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The first session of the 63rd general assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature will resume at 1 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 21, when the lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia will read the speech from the throne.

Two film productions have been announced through the Nova Scotia Film and Television Production Incentive Fund by Nova Scotia Business Inc. Television series, This Hour Has 22 Minutes Season 25, produced by DHX-Hour Productions(NS)XXV Inc., has been approved for a funding commitment of \$2,436,761 based on an eligible Nova Scotia expenditure of \$8,122,536. Short film, Pearls, produced by Mama's Pearls Productions Inc., has been approved for a funding commitment of \$15,149 based on an eligible Nova Scotia expenditure of \$48,869.

David and Faye Sobey entrusted their 30 acre property on the St. Mary's River to the care of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The property provides critical habitat for several endangered species but is also steeped in memories for the Sobey family who have been visiting this part of the river for over 80 years.

The property builds on long-time Nature Trust conservation work on the St. Mary's river, one of Nova Scotia's most ecologically rich and important rivers. The new property brings their conservation network to nine protected areas encompassing over 800 acres of important forests and wetlands on this river.

The Sobey property at Mitchells Pool, just north of Sherbrook Village, includes 30 acres beautiful floodplain forest, a rare ecosystem in Nova Scotia. Its large oaks, maples, and yellow birch provide cooling shade essential for the rivers aquatic life. The property's stillwater, brooks, swamp and island provide important habitat for a diversity of wildlife, from ducks and forest birds to amphibians and reptiles including wood turtles, a species on Canada's endangered species list.

Through June 2017, non-resident, overnight visitation to Nova Scotia is up eight per cent compared with 2016. Visitation by road is up seven per cent and air visitation is up nine per cent. Most of the increase in visitation is from Canada, specifically Atlantic Canada (up 26,000), followed by Ontario (up 25,000). Visitors from the United States increased by 6,000, while visitation from overseas markets increased by 1,000.

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Part 2: Youth Council Final Report

(This is the conclusion of a two part series of the Final Report of the Cumberland-Colchester Constituency Youth Council on youth retention and migration in rural Nova Scotia. Part 1 was published in the July 2017 issue).

Attracting Young People to Rural Nova Scotia

Employment opportunities are a key, but not the only, factor motivating young people to leave rural Nova Scotia.

Fred Morley, who is part of the "baby boom" generation, noted that folks like him are often reluctant to retire—from jobs, from municipal councils or from community organizations. They wish to remain active and they have much experience to offer.

Unfortunately, this can create a "clog" situation which limits opportunities for younger people to advance in their careers, to participate in community decision-making and to feel like there is a future in rural communities. One witness noted, and several others agreed, that rural communities often seem to have a cultural preference for older workers.

At the same time, many rural businesses find it hard to attract younger workers, for reasons already mentioned. It can be particularly difficult for employers to attract high-skill workers, who have the mobility to choose where they work and live.

We heard from Cindy Costin-Fury that rural employers have to take a different approach to developing talent. Employers often require so many years of experience that younger workers are automatically excluded. Where an urban-based employer can look for a fully-qualified professional with all the existing credentials, a rural-based employer may have to hire people at a more junior level and develop their talent from within.

In terms of community engagement, some of the same issues exist. Towns and counties in rural Nova Scotia tend to be governed by older, often retired, community members. Young people have to want to participate, of course; and not all community leadership comes with an office or a title. But if communities and organizations bristle at new voices

and over-emphasize past experience, then young people will be discouraged from giving back.

Mark Austin noted that there are communities in Europe where one of the municipal council seats is designated for youth. This has ensured that there is at least one voice around the council table that is not occupied by the old guard. But creating opportunities for young people to participate is only part of the equation.

Communities and governments need to invest in the kinds of infrastructure that encourage young people to migrate in, to return home and to stay in rural Nova Scotia. Small schools in small communities may not add up by the conventional math of dollars-per-student, notes Mark Austin; but without them, communities cannot support young families, which has much wider economic implications for rural Nova Scotia. Similarly, child care, health care and places to meet are all key to enabling young people to get established and raise families, notes Kathleen Kevany.

The importance of rural broadband internet and cellular service is hard to overstate. As Mark Austin noted, many new jobs can be done remotely, and many more require a high-speed internet connection to be done. Small businesses need good access to the internet to market their products and services; students need access to on-line educational material; and young people are heavy consumers of web-delivered content.

While it may seem counter-intuitive, Fred Morley emphasized to us that the welfare of rural Nova Scotia is closely linked to urban growth as well. He pointed out that many rural areas near the Greater Toronto Area are sustained by those larger communities. Similarly, rural areas provide many of the things—water, food, recreation, and young workers—that urban areas need to be sustained.

Choosing Rural Nova Scotia

As Mark Austin said in our January 14th meeting, we want young people to choose rural Nova Scotia, and we want communities and governments to

help make that choice more desirable. We don't think young people should be forced or guilted into staying or coming back to rural Nova Scotia. We agree with Miriah Kearney, who says that she would never discourage someone from going away, if they wanted to. Young people can gain valuable education, experience and life skills by traveling, living in new places and gaining perspective.

In some cases, that will mean letting young people go—even encouraging them to go—and gain knowledge, experience and perspectives that could serve rural communities. Miriah Kearney says she would "never discourage" a young person who wanted to go away for school or a job.

The migration and retention issue is real and it is serious; but it is not helped by negativity. In our high schools, it is common to hear a conversation like this one: "Where are you going to be next year?" "Not here!" Miriah Kearney emphasizes that young people, and whole communities, have to reject the idea that "this place sucks": be part of the group making the place more vibrant, inclusive and accepting. We understand many youth want to leave and see what is out there; but we also think it is important to try and be happy wherever you are.

Fred Morley echoes the same idea when he said that young people need to be supportive of their peers who are not afraid to step forward and be leaders. Sacha Siddall urges young people to show leadership. If there is something you want to see, don't wait for someone else to do it.

Recommendations

We welcome young people choosing to stay in, return to or try rural Nova Scotia. Your perspectives, ideas and enthusiasm are needed. We recommend you:

Pursue some form of higher education or advanced skills training. This will ensure you have more employment options in rural Nova Scotia.

Learn to be your own advocate, and insist on having your voice heard. We are not punching near our weight. We need to participate in civic life in order for our priorities to be considered. Governments—municipal, provincial and fed-

eral—should make attracting and retaining younger people to rural Nova Scotia a priority. We recommend they:

Pursue strategies to ensure younger people can participate and succeed as candidates for election in rural areas. Put on workshops to encourage people to run; hold meetings with and be accessible to young people.

Improved civics education. If youth are educated in school about how the structures that govern us, and about political participation, they will be more engaged and empowered to participate in shaping the futures of their communities and this province.

Invest in the infrastructure that young people need to live and work in rural Nova Scotia: broadband internet; cellular service; rural schools; and recreational infrastructure. These are basic, not exotic, needs for small communities to survive and thrive.

Expand your focus. Empower entrepreneurs through grants and other supports. Encourage tourism across the entire province, and especially around the Bay of Fundy.

Rural business and entrepreneurs can help attract and retain younger workers. We recommend they:

- De-emphasize years of experience in hiring practices. Without suggesting that experience is not important, there is also value in new perspectives, new energy and new ideas. Growth does not come without change.

Consider hiring less specialized workers who can be trained and mentored in-house. Invest in training, rather than searching for someone who is already a specialist.

Additionally, we recommend that government and employers work together to ensure retirement income security for all workers. Without it, older workers cannot leave the workforce, and create space for younger workers, until much later.

Each of these actions will contribute to keeping young people in rural Nova Scotia and ensure our rural communities remain vibrant and sustainable for generations to come.

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