

**PARTNERSHIP INITIATES “GROWING TOGETHER” PROJECT**

The Antigonish Area Partnership has commenced the project, “Growing Together” that will build its strategic plan. A series of six in-depth community round-table consultations, on a sector by sector basis, are providing input from stakeholders in each sector. The project will advance the Partnership’s core mission to foster economic growth for the Antigonish Area.

“The project has three important, direct benefits,” explains AAP President and CEO, Brian Segal, “we receive direct input from members of the sector; the participants have an excellent opportunity to interact, and learn from each other in an informal, open atmosphere; and, by the end of each meeting, we have a definitive set of priorities for that sector.”

The sessions focus on the Hospitality, Resource/Agriculture, Retail/Services, Knowledge, Health Sciences and International Opportunities sectors. These reflect the priorities as laid out in the AAP Launch Plan that was approved by the community last September.

Each round-table session includes about a dozen participants, explained Segal. “We invite about 24 people to each meeting, and aim to have at least ten to twelve attending. Since everyone has such full schedules, we have been careful to invite enough people to ensure a diversity of opinion and broad representation within each group. So far we have been very fortunate and received excellent responses and participation.”

Once the six sessions are completed a report will be prepared for the Partnership Board, and a preliminary strategy document will be created. “By the time we have reached that point in the process, we will be ready to bring a draft strategy document back to the full group of Investors. Ultimately the Investors will have the final say on the plan; after all, it is their plan - they will have built it.” Segal remarked.

AAP Chair Irene MacLeod is delighted by the response to the project, “This process is enriched by the excellent participation of very capable, and, I might add, busy people, who have generously agreed to share their valuable knowledge and time with us. ‘Growing Together’ is an important project for our Partnership and our community”

The project is in full swing with sessions slated to be completed by May 6<sup>th</sup>. “We aim to have a draft plan ready for consideration by the third week in May with final completion by the end of that month,” says Segal.

MacLeod remarked that the community has achieved remarkable results in less than a year, “Believe it or not, the Antigonish Economic Summit was held not quite a year ago. Since then the Partnership Launch Plan has been developed, approved and implemented. The Partnership is established; private sector investment has been secured and is growing every day. Our operation is in full swing. This accomplishment is a testament to our community’s forward-thinking character and long-established tradition of providing leadership by example.”