

DISCUSSION PAPER ON DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR MAHONE BAY

BACKGROUND

Municipalities which receive **federal gas tax transfers** from the Province under the Canada Nova Scotia Agreement on the Transfer of Federal Gas Tax Revenues are required to prepare an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

An **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan** is defined as a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members, that provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity. Integrated Sustainability Plans must also be reasonably consistent with statements of provincial interest under the *Municipal Government Act*.

Nova Scotia's principles of sustainability are set out in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. They include the principles that the environment and the economy of the Province are a shared responsibility of all levels of government, the private sector and all people of the Province.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Mahone Bay should immediately begin to create a Community Sustainability Plan. All development in the Town should be consistent with the Town's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan.

To assist the Town and meet the requirement for citizen participation in the planning process, an *ad hoc* **Citizens' Advisory Committee on Sustainability** should be established to recommend an interim Integrated Community Sustainability Plan to the Town Council. Until a final Plan is in place, all developments in the Town should be referred to the Committee for its

advice with respect to the sustainability of the proposal.

The Committee should establish **working groups** on topics that would include the environment, culture, social justice and the economy. The working groups should be given a mandate to conduct their business at informal "**kitchen table**" meetings throughout the Town and report back to the Committee as a whole.

The **terms of reference** for the Committee should (1) be worked out by the Council in consultation with the Committee; (2) establish a reasonable time frame to report; (3) identify the support and resources available to the Committee; and (4) take account of the following:

- existing planning and financial frameworks of the Town as well as its other plans and programmes;
- the systematic identification of problems and their causes;
- the prioritization of tasks to address identified problems;
- the consideration and assessment of alternative strategic options;
- **creation of a vision for a sustainable community;**
- establishment of a long-term action plan towards community sustainability which includes measurable targets; the programming of the implementation of the plan including a timetable and statement of allocations of responsibilities; and procedures for monitoring implementation of the plan.

The town's procedures for finalizing the Plan after receiving the Committee's report must be transparent, accessible to the public, and mandated by law in order to meet the test for legitimacy set out by the Supreme Court of Canada (*City of London v. RSJ Holdings*). []

Proposed by Veryan Haysom