



## Four Sustainability Strategies for the Future

The integrated community sustainability plan (ICSP) for four Pictou County municipalities — towns of New Glasgow, Pictou and Westville and the rural Municipality — is based on community ideas and community actions. Education and preliminary public consultation began with meetings and surveys. Councils wanted to know which issues were most important to residents, so people were asked to prioritize nearly 20 environmental, economic, social and cultural issues.

From this 232-survey sample, six public forums were held to more fully examine priority issues, seek direction on actions, encourage collaboration and build community capacity. More than 180 people attended the forums, and another 50 attended a visioning workshop, so active public participation in the process was more than 460, or about one per cent of the county's population.

As a result of the forums, four key overarching strategies were developed that can be applied at the county level and help guide the county into the future. Individual municipal plans should reflect and incorporate these broad strategies.

### ICSP 1 Improve long-term environmental health by taking a county-wide approach to air, water and climate change issues

*Objective: Improved long-term environmental health in Pictou County will be accomplished through enhanced public awareness and the involvement, support and cooperation of all municipal units working together, making planned environmental improvements over time — From January 2009 forum in Pictou*

Top 10 ENVIRONMENTAL Sustainability Issues
1 Energy efficiency
2 Air Quality
3 Water Management
4 Natural Resources
5 Transportation
6 Solid Waste
7 Protection biodiversity/habitat
8 Sewage treatment
9 Adapting to climate change
10 Other

The foundation of healthy and sustainable communities rests on providing the basics: **clean air** and **clean water**, which were the second and third top environmental priorities identified by residents. Related to both is **climate change**, which is the most significant environmental issue facing the planet. Extreme weather associated with climate change may result in more droughts, threatening water supplies. Linked to water quality is **sewage treatment**. Untreated or improperly treated sewage can contaminate drinking water and damage aquatic ecosystems. Watershed protection often includes nearby forests, riparian areas and wetlands. These protected areas of water and land help maintain **wildlife habitat and biodiversity**. Poor air and water quality adversely affect people's **health**. In dealing with air and water issues, the current practice is for municipalities to largely act on their own despite the interconnectedness of water resources and effects of air pollution. A county-wide approach is essential to achieve improved community environmental health.

## ICSP 2 Address population decline by promoting green entrepreneurship

*Objective: Create a community with the energy, opportunity and atmosphere to inspire people to want to be a part of it*  
 — From November 2008 issues forum in New Glasgow

Long-term sustainability depends on having people live and work in communities. Population loss in Pictou County — a drop of 3,200 between 1986 and 2006 — indicates that more effort is needed to **retain youth and address population decline**. The essence of the above objective is to encourage **economic development** by creating a welcoming, supportive and even celebratory environment to attract and keep people in Pictou County. **Education and training** can help promote the creativity of entrepreneurship, particularly 'green' ventures that provide environmental, social (e.g., **health care**) or cultural (e.g., **culture and heritage**) benefits.

<i>Top 10 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL Sustainability Issues</i>
1 Health Care
2 Economic Development
3 Education and Training
4 Declining Population
5 Affordable Housing
6 Public safety and EM
7 Technology
8 Recreation
9 Tourism
10 Culture and heritage

## ICSP 3 Encourage energy efficiency and sustainable use of natural resources

*Objective: Promote sustainable use of energy and natural resources*

The above objective attempts to summarize the intent of two issues forums in November 2008 on **energy efficiency** and ecosystem services. The energy focus is on conservation, reduced use of fossil fuel sources and support of renewable energy. These initiatives will lead to **economic development** opportunities. Reducing fossil fuel use will improve local **air quality**. Active transportation and public **transportation**, possibly using biofuels, will also reduce fossil fuel demand. Sustainable use of **natural resources** could include valuing ecosystem services, such as carbon storage and air and water purification. This strategy helps address three of the top four overall sustainability priorities, and two other top 10 issues.

<i>Top 10 OVERALL Sustainability Issues</i>
1 Health Care
2 Economic Development
3 Energy Efficiency
4 Air Quality
5 Water Management
6 Education and Training
7 Declining Population
8 Affordable Housing
9 Natural Resources
10 Transportation

## ICSP 4 Show leadership in improving cooperation among municipalities and organizations

*Objective: All municipalities working together for the good of all our citizens*

The above objective was one of several vision statements created by small groups at a July 2008 visioning workshop. Greater county-wide cooperation among municipalities and other groups was one of the main themes of the workshop. This theme was repeated at nearly all the issues forums and public meetings held on sustainability in the county. For this strategy, all of the priority issues are highlighted because all would benefit from greater cooperation.

<i>Top 10 OVERALL Sustainability Issues</i>
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10 Transportation

***Entire sustainability plan can be viewed or downloaded at [www.parl.ns.ca/rooms/greenroom/index.asp](http://www.parl.ns.ca/rooms/greenroom/index.asp)***