hub for the Women and Youth Technical Capacity for the Blue Economy (WYTEC) program.
 - 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 (Sydney), Nigeria, and Sierra Leone.
 - We are creating a database of Blue Economy organizations and businesses in Unama’ki – Cape Breton and will be sending out a survey online that focuses on workforce gaps.
- **QUEST Canada's Net-Zero Community Accelerator**
 - Providing support to the Manager of Energy Sector Development for Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury to participate in the Net-Zero Community Accelerator (NCA) Program.
 - This Program equips communities with the tools and knowledge to develop and implement Community Energy and Emissions Plans (CEEP) and understand the net economic benefit they can provide. Outcomes include services designed to assist them in developing and implementing a CEEP, Benchmarking progress, Peer-to-peer exchange, etc.
- **Other events attended:**
 - Hydrogen East & Smart Energy Conference
 - NS REN Partners for Progress Conference
 - Presented on the work of the GEEP and a panel discussion about green energy.
 - Safety First Symposium
 - Sydney Ports Days

Project Updates – Creative Economy Development Officer:

ISLAND WIDE

Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council, Community Outreach Session, June 2025

Supported the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage in delivering a successful arts and culture community outreach session at the Eltuek Arts Centre in Sydney. The CEDO helped plan the itinerary and invite participants from all five counties as well as from Membertou, Eskasoni, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, We'koqma'q. Attendees were enthusiastic about connecting with the province and creative sector peers from across Cape Breton.

“Thank you for the invite. I had a great time and met some very interesting people. It was great to see such a diverse crowd. Enjoyed each table and have a few really good ideas to press forward. Thanks again and keep us in mind for future events”. - Louisbourg Playhouse

Creative Arts Awards 2025

A partnership with Cape Breton University for the 2nd annual “CBU Creative Arts Awards”. Open to creative types, island-wide, and is now officially scheduled for November 6, 2025, at CBU. In 2026, the event will travel around the island to present the annual “Creative Arts Awards” in other Cape Breton communities.

RICHMOND COUNTY

Richmond Artists Alliance

- Provided guidance, connections, and served as a catalyst for this new organization with a focus on developing local visual artists and makers in Richmond County, Port Hawkesbury, Potlotek, and other areas of Cape Breton. The Richmond Artists Alliance has aligned with a local venue for artists to sell their products, developed a promotional foundation for artists, and provided a number of networking events.

Cape Breton Comedy Festival

- Provided guidance and facilitated connections for the consultation for the festivals 2025 events. Now in its third year, the festival continues to expand.

“Doors Open” Museum / Cultural Project

- A new project that aims to connect and promote local museums and cultural centers. Working in conjunction with Heritage Cape Breton and its' membership of museums, heritage buildings, Destination Cape Breton and the Beaton Institute.

PORT HAWKESBURY

Creative Careers Day for High School Students

- In partnership with Nova Scotia Works to develop a Creative Careers Day for the students of Port showcasing the mental health benefits and economic opportunities in the creative sector.

The Futures in Film Presentation

- Working with industry professionals to deliver the “Futures in Film” Information session in Port Hawkesbury, which will provide insights into opportunities in the Cape Breton film industry.

Project Updates – People and Labour Force Attraction:

IMMIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICES

The Partnership officially launched "Immigration Access +" during Q1. This program will offer our comprehensive representation services to Investors for a fee.

Dani Mombourquette, our Immigration Engagement Coordinator, has successfully become a licensed RCIC. This adds a much-needed capacity to our small immigration team. Currently on provincial funding, we have received clearance for Dani to offer representation services on federal programming. Our services were signed to three new employers during Q1.

Immigration Metrics, at end of Q1

- Completed 2 applications for employers in Richmond County, and facilitated 9 immigration quick supports in the municipality.
- A total of 7 immigration advisory files were supported, with 4 accompanying spouses.

CAPE BRETON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (CBLIP)

The CBLIP Council held its quarterly meeting in Inverness on June 12, with a guest speaker from IRCC Outreach on francophone immigration. Some key highlights from the CBLIP in Q1:

- One new working group formed in Q1 with a focus on Building Partnerships.
- The Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT) is made up of people born outside Canada with lived experience in the process of immigration. This group ensures that a newcomer perspective is always central to the work of the CBLIP. A new IAT Alumni group for outgoing members formed in Q1, and recruitment of new IAT members in rural Cape Breton is underway. The IAT currently has 12 members.
- Planning for the 2025 Immigrant Survey is underway. The survey will open in Fall 2025 and will gather insights from people born outside of Canada who now live on the Island. More at welcometocapebreton.ca/immigrant-survey

CAPE BRETON WELCOME NETWORK

The Buddy Program was initially launched internally and is now in the process of being launched more broadly to grow the program. While there are volunteers that have expressed interest that live outside of the CBRM, all newcomers that have expressed interest thus far reside within the CBRM. The Cape Breton Welcome Network will maintain a local presence in Richmond County with the intention of attracting newcomers from the county to utilize the Buddy program.

Community Engagement

The Welcome Network continued to collaborate with the Connector Program to host Coffee & Connect sessions, prioritizing local venues and businesses to enhance community ties. These initiatives reinforced the importance of informal, welcoming spaces for newcomers to engage with their communities. The Welcome Network Coordinator continues to meet virtually bi-monthly with other Welcome Networks and similar programs across the Island.

CONNECTOR PROGRAM

Cape Breton Connector Program

The 2025-2026 fiscal year has seen some adjustments to the mandate of the Connector Program. While still aimed at newcomers, the program is also targeting skilled trades and high school students. The goal is to connect youth to opportunities in an area of labour shortages. In Q1, the Connector Program facilitated 2 matches in Richmond County, with an additional 4 in progress.

Community Engagement

The program was active in the community through events, workshops, and outreach. These efforts contributed to building a more welcoming and connected community for newcomers, students, and professionals in the region.

Some key highlights from Q1:

- Attended the Port Hawkesbury Job Fair on April 1st.
- Supported the Richmond Rainbow Alliance event on June 7th to expand outreach in underrepresented communities.

LABOUR MARKET SUPPORT

The Partnership began distributing a summary of news and policy updates. This grew from sharing highlights with a few colleagues to all staff and numerous partners. This resulted in the creation of "On Our Radar," a brief publication sharing updates and trends in immigration and labour. This is only distributed through email currently.

Cape Breton Job Board

- In Q1, 22 new organization accounts were created, bringing the total to 498. 112 jobseekers created accounts, and 37 applications were submitted directly through the Cape Breton Job Board.
- There were 16 new job posts in Richmond County and Port Hawkesbury.
- Currently, there are 33 Richmond-based organizations, and 15 Port Hawkesbury organizations registered and active on the Cape Breton Job Board.

Job Fairs & People Attraction Missions

- A total of 3 job fairs in Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury were attended by our team. We hold booths at a variety of events to target various audiences and ensure our services are promoted to those who need them.

Upcoming Events:

- **OffshoreWind4Kids with COVE** - Our Green Energy Engagement Coordinator is collaborating with COVE to bring two free OffshoreWind4Kids events to Cape Breton this July. The hands-on, family-friendly sessions will provide children and families an opportunity to build and launch model wind turbines and to learn about renewable energy during beach demonstrations. The Cape Breton events will take place on
 - July 19 at Point Michaud Provincial Park (Richmond)
 - July 20 at Dominion Beach (CBRM)
- **Investor Summit 2025** – Planning is well underway for the Annual Investor Summit, which will take place on Thursday, October 23, at the Inverary Inn on Baddeck Bay. The Investor Summit offers a full day of presentations, updates from local and emerging businesses, and valuable opportunities to connect with key business and community leaders from across the Island.
- **Cape Breton Partnership Partners Day** – Glenora Inn & Distillery: **July 29**
- **MORE EVENTS** - 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 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:

Rachelle Samson

Rachelle Samson
Economic Development Officer –
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 (April 1 – June 30, 2025)***
- ***Cape Breton Partnership Communications Report (April 1 – June 30, 2025)***

---end report---

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

Activities	Q1 Metrics Q1 April 1st - June 30th, 2025		YTD Since April 1
	In Progress	Completed	Total Completed
Business Support, Sustainability, & Growth	Total: 6	Total: 6	Total: 6
Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) Surveys Completed		1	1
Continuous Improvement & Business Advisory Services	5	1	1
Business Quick Support		3	3
Succession Planning & Support	0	0	0
New Businesses Supported in Navigating Resources	1	0	0
Microloan Participants	0	1	1
Other Business Support Services	0	0	0

Major Projects & Strategic Sector Support	Total: 8	Total: 0	Total: 0
Sector Development Projects	8	0	0
Major Economic Development Projects	0	0	0

Addressing Talent Needs (Labour & Population)	Total: 11	Total: 27	Total: 27
Projects Assessing Local Labour Market	0	0	0
Cape Breton Job Board Advertisements		16	16
Immigration Advisory Services	11	9	9
Immigration Applications Submitted	0	1	1
Business Immigration Quick Support		1	1

Newcomer & Talent Retention Programs	Total: 4	Total: 83	Total: 83
Connector Program Matches	4	2	2
Newcomers Welcomed Through the Welcome Network	0	3	3
Local Immigration Partnership Members		71	71
Events Aimed at Talent Attraction & Retention		7	7
Other Activities Addressing Talent Needs	0	0	0

Note on Addendum 1: The data provided is sourced from our Insightly CRM software and, at times, CBRM REN metrics may not be complete due to data availability from all programs and projects at the time of report preparation. Year-to-date data will be adjusted accordingly in subsequent quarterly reports to ensure accuracy.