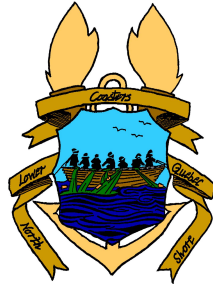


COASTERS ASSOCIATION INC.



PRESENTATION TO THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGES



SEPTEMBER 13, 2010

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Presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages

I. Description of the Region

The Lower North Shore, with a total population of less than six thousand, consists of fourteen (14) isolated communities, twelve predominantly English speaking, two Francophone communities, and two Montagnais reserves (Five municipalities.) These communities are spread over 550 km on the North East coast of Quebec.

II. Background of Coasters Association Inc.

The Coasters Association is a non-profit organization formed in St. Augustine in 1988 by a group of concerned citizens of the Lower North Shore. The association was incorporated in La Tabatiere in 1991. It is administered by an elected, volunteer, Board of Directors, with representatives from 5 municipalities and three designated seats (youth, seniors and disabled). The Association=s work is mainly funded by the Ministry of Canadian Heritage, while the remainder of its funding is received from other government departments (i.e., federal, provincial, and local), as well as fundraising, donations and membership drives. The Coasters Association=s membership stands at 3,542 and with each new member, the Association becomes stronger!

III. Vision and Mission

The vision of the Coasters Association, as a representative and responsive organization, is to enhance the quality of life on the Quebec Lower North Shore by creating and supporting community development and community leadership-

The mission of the Coasters Association is to develop knowledge of the needs and expectations of the fourteen communities on the Lower North Shore and act in partnership with community leaders, organizations, and stakeholders to design and deliver community strategies, programs and services which respond to the region's development challenges and which profile the unique cultural and natural resources of the region.

IV. Areas of development

Goal: Nurture and enhance community capacity and leadership

A five-year strategic plan was developed, in partnership with the key players on the Lower North Shore.

Priorities

- Support organizational development on the Lower North Shore
- Facilitate the emergence of local leadership and organizational task forces and committees to address specific challenges and concerns
- Develop better support measures and opportunities for volunteers

Accomplishments

- 5-year Strategic Plan developed (up for renewal in 2011)
- Established partnerships on & off the territory
- Designed and successfully delivered one hundred and sixty (160) projects funded by various federal, provincial, and municipal government departments
- Created approximately ----- jobs - i.e.: full time and/or part-time, and provided the necessary training that enabled them to seek employment elsewhere or return to complete their education
- Workshops carried out within staff of the organization and with community organizations on capacity building, leadership, fundraising, etc...

Challenges

- High cost to bring population together for training
- Training opportunities for organizations and staff

Goal: Promote the social development of vulnerable groups

Seniors and those with loss of autonomy

According to the statistics provided by the Agency of Health and Social Services (2005), there are 5511 residents on the Lower North Shore, and that 9% or 625 residents are aged 65 years and older, compared to 5.5% in 1981. 10% of men are aged 65 +, and 12% of women are 65+. We also know that according to projections provided by the Agency, the age group of 65+ will increase by 78% in 2026.

Priority

- Establish Day Centers for Seniors in partnership with the CSSSBCN through the clinical project

Accomplishments

- Lower North Shore Local Table for Seniors established
- Eleven (11) Senior Clubs set up

Challenge

- Obtain funding for coordination and animation of Senior Day Centres

Youth and Family

The economic downfall of the fishery on the Lower North Shore is having a direct impact on the capacity of families to cope with everyday life. The lack of work on the LNS necessitates that the parents have to leave to seek employment elsewhere which destabilizes the family unit resulting in other social problems (ie: drinking, drugs, vandalism, etc...).

In terms of education, statistics reveal that 78% of residents do not have an education higher than Secondary 3 on the Lower North Shore, and this statistic includes a high percentage of persons aged 65+. Also, there is a high rate of high school drop-out, especially in males. 42 % of students as well as adults 17 and over have less than a grade 11 education.

Priorities

- Expand and maintain KIDS Summer Camp in the five municipalities
- Support the implementation of Early Childhood Development Program in all Communities with CASSBCN
- Poverty Program implemented on LNS in partnership with NPI groups and Vibrant Communities
- Assist with the set-up and maintenance of the four (4) Intergenerational Centers in the communities of Kegaska, Harrington, St. Augustine and Blanc Sablon and with the sustainability of the three (3) CLC's established in St. Paul's School, Mecatina School and Netagamiou School, in partnership with CHSSN and CSL
- Assist with the maintenance and establishment of Youth Centers in the municipalities
- Improve literacy levels in "at risk" English speaking community youth

Accomplishments

- KIDS Summer Camp Program established (employed 14 students, accommodated 120 youth/parents and obtained \$120ths in funds)
- Early Childhood Development Program "Show me the Way" established
- Communities achieving responsive services (CARS), training program implemented on the Lower North Shore (only territory in Quebec to receive training)
- Partnerships established with YMCA, YWCA, Free the Children, 4-H clubs, QCGN - Youth Leadership program

Challenges

- Sustainability of KIDS Summer Camp program
- Lack of equipment and infrastructures for youth and family activities
- High cost of transportation for Youth to travel out to school
- No special consideration for students from the Lower North Shore with regards to Loan and Bursaries, therefore, parents would have to maintain two households while their children attend post secondary education off territory, this attributes to the high drop out rate.
- High cost of transportation on and off the territory for youth to travel to sporting, arts and culture, recreational events, etc.

- Lack of French Second language opportunities for youth in Anglophone communities
- Unilingual Anglophone youth have a difficult time finding employment on the territory due to insufficient French Second Language skills
- Exodus of our youth
- High drop-out rate in the region
- High poverty status in the communities, high percentage of people living below low income cut off
- Lack of tutoring support system and mentoring systems

Women

The women on the Lower North Shore (LNS) face challenges on a daily basis. There are approximately 1740 women residing on the LNS and a very high percentage of those women leave for 4 to 6 months, out of a year, leaving their children with various family members or on their own. This situation creates a very poignant lifestyle for these women in that the home life becomes disconnected, children become troubled, and the parent becomes discouraged and frustrated. In 2006, a Women's Coalition was established bringing together women from all over the coast to identify opportunities and seek lasting solutions to the situation faced by these women.

Priorities

- More services and programs researched and implemented
- Maintain Women's Coalition
- Job Creation and training opportunities for women
- Create and implement an action plan

Accomplishments

- Women's Coalition established
- Phone-In program established in every community on the Lower North Shore

Challenges

- Isolation (most communities are remote and inaccessible)
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Lack of services and programs
- Lack of education and training
- No infrastructure implemented for women who are physically and mentally battered and abused
- Women on the Lower North shore are not always given the tools or directions they need to make changes in their living situation.

Intellectually and Physically Challenged and those with development disorders

There is nothing put in place for this vulnerable group of people. They are lacking programs and services in every area of development. There is no group home or facility on the Lower North Shore, they must leave the coast to obtain these services, resulting in learning another language, French, then unable to communicate with their parents back home. The school system is not even equipped to assist them.

Priorities

- Support the establishment and maintenance of a Community Animation Program for the disabled population in all communities in partnership with CSSSBCN
- Establish Local Table in partnership with all the key players on the Lower North Shore
- Create and implement an action plan

Accomplishments

- Group Accessibility established in the Municipality of St. Augustine
- Seat established on the Board of Directors of the Coasters Association Inc.

Challenges

- Lack of programs and services
- No lodging facilities on the territory
- Lack of employment opportunities for the disabled population

Goal: Support the development of Health and Social Services programs

There is a chronic need to find lasting solutions to the health and social issues on the Lower North Shore. Ensuring access to the proper information about health and social services is one of the steps in providing adequate services to the people of this vast and isolated region. However, it is evident that lack of proper information is a very serious problem for the population. The health and social services system must be flexible enough to ensure that the needs of the scattered communities of the Lower North Shore are met in the most effective and efficient manner possible. In times of health crisis many users lack the skills necessary to communicate with professionals in off-coast institutions.

Public health

Priorities

- Support the implementation of the Diabetes Prevention Program with CSSSBCN
- Maintain 5-30 program
- Establish a Volunteer Assistance Program for English speaking patient traveling to external hospitals in partnership with CSSSBCN
- Implement Access Plans in partnership with Regional Health and Social Services Access Committee
- Maintain Health Education Program (i.e. Telehealth program, health workshops, health events, newsletters, etc...) in partnership with CSSSBCN
- Maintain Retention of Health Professionals on LNS program with CSSSBCN through the McGill project
- Maintain and expand Community Gardens and Kitchens
- Support Ecole en Sante Movement
- 3 R's (Recycle, Reuse, Reduce)
- Waste Management

Accomplishments

- Establishment of the Lower North Shore Coalition for Health
- Telehealth program established
- Health promotion program established
- Ten (10) community gardens and four (4) community kitchens established
- Tele-medicine Diabetes program established

Challenges

- Translation of documents
- Lack of assistance for English patients travelling outside of the region
- Lack of health programs and documentation in English
- Info Sociale not available in English

Physical health

Priorities

- Expand and maintain these programs, and have Animators in place in all municipalities to assist with the following programs (i.e. KIDS Summer Camp, Quebec en Forme, Tobacco, Diabetes, CAD Program, Early Childhood Development, French Teen Immersion, etc...)
- Assist in the community aspects of the clinical project of CSSSBCN on Cancer
- Support implementation of Tele medicine Diabetes Program
- Equipment acquired for Tele medicine program (i.e., diabetes, heart disease, etc...)
- Support establishment of sports infrastructures in communities

Accomplishments

- Lower North Shore Food Guide produced
- A project on Healthy Lifestyles used as a case study by Health Canada
- Cancer Fund for patients on the Lower North Shore
- Quebec en Forme established in five (5) communities

Challenges

- High costs for patients having to receive extra regional services (ie, Cancer treatment, Dialysis, Surgeries, etc.)
- Lack of cell phone service to implement Tele Medicine
- Lack of funding for salaries for animators to do physical recreational programs

Mental Health

Priority

- Assist in the community aspects of the clinical project of CSSSBCN on Mental Health

Accomplishments

- Partnership formed with AMI Quebec

Challenges

- Lack of support groups for population with mental illness
- Lack of programs and services
- Lack of professional services present in remote communities

Alcohol and drug addiction

Priorities

- Implement CAD Program (Community Against Drugs) in all Municipalities on LNS
- Work with the CSSSBCN to establish a new network for Drug and Alcohol Prevention
- Support the implementation of the Tobacco Prevention Program in partnership with CSSSBCN

Accomplishments

- CAD Program implemented in the Municipality of Bonne Esperance
- Reduction in Drug and Alcohol Abuse in Youth in the Municipality of Bonne Esperance
- Drug and Alcohol Prevention conference held in Gatineau
- Provincial inventory of Drug and Alcohol Prevention programs and services completed

Challenges

- Lack of equipment and programs to implement Drug and Alcohol Prevention activities (ie: Reach for the top equipment, etc...)
- Lack of funding to implement CAD program throughout the Lower North Shore
- Lack of training programs for animators at youth centers to deal with Drug and Alcohol issues

Goal: *Encourage development, diversification, and sustainability of Lower North Shore economy*

The Lower North Shore is faced with many social and economic challenges. This region has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Canada at 40%. The Lower North Shore also has three municipalities out of five, recognized as devitalized Municipalities within the province of Quebec. The municipalities have created municipal action plans to improve their devitalized status. These plans have been submitted to the provincial government and the municipalities are awaiting a response.

Non-Timber Forest Products

In July of 2009, the Coasters Association received a project funded by the Ministre des Affaires Municipales, des Régions et de L'occupation du Territoire, under the "Politique Nationale de la Ruralité 2007-2014" program, to develop a small fruits and wild mushroom industry on the Lower North Shore. In 2010, a project was received and accepted from Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions (DEC), under the Economic Development Initiative of the Government of Canada's Official Languages Minority Communities 2008-2013 to aid with the development of the wildberry industry as well as other long term non-timber forest product initiatives' (ie: greenhouse, kelp, peat moss and fish-by-products). The development of sustainable industries using various Non-Timber Forest Products will help stimulate and

diversify the economy of the region and create much need long term jobs.

Priorities

- Work in partnership with Ministre des Affaires Municipales, des Régions et de L'occupation du Territoire, Canada Economic Development and the Office des Baie Sauvages de la Basse Cote Nord, the Centre de recherche les Buissons, Council of Mayors, MDEIE, MAPAC and Quebec Labrador Foundation to promote, expand and develop the marketing of the wild berry industry
- Encourage the sustainable development of the wild berry environment
- Establish a Co-op for the NTFP Industry

Accomplishments

- Project accepted for five years
- Recipes developed
- Market and Inventory studies completed
- Coordinator and Development Agent hired to work on the establishment of the Wildberry industry.
- Twelve seasonal workers hired to begin pre-production in the Municipality of Bonne Esperance

Challenges

- High cost of transporting products
- Lack of equipment and facilities
- Funding for workers to work in the industry
- Infrastructures (building) to implement the Wildberry industry

Tourism

The Lower North Shore is rich in culture and heritage. This vast land and its people are where Canada's history originated. Due to its isolation and high costs associated with travel the tourism industry has struggled to get off the ground despite the fact that the Lower North Shore has much to offer tourist as the slogan says "where the road ends...the adventure begins".

Priorities

- Establish tourism groups in all municipalities
- Create partnership with Labrador
- Work with existing tourism groups
- Enhance natural, heritage and cultural attributes and attractions
- Assist with the development of a tourism marketing plan
- Promote exchanges between cultures

Accomplishments

- Local tourism groups and centers established
- Coast Raid hosted
- Coast Fest carried out

Challenges

- High cost of travel
- Lack of marketing
- Lack of funding for salaries at interpretation centres and museums

Transportation

The Lower North Shore is an isolated region only accessible by plane and boat in summer and plane and snowmobile during the winter months. The residents of the Lower North Shore have lobbied to extend route 138 throughout the Lower North Shore. To date the Quebec Government has granted one hundred million dollars over 10 years. This funding is insufficient as the estimated cost for the route is six hundred million dollars. The population of the Lower North Shore feel that the rest of Canada has forgotten them.

Priorities

- Assist the Council of Mayors and others to attain the implementation of Route 138
- Advocate for better transportation systems to serve the region (ie: plane, ship, etc...)

Accomplishments

- \$100,000,000.00 granted by the Quebec government

Challenges

- \$500,000,000 needed for completion of route 138

Fisheries

The Lower North Shore's economy was based around the fishery. With two moratoriums on the cod fishery and one on the crab fishery in zone 13 the economy has been severely shaken to the core. The major reconstruction of the fishing industry has to take place. This reconstruction will have to be conducted with the fishermen who know the territory best and not by an outside institution.

Priorities

- Contribute to initiatives to maintain, diversify and enhance the presence and activities of fishers and plant workers
- Assist local organizations, committees, and associations with fishery renewal efforts

Accomplishments

- Fishermen's Association established
- Needs Assessment and Identification of Opportunities, Fishery Assistance Report completed in 2004

Challenges

- Lack of communication between Fishermen's Association and Fishers on territory
- Lack of a fishery reconstruction plan

Goal: Support the growth of a solid and effective communications and multi-media network across the Lower North Shore

Although the communities are small communication tends to be our greatest hurdle due to the vast territory and lack of road infrastructures between individual communities. There are currently four (4) local Radio Station and one (1) local cable TV station situated on the territory. There are two (2) regional newsletters produced (Forecaster and Coastal Breeze) and circulated throughout the Lower North Shore via mailboxes. Most local house holds are connected to the internet via dial-up. Some organizations, institutions and the thirteen (13) schools have access to internet via satellite (xplornet). No communities have any complete access to cell phones.

High Speed Internet (Fibre Optics)

Priorities

- Lobby government to establish fibre optics on the territory
- Support the growth of a solid and effective communications and multi-media network across the Lower North Shore

Accomplishments

- Website development under construction for Coasters Association

Challenges

- No high-speed internet on territory

Regional Radio Network

Priority

- Link all four (4) local networks coastal radio broadcasting

Accomplishments

- Four (4) local radio stations implemented

Challenges

- Maintaining operation cost
- Lack of funding for broadcasters/journalists
- Lack of coastal broadcasting

Local Newspaper

Priorities

- Contribute to the development and maintenance of local and regional electronic and print media
- Develop planned communications activities with other Lower North Shore organizations and institutions

Accomplishments

- Forecaster published
- Lower North Shore Communications Task Force established

Challenges

- No regional newspaper

Telecommunications (Cell Phone Access, Phone and Videoconferencing)

Priority

- Develop an Information and Communications Technology plan for the region, and undertake initiatives

Accomplishments

- Video-conferencing sites established in seven (7) communities

Challenges

- High cost for telephone and video-conferencing services
- No cell phone service

V. Conclusion:

The Lower North Shore is home to three different languages and cultures; Anglophone, Francophone, and Innu, with 80% having English as a mother tongue. The majority of the senior population are English speaking and have difficulty in accessing information in their mother tongue.

The crisis in the fishing industry has resulted in an out-migration of residents from the region. Many have uprooted and settled down in other regions, while many leave on a seasonal basis to seek employment from April to November of each year. This reality has changed the dynamics of family life on the Lower North Shore.

Milestones:

- Set-up the only regional print newspaper on the LNS, Coastal Publications, in 1991
- Member of a Provincial Networking and Lobbying Committee from 1993 to 1997, as a result branch office of the Local Development Center, Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi, Fishermen's Association were all instated on the LNS
- Founding member of the Quebec Community Groups Networks (provincial network) in 1995
- Held the first LNS Tourism Conference and established the Tourism Development Corporation in 1996
- Founding member of the Human Resources Development Canada-Community Table (provincial network) and established the Lower North Shore Community Economic Development and Employability Committee - CEDEC in 1998
- Held the first LNS Youth Forum, and established a Youth Coalition in 1998
- Set-up five CAP sites on the LNS in 2004
- Creation of a local networking table called the Lower North Shore Coalition for Health (LNSCH) made up of regional partners. The LNSCH has been in operation since 2004

and has a Strategic and Sustainability Plan and aids the Coasters Association in the implementation of initiatives dealing with the determinants of Health

- Implementation of the KIDS Sumer Camp Program, started in 2005
- Voices and Choices program was implemented on the LNS in 2005, and established School Health Committees in all the high schools on the coast
- Successful piloting of the Community Against Drugs (CAD) Program, and established Local Action Groups in 2005
- Formed a Regional Local Table for Seniors in 2006
- Established a LNS Women’s Coalition in 2006
- Produced a Lower North Shore Food Guide in 2007 (the only other food guide produced is by Health Canada)
- Implemented the CARS – Community Achieving Responsive Services program on the LNS in 2007 in three communities
- Healthy Lifestyles project used as a Case study by Health Canada in 2008
- Held the first Lower North Shore Youth Forum in 2008
- Ten-year program on Healthy Lifestyles received by Quebec en Forme in 2008
- A five-year project from MAMROT to start a new industry on the LNS in 2009
- Held a LNS Partnership Forum in 2009
- Established a LNS Drugs & Alcohol Network in 2009
- Successfully carried out a LNS Job Fair in 2010
- Implemented the Success Factors program in 2010
- Developed a 5-year Strategic Plan, as well as a promotional folder
- Celebrated our 21st Anniversary in February 2010

Recommendations (5 years) 2011 – 2015

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