



# *Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan*

for the Western Regional Enterprise Network





**Western Regional  
Enterprise Network**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### From the Western REN's 2015 Strategy until today...

The 2015 Western Regional Enterprise Network (Western REN) strategy focused on connections among local governments and regional businesses, seeking to establish an economic climate ready for investors. **This focus has not changed.** The Western REN has been working diligently to create the public and private sector networks and partnerships needed to form a cohesive regional economic development ecosystem built on trust and collaboration.

Moving forward, there are several foundational activities that the Western REN must continue implementing. Some of these items include:

- Continuous engagement with the Western Region's business community through regular communications and business visits, programming and events.
- Building partnerships and working in collaboration with all Economic Development partners both from the private and public sectors.
- Maintaining a strategic focus on continuous improvements within the Western Region's business community.
- Working with regional businesses, industry sectors and workforce delivery agents to ensure local and regional businesses can retain and attract the number and types of employees they need.
- Nurturing and strengthening the overall ability of the Western Region and the Western REN's municipal partners to attract and retain investment within the region.

The 2019 Strategy places emphasis on the following barriers and challenges to economic development:



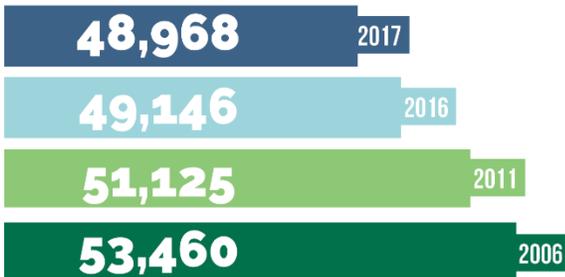
- Communications infrastructure in Western Nova Scotia.
- The capacity limitations of the energy grid.
- The demographic profile of Western Nova Scotia and its impact on the region's ability to retain, sustain, and attract business.



1.1. Statistical Overview

# Demographics

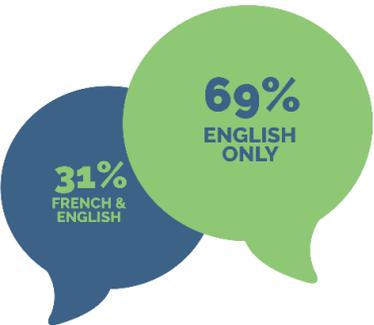
## CENSUS POPULATION



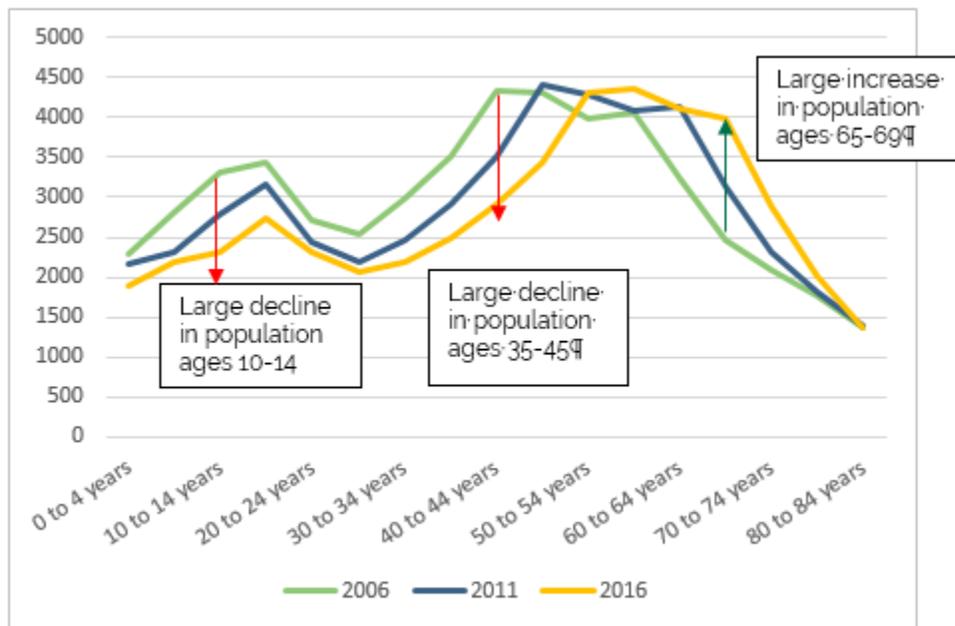
## MEDIAN AGE



## LANGUAGE



## Census Population Growth



**2. THE ECONOMY AT A GLANCE**



The Participation, Employment and Unemployment rates are normally greatly impacted by the seasonal nature and availability of work in the region.

- TOP 3 EMPLOYERS**
1. Seafood product preparation and packaging
  2. Fishing
  3. General medical and surgical hospitals

- TOP 3 JOB GROWTH**
1. Seafood product preparation and packaging
  2. Ship and boat building
  3. General medical and surgical hospitals

- TOP 3 EXPORT \$**
1. Seafood product preparation and packaging
  2. Fishing
  3. Agriculture, Mining & Forestry



### 3. WESTERN REN VALUES



The fundamental Economic Development VALUES that are deeply rooted in the Western Region are:

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#### People are the Western Region's Core Strength

People's knowledge, skills, positive outlook on economic development and optimism towards **the future of the Region** are crucial elements to the Western Region's success.

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#### Diversity is Crucial to Sustainability

The Western Region is home to many unique cultures, languages and ethnicities, varying geographies and communities. Embracing those differences and diversifying industry is key to the long-term success of the region.

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#### Creativity Drives Entrepreneurship & Innovation

A distinctive characteristic of the people and businesses in Western Nova Scotia is their **ability**, not only to survive in tough times, but **to actually grow and thrive**. This is a direct result of people's tenacity, resilience and entrepreneurial creativity.

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## People Living in Western Nova Scotia Value Rural and Small-Town Lifestyle

The people living in this region have a **love for their rural lifestyle**. This means residents value:

- their direct connection with their natural surroundings,
- the benefits offered through a more relaxed way of life in Western Nova Scotia, and
- the direct personal-relationships supports and “helping hand” attitude offered within that small-town community atmosphere.

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## Partnerships are the Key to Success

The Western REN is only as strong as its partners and partnerships. The strength of the Western REN comes from the many municipal, provincial, federal, community and business partners that together support the business and economic development efforts of Western Nova Scotia.

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## Natural Resources are the Backbone of Western Nova Scotia

People of Western Nova Scotia value their environment and the natural resources that generate opportunities for economic wealth and jobs to support people living in the region. It is vital that the sustainability, proper stewardship and enhancement of these natural resources are considered paramount when looking at economic development activities and opportunities.

## 4. 2019 STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIONS

The Western REN was created to be the face of the Western Nova Scotia's regional economic development activities. The primary focus of the Western REN is to drive efforts towards an investment friendly and prosperous Western Nova Scotia.

As a result of this focus, the organization is lead by a Board of private sector business leaders. The Western REN is engaged in strategic efforts connecting the needs, interests and opportunities of the region with potential investors and public sector partners. The Western REN is also the connection between the private and the public sectors accelerating opportunities in the region's overall economy.

The Western REN is driving investment, whether it is local businesses reinvesting, business start-ups, or bringing investment in from outside the region. This Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan builds on the previous successes and efforts of the Western REN, while looking at new actions to increase its impact as a catalyst strengthening and growing the region's economy.

2019 Western REN Strategic Actions are focused on investment and are based on three main objectives:

1. **Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions that *engage the Western Region's Private Sector Business Community.***
2. **Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions that *engage the Western REN's Public Sector Partners.***
3. **Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions that *engage all partners in addressing issues impacting the regions Talent Needs and Gaps.***

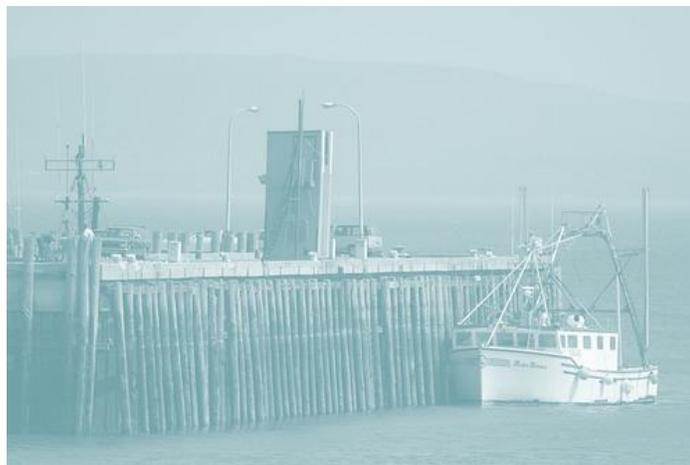
# Western REN

## Strategic Actions

1

### Increasing Investment within Western Nova Scotia through Collaborative Actions that Engage the Western Region's Private Sector Business Community

- On-going and continuous communications through an active social media campaign (Web, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.).
- Continuing to deliver regional business/sector networking and business development events.
- Using *BusinessNow* to identify barriers to attracting investment and identifying opportunities.
- Continuing to build and promote Western Nova Scotia's Regional Value Proposition as a tool to promote opportunities for attracting investment.
- Coordinating a working group to define and prioritize infrastructure needs for the region's investment attraction efforts.
- Identifying and matching business succession opportunities to ensure survival of businesses, especially those critical to regional supply chains.
- Continuing to deliver the Western Connector Program.
- Reengaging as a delivery agent for a continuous improvement program.
- Communicating and engaging with the Chambers at a regional level about priority economic development issues impacting the region.



## 2

### Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions that engage the Western REN's Public Sector Partners

- Collaborating with and supporting partners, such as Develop NS and Municipal Units, to create an action plan focusing on energy and telecommunications infrastructure.
- Continuing to work and collaborate directly with economic developers from municipal units on strategic files.
- Executing and promoting the Western Nova Scotia Regional Value Proposition.
- Circulating, coordinating and responding to investment inquiries at a regional level.
- Assisting in removing barriers to expanding businesses and attracting investment within the region.
- Continuing with joint economic development partner training, forums and overall regional economic development collaboration.

## 3

### Increasing investment within Western Nova Scotia through collaborative actions that engage all partners in addressing issues that positively impact the regions Talent Needs and Gaps

The Western REN will work toward addressing **Talent Shortages** by:

- Continuing the delivery of the Connector Program in order to retain talent in the region.
- Taking a lead role in coordination of immigration services where directly related to addressing gaps in workforce and the regional talent pool.
- Continuing the delivery of immigration-oriented actions such as the Atlantic Immigration Pilot,

The Western REN will work toward addressing **Community Building Issues to Drive Sustainable Population Growth** by:

- Working in partnership with Develop NS to inform a Place plan, emphasizing placemaking and the importance of quality places to talent attraction and retention efforts.
- Activating the Western REN Municipal Partners through the Liaison and Oversight Committee, Regional EDO Network and Regional Association of Municipal Administrators of NS to craft a people retention and attraction action plan and determining a path to implementation.

## 4.1. Appendix A

### 4.1.1. Board of Directors at April 2019

The Western REN is led by a private-sector, volunteer Board of Directors. Our eleven-member board of directors has four standing committees: Executive, Human Resources & Governance, Finance, and Audit. Full biographies and board terms for all board members are available online at [www.westernren.ca](http://www.westernren.ca).



*Ron Smith, Board Chair*



*Clark Sigfridson, Board Vice-Chair, Finance & Audit Chair*



*David Arenburg, Human Resource & Governance Chair*



*Craig LeBlanc*



*Mary Thompson*



*James Symonds*



*Misty Morrison*



*Allister Surette*



*Benjamin Shearer*



*Nick d'Eon*



*Warner Comeau*

4.1.2. Liaison and Oversight Committee - Membership & Alternates

Municipality of the District of Argyle	Municipality of the District of Barrington	Municipality of the District of Clare	Municipality of the District of Digby	Municipality of the District of Yarmouth
Lucien LeBlanc, Councillor <i>Alt: Guy Surette, Councillor</i>	Eddie Nickerson, Warden <i>Alt: Shaun Hatfield, Councillor</i>	Ronnie LeBlanc, Warden <i>Alt: Yvon LeBlanc, Councillor</i>	Vice-Chair Jimmy MacAlpine, Warden <i>Alt: Linda Gregory, Dep. Warden</i>	Patti Durkee, Councillor <i>Alt: Trevor Cunningham, Councillor</i>
Department of Municipal Affairs	Labour & Advanced Education		Town of Digby	Town of Yarmouth
Ahmad Shahwan, Municipal Advisor <i>Alt: Lorraine Boyd</i>	Ross MacDonald, Workforce Consultant		Ben Cleveland, Mayor <i>Alt: Mike Bartlett, Councillor</i>	Chair Pam Mood, Mayor <i>Alt: Wade Cleveland, Councillor</i>

4.1.3. Key Partnerships

In economic development, partnerships are the deciding factor on success.

Partnership is baked into the REN structure through a formalized **inter-municipal partnership** and working relationships with several **Departments of the Nova Scotia government**. Each demonstrates a shared commitment to improve the economy of Western Nova Scotia. At a government level, this means ensuring existing businesses and **potential investors** have easy access to information they need for their decision making. Being able to provide this information and to meet an investor’s needs increases the chances of landing a successful business investment.

In addition to these formal municipal partnerships, there are also active working relationships between the **development staff** of the seven municipal partners and the Western REN. Coordination of on-the-ground work and province wide strategies are an important part of ensuring effective economic development.

The Western REN reinforces and strengthens partnerships through targeted and relevant strategic actions; each partner can see their own priorities in this strategy. Some priorities are built into the Western REN core activities, and others are addressed through shared projects.

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### *Core Activities*

The purpose of a REN is to support and expand regional businesses - so partnership most central to this strategy is the private sector. The Western REN engages and supports the private sector both through core activities and through projects.

***BusinessNow*** is a professional visitation program for connecting **existing businesses** with **economic and business development partners**. In addition to directly supporting businesses, the *BusinessNow* program provides insights into the regional business climate that cannot be learned any other way. The Western REN is committed to sharing sector or issue-based insights with partners to allow for the most effective planning and decision making.

### *Strategic Projects*

Addressing fundamental barriers to economic growth have been at the heart of all Western REN activities since its incorporation. In particular, the Western REN has been working on **improving access to talent, reducing infrastructure challenges, and identifying investment opportunities**.

The Western Connector Program and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) are both in support of employers experiencing persistent talent shortages. The Connector program, supported by **Labour and Advanced Education**, is intended to uncover hidden jobs and hidden talent. In partnership with **Nova Scotia Office of Immigration**, the AIP supports employers to recruit specific talent, regardless of where they are in the world.

Previous projects - and projects outlined in this strategy - include partnering with non-governmental organizations as well as all levels of government from local to Federal, including government agencies and commissions.

## Partnerships

Non-Government Organizations	Municipal Government	Provincial Government	Federal Government
Chambers of Commerce	Economic Development Offices	Departments: Municipal Affairs, Business, Labour & Advanced Ed, Energy & Mines	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
Boards of Trade	Chief Administrative Officers and Wardens/Mayors	Offices: NS Office of Immigration	Global Affairs Canada
Engage NS		Agencies: NSBI, Develop Nova Scotia	Innovation, Science and Economic Development  Rural Economic Development

Finally, a critical partner in building a strong and resilient economy are the region's **Post Secondary Institutions**. In addition to training the current and future talent needed, these bodies conduct, participate in and lead research and development that is relevant to the region's private sector growth.