

Mayor

- Good evening, Mr. Chairman, Chamber members, and guests.
 - Thank you to the Chamber for inviting us to speak about the initiatives the Town and the Municipality plan to implement to support economic development in the communities throughout Cumberland County.
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Warden

- As many of you know, the Town and the Municipality have the same authority and responsibilities, and are governed by the same legislation. And as most of you know, we participate as partners on many projects and initiatives.
 - There is a great deal of overlap in our development projects and plans, so, in order to avoid duplication, we are making this **presentation jointly**.
 - By making this presentation together, we want to underscore the need to promote the strengths of the region as a whole, and recognize the importance of a collective vision for regional prosperity.
 - We are both pleased to see that the question posed by the Chamber includes the word “communities” as that is what municipal governments are all about.
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Mayor

- We are about sustainable communities that enable our residents to have excellent quality of life. As the front line in providing public services to our communities, most of our spending goes towards essential infrastructure and services: water, sewer, roads, libraries, parks & recreation facilities, protective services such as fire, police and emergency measures, and the like.
 - We also play a significant funding and advocacy role in services provided by the province, such as health care and education.
 - These essential services give our communities the capacity to be great places to live, which are also the things that businesses base decisions on to start and locate here, and to prosper and grow.
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Warden

- But none of that means anything if we cannot maintain the **critical mass** of people necessary to make the provision of those services financially **sustainable**. And we know that **demographic** changes, our aging and declining population, are a serious challenge in this area.

- You can see a healthy population pyramid on the screen. However, that is not what the population pyramid looks like in Cumberland County In fact, you can see that ours does not look like a pyramid at all. This is a **cause for concern** in Cumberland County.
 - In order to maintain and grow our population, people must first and foremost be able to **make a living**.
 - We need more good **employment** and **business** opportunities so that people can stay here and so people will move here. We need to focus on retaining and attracting working age people.
 - So, **what are we doing** to support the economic development required to improve employment and business opportunities?
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Mayor

- We strongly feel it's our role to create the environment for business investment and economic growth.
 - We do not have the resources to offer financial incentives; and even if we did, that is not permitted by the legislation under which we operate.
 - As government, we do not directly create jobs, and we do not start businesses. However municipalities and counties do create the conditions in which business can prosper in the community.
 - For example, The Town successfully applied for \$11.5 million in infrastructure funding that is integral to the community's ongoing water quality and overall well-being. Projects include the reconstruction of the town's water reservoir, the rehabilitation of the East Victoria Street water system and a new storm sewer system on Station Street – these projects reflect an investment in our community.
 - Another example - in late 2016 both municipalities responded to concerns around the possible loss of services and capacity at the Cumberland Regional Health Centre. The municipalities initiated a meeting with the Health Minister in Halifax to discuss the regional status of the Centre. This resulted in the Health Minister coming to Amherst the next month to clarify and answer questions about the future of Cumberland County's Health Care.
 - While it may not be obvious to some, this is an example of the role Municipalities must play in supporting Economic Development in the region. Quality health care is a critical component of community capacity and sustainability.
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Warden

- And speaking of health care, we were very pleased to hear last week that – thanks to the efforts of the local medical community, residents, and elected officials – the

Province has reaffirmed its commitment to replace the Pugwash Hospital and is moving forward with design work this year.

- This year and last year are shaping up to be two of the biggest years in recent history for infrastructure investment by the Municipality.
 - This year we will complete the \$15 Million Pugwash Water Supply project, which will supply safe, reliable drinking water to residents and businesses in the Pugwash area. These residents and businesses will no longer need to rely on wells. This will contribute to the economic growth of the region, as it promotes business growth and business sustainability.
 - We have issued the Tender for the \$5 Million Springhill Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Project, which will include the replacement of aging water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer lines and the reinstatement of paving.
 - And, we have issued the Tenders for the Parrsboro Waste Water Collection and Treatment Systems. This \$8.7 Million project will see the extension of the existing collection system and, for the first time, modern treatment of effluent before it is released to the Bay of Fundy.
 - Once again, these projects build community capacity and they contribute to the potential of economic growth and sustainability in our region and our communities.
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Mayor

- The County and the Town also created a shared Community Economic Development Strategy 2014, which is currently under revision.
- The strategy identifies four main focus areas: demographics and community capacity which we have already touched on, as well as, Tourism and Business Support.
- Growing our tourism industry is important to both municipalities, and everyone has a role to play.
- It provides business and employment opportunities, and brings money and people into our communities. But most importantly, tourism is an opportunity to share the best version of ourselves, to show visitors why it makes so much sense to live, work and play here.
- While many of the major attractions such as Cape Chignecto Park, Joggins Fossil Cliffs, or the Northumberland Strait beaches might be far flung throughout the County, urban areas like Amherst play a significant role as a service centre and gateway that offers accommodations, unique retail, dining and entertainment options.
- Indeed, in recent years Amherst has experienced an expansion in our food service industry in addition to the great dining establishments we already have. We think there

is a wonderful opportunity to attract visitors off the highway with unique food, beverage, and retail experiences. As such, we've recently started developing dining guide for the public and visitors, and plan to look for ways to promote these dining experiences through social media and at the visitor centre.

Warden

- In the Municipality, we have **supported** the development and operations of the
 - Joggins Fossil Centre,
 - Cape Chignecto Park,
 - the Ann Murray Centre,
 - the Wallace Marina,
 - and many other attractions.
 - We are currently leading planning and design projects for a **Cape d'Or Master Plan** and a **Pugwash Waterfront Development plan** that will improve the tourist draw and experience in those areas as well as contribute to economic growth and sustainability throughout the County.
 - We have retained the services of a **Project Facilitator**, Taylor Redmond, to assist community groups along the Parrsboro Shore to improve the tourist experience and increase community capacity.
 - We are in the process of hiring a full-time **Tourism Development Officer** to help improve the market readiness of the tourism product throughout the County
 - And, we are supporting the movement to have the **Cliffs of Fundy Geopark** designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark by 2020.
 - A Global Geopark is a **UNESCO designation** that attracts **international tourists** wishing to explore the connections between globally significant geological sites, local communities, cultures and natural ecology. They're designed to promote **geotourism** and **celebrate a region's uniqueness**.
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Mayor

- In the Town of Amherst we have recently partnered with the County and Province to bring a presence at the Tourist Bureau to attract and retain visitors to this region.
- We will be looking at ways to support the Amherst Area Tourism Action Committee born out of the Engage NS meeting in 2016.
- We continue to partner and fund a number of activities to bring people to the community, including: Biker Bash, Summer Bash, Nova Scotia Fibre Arts Festival, Blueberry Harvest Festival, Gymnastics Competitors, the list goes on....
- We are investigating ways to attract visitors through the Great Amherst Mystery.

- Our Investment into the No fee Youth Ice Policy in the 2016-17 Ice Season resulted in organizations like Ringette Nova Scotia, and Skate Canada visiting Amherst. These events put money into the local economy.
 - Our #seewhyweloveit campaign – aims to build pride into our town and encourages community-wide collaboration and spirit
 - Our Family-First Programming – Over 100 events last summer were offered for all ages, free, and tobacco and alcohol free
 - The Bordertown Partnership with Sackville, allows us to piggyback on events. For example just two weeks ago the Mount A Choral Society put on an exceptional performance at Trinity St-Stephen’s United Church.
 - We want to find ways to support and promote efforts to bring world class entertainment to Amherst, like last night’s stunning performance by Symphony Nova Scotia made possible by Trinity St- Stephen’s United Church. This was a rare opportunity to hear the orchestra outside Halifax and we are so proud to be a host of such talent.
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Warden

- And the Town and the Municipality have agreed to pursue the development of a **coordinated approach to Tourism branding and marketing**. Hopefully we can formalize that agreement and begin developing those plans in 2017.
- We are very aware of the need to have a strong and positive **internet presence** in order to get on the radar of prospective visitors today, and we will work together to make it happen.
- Turning to other business initiatives, the municipalities have committed to financing and overseeing the **Cumberland Business Connector Society**: a private-sector led economic development organization serving the Municipality, Amherst and Oxford. The Business Connector will support business growth and retention, and provide local leadership on economic development priorities, including the employment readiness of our youth. The Business Connector is currently in the process of recruiting its first CEO.
- The Business Connector’s CEO office will be located here at the **Community Credit Union Business Innovation Centre**, which is another new jointly funded facility for the community.

Mayor

- CCUBIC brings together all the economic service providers under one roof, and was made possible through federal, provincial and local partners. The 8,200 square-foot building was repurposed into a hub for local businesses, industries and community groups, with a vision to increase prosperity within the region.

- Again, we can't emphasize enough that municipalities can only work to create a climate for economic growth.
 - Indeed, and in addition to the previously mentioned efforts, Amherst is also:
 - In the process of the adopting a Commercial Phase-In Bylaw. This Bylaw would provide the phasing-in of a commercial or industrial assessment increase as a result of an investment over a 10-year period, and would forgive up to 50% of that tax increase.
 - We are undertaking a Smart-Grid Energy study to investigate the possibility of becoming a test community for smart-grid technology. This project has the potential to put Amherst at the forefront of green technology while supporting local industry partners.
 - We also continue to promote the area's Industrial Park and the area in general as central in the Maritimes, with excellent services, transportation links, and very competitive land costs.
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Warden

- In 2013, the Municipality entered into an inter-municipal agreement with the towns of Springhill and Parrsboro that resulted in the incorporation of the **Cumberland Energy Authority**.
- Although the towns have since merged with the Municipality, the Energy Authority is still alive and well, and continuing to lay the groundwork for a "**green energy**" industry in Cumberland County, centered on
 - Geothermal in the Springhill area,
 - Tidal in the Parrsboro area, and
 - Wind Energy in various locations.
- The Energy Authority has already completed a number of background geothermal technical studies, and in **2017** they will complete **two important studies** to move this energy source closer to large scale commercial development.
- The first is a **cost analysis of the savings** current users of geothermal energy in Springhill are experiencing to be used as a demonstration of what new users can expect (budget for this project is \$60 000),
- and the **second** is an exploration of the **volume, chemistry and thermal characteristics** of the deep mine workings, which will demonstrate the **long term capacity of the resource**. (Budget for this project is \$80 000)
- Over the next year the Energy Authority and Municipal staff will develop a **draft plan for industrial park expansion**, including required infrastructure investments, in the Springhill area.

- As we are all aware, **Tidal Energy** in the Bay of Fundy is potentially one of the **largest** sources of renewable energy in Canada.
 - Although commercial development of the resource is years in the future, the Energy Authority is working hard to ensure that the **benefits from any development** will be **maximized** in the local Cumberland County **economy** and throughout Nova Scotia.
 - We have developed strong relationships with tidal power developers and the Fundy Ocean Research Centre for Energy, and we have budgeted \$100 000 to conduct an **industry needs and infrastructure assessment** at the appropriate time, in order to ensure local business and industry are able to position themselves strategically for future development.
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Mayor

- In closing, we believe business does not seek out towns or cities to call home, rather they select thriving regions. To succeed with growth it is important to draw on the strengths and economy of the entire region rather than any one player.
- Municipal staff continue to work with our partners including ACOA, CBDC, CANSA, NSCC, Cumberland Business Connector, and Chambers of Commerce throughout the region to look for ways to promote economic growth.
- In order for our region to thrive, we need everyone working in concert. Government has a significant role to play, but success will require the efforts, ingenuity, and entrepreneurial spirit from the private sector. From chamber members like you.