

BRIEF SUBMITTED TO THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES



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PREFACE

I am not quite sure what to think of this invitation. After all these years of taking turns with my friends, the mayors and the chiefs of Indigenous communities asking for a hearing with governments to discuss a critical issue—breaking our isolation—here I am, invited to an important forum.

I want to see it as hope, the light at the end of the tunnel, the road at the end of the bridge, the path that nurtures our hunger for equality and creates dreams of better days. Hope is what we want to see rekindled in the eyes of our children, for whom isolation is the norm, well aware how hard it is to escape.

I am choosing to seize the opportunity, hoping that this time will be the right time and that finally someone will hear us. I have but one wish in appearing here: to see you understand the many advantages of this road and become our allies.

INTRODUCTION

First, I would like to thank the Chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities for giving me, a 63-year-old man who has lived in isolation for all these years, this invaluable opportunity to present my testimony. I speak not just for myself, or even for my village, but on behalf of all those families scattered in isolated communities from Kegaska to Blanc-Sablon, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, brothers and sisters bound by the same experiences, by the same feeling of abandonment, sometimes of survival, by our resilience, of course, and by the devitalization of our communities.

My words may seem harsh at times, but how can I remain silent about the flagrant injustice of adding more and more highways, bridges and air routes for residents of the major centres while people in our region are dying because there is no road connecting them to the rest of Quebec. Quite recently, a man died when his snowmobile went through the ice on a lake and he had to walk for hours in the freezing cold. Others lost their lives in December 2018. How many does that make? More importantly, how many will it take to get our governments' attention?

Global warming brings us face to face with our challenges, but also with our paradoxes. For us, it translates into more frequent storms that prevent supplies from reaching villages, into potentially unsafe ice on rivers and lakes, increasing the risk of drowning while performing simple everyday tasks, and into despair because of the growing isolation, which particularly affects our youth. In the big city, where people should be as worried as we are, they talk about building expensive new infrastructure to accommodate more automobile traffic, instead of relying on public transit to reduce their environmental footprint. Two worlds, two realities, but also quite a paradox to see so much money invested in intensifying the pressure on the climate and so little to help us break our isolation.

Of course, this brief will sound like a *cri de cœur*, but it will also encourage you to inspire us with a vision, something that could make all the difference for our communities but would also promote the free movement of goods and people in Eastern Canada, fostering trade that today is virtually impossible or non-existent. In short, I will speak about dynamic occupancy of a magnificent land, as we have experienced it all these years, feeling like second-class citizens, left to our own devices, when there are so many possibilities.

I will also speak about rapprochement between communities, concrete reconciliation with Indigenous communities, because opening up the road also means knocking down a host of formidable barriers.

I will speak about humanism, employment, the economy and the future.

A LITTLE HISTORY

More than 50 years ago, people were talking about building a road to link the villages of the Lower North Shore and allow the free movement of goods and people between Blanc-Sablon and the rest of Quebec.

The first paved stretch of road connecting the North Shore to the rest of Quebec opened in 1931. At that time, Route 138 went as far as Portneuf-sur-mer.

The forest industry in Baie-Comeau pressured the government to extend the road. In 1943, the town of McCormick was linked to Quebec with a good road.

It was not until 1961, when a stretch of road was built in the Franquelin area, that Sept-Îles was joined to the rest of the province by Route 138. The road ended at the bend in the Moisie River about 20 kilometres east of Sept-Îles.

The bridge over the Moisie was commissioned in 1976. Opened officially in 1976, the section from Sept-Îles to Havre-Saint-Pierre left many residents of the Minganie RCM unsatisfied, especially with the promises from provincial governments. Then Mulroney came in and made an agreement with Mr. Bourassa to draw on what they called the infrastructure fund. So they agreed to build the road from Havre-Saint-Pierre to Natashquan. In 1996, the road was finally extended all the way to Natashquan, in Gilles Vigneault country.

In the 1950s, construction began on a road leading west from Blanc-Sablon to Brador and Middle Bay, finally reaching Rivère-Saint-Paul in 1977. That section was extended to Old Fort in 1985 and was completely paved in 2007. In the 1970s, the road was pushed east from Blanc-Sablon into Labrador. Hundreds of kilometres were built in a short period of time to link the North Shore communities with the northern coast of Labrador.

A final section was completed in 2013, reaching Kegaska, the first community west of the Lower North Shore.

In 2018, elected officials and chiefs on the North Shore worked with elected officials in Labrador in an effort to have Route 138 completed.

The Quebec Department of Transport is planning land clearing from Kegaska to the village of La Romaine for a new route in the winter of 2019.

Together, we have to write the sequel to this story.

DEMOGRAPHY AND LAND OCCUPANCY

The Lower North Shore, encompassing an area of 65,148 km², faces the west coast of Newfoundland, where the Strait of Belle Isle empties into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It runs from Blanc-Sablon on the border with Labrador to west of Kegaska. It is part of the Côte-Nord administrative region. It has five municipalities and 14 communities. Most of them are accessible only by ferry, plane or, in winter, snowmobile. The two easternmost municipalities, Bonne-Espérance and Blanc-Sablon, are linked by a highway and are accessible by ferry from Newfoundland. The Lower North Shore also has two Innu communities, Unamen Shipu and Pakuashipi.

According to the last census (2016), the population of the Lower North Shore was 4,736, down from 5,126 in 2011, a decrease of 390 in five years. This demographic decline is largely due to population aging, the migration of young people to major centres and the fact that more people are leaving the region to find work.

The population of the Lower North Shore has been declining since the 1996 Census; one consequence of this was the abandonment of the village of Aylmer Sound in 2006.

- Between 2006 and 2011, every municipality was affected by the decline, with the largest losses occurring in Saint-Augustin (-20.2%), Bonne-Espérance (-12.2%) and Gros-Mécatina (-11.8%).
- The trend continued between 2011 and 2016, with Gros-Mécatina and Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent suffering the biggest decreases, -14.2% and -11.8% respectively.

Conversely, Indigenous communities experienced an increase in population.

According to Statistics Canada's 2016 Census, the Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCM had the highest unemployment rate on the North Shore, 28.2% for the 15-and-over age group, about four times the rate for Quebec as a whole at that time.¹ That RCM also had the lowest employment rate on the North Shore in the same census.

¹ Department of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity (2018), tables produced by the North Shore regional directorate.

LIVING IN ISOLATION

Despite harsh, precarious living conditions, the residents of the Lower North Shore have deep roots there and make dynamic use of their land. Our lifestyle is based on values such as respect and mutual assistance. A simple life in which nature is an integral part of our daily existence. Isolation does not define our daily existence, but we live in isolation on a daily basis.

We also live in isolation through our geographic situation and the fact that we are far from major centres and services. Our region's proximity to the sea means that our weather changes constantly: fog, high winds and winter storms that dictate how often residents come and go. It is quite normal to wait several days for a plane to come in.

We live in isolation in various ways. One obvious example is access to high-quality perishable goods. Such goods are often inaccessible because of their scarcity and their high cost. Purchasing a washer-dryer set in the middle of winter when the shipping service has shut down may also be impossible. Some communities go nearly four months without being able to order goods through the shipping service.

Transportation to medical appointments and all medical evacuations are by air. Another consequence of isolation is the dearth of health care specialists in the region (oncologist, psychologist, dermatologist and so on), and people have to leave the region to obtain such services. Residents get from place to place by boat or plane, but bear in mind that when we travel is never up to us. Our schedules are always dictated by transportation companies or the weather.

Isolation also means that the elderly, the infirm and people with reduced mobility are forced to travel by snowmobile in winter. Such travel is difficult, and sometimes impossible.

Keeping residents safe is also very complicated. Police have to be constantly on the move to provide some semblance of safety and security in the RCM, and fire services are virtually non-existent because of the geography and the scattered population. It is practically impossible to share such services.

We are isolated from the rest of Quebec in terms of official language, since English is used by most people on the Lower North Shore.

There is also technological isolation, due to the lack of an efficient telecommunications network and a cellular phone system.

BENEFITS OF A ROAD

A road offers many benefits. A road would strengthen the economic, social and family fabric and allow trading between communities. Clearly, opening up the region would also open up development opportunities.

Also feasible would be infrastructure-sharing between communities, such as schools, North Shore integrated health and social services centres (CISSS), wharfs and airports. Such services are mostly funded by governments. The construction of Route 138 will probably save a great deal of money, tens of millions of dollars, by eliminating the need for certain services (shipping, service by the Quebec Ferry Company, airports, etc.).

Natural resources in our hinterland, which have never been developed, offer great economic development opportunities (berries, hydro-electric power, outfitting, mining, etc.). Fishing is the Lower North Shore's main industry, though it is not developed to its full potential. Currently, many of our marine products are exported in raw form. A road would make secondary and tertiary processing possible, creating many jobs and value-added products.

Development of the tourism industry offers enormous opportunities, with the region's vast frontiers, the seashore, the lakes and rivers, the scenery, and the flora and fauna, things that are much sought-after by tourists.

Ecotourism is growing at a rate of 10% to 30% a year,² compared with about 6% for tourism in general.³

In 2004, according to *National Geographic*, Cape Breton Island, Vermont, Old Quebec City and the Rocky Mountains were among the top six ecotourism destinations in the world.

Our pristine lands, many of whose lakes have never been fished, are perfect for meeting the growing demand for ecotourism, especially since the least developed areas are the most sought-after.

With the huge number of world-class attractions in Northeastern Canada, the completion of Route 138 would promote the region and make it just as appealing a destination as Western Canada or the Alaska Highway. By adding Vermont to the circuit, the region could even be promoted as the international Canadian Northeast.

The idea is to bring together a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Red Bay, L'Anse-aux-Meadows, Quebec City), national parks (Terra Nova, Mingan Archipelago, Gros Morne, Forillon), provincial parks (such as Anticosti), major tourist areas/provinces that attract hundreds of millions of visitors annually (Gaspé, Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia), and Indigenous communities (see map).

² World Resources Institute.

³ *Le Devoir*, Agence France-Presse, January 21, 2019.

The tourism potential for Quebec is estimated at 12 million Canadian visitors and 96 million American visitors; this does not include the influx of tourists to Canada's Maritime provinces.

Once the transportation infrastructure is in place, we can identify dozens of tourist circuits, including the eastern Canadian and U.S. maritime regions, with completely different landscapes: coastal areas, seascapes, boreal forest, taiga, and isolated pockets of French, English and Innu speakers.

CONCLUSION

For once, why not overturn the convention of building a road just to get to the next big project, without much thought for the people who live in the area? For once, why not look at things from the perspective of an investor, who sees the full potential of the investment over the medium and longer term? Opening up access to such a large area requires a lot of vision and bold ideas, but some things are certain: there will be substantial social and economic benefits that will extend far beyond the communities directly affected by the initiative. Those benefits are described in this brief. While politicians see the benefits arising from their decisions in terms of returns at the ballot box, leaders understand the full importance of dynamic land occupancy.

When a large delegation from the North Shore went to Ottawa in November 2018, we got the impression from all of the elected officials we met that they were definitely interested in our longstanding project of opening up our region. The project is necessary not only for the area's residents but also for building the entire economy of northeastern maritime Canada. The invitation to testify before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities today is, we hope, the beginning of an effort to understand all of the positive effects that opening up the region will have, and all of the obstacles to our development that we will overcome one by one. You have to experience isolation to understand it, comprehend the prohibitive costs, mainly related to transportation, for all aspects of our lives, wait for supplies that do not come because of unstable weather, experience the threat to survival whenever the required care cannot be delivered. In return, we are expected to occupy that vast region, usually with no support. Is it not time we were rewarded for that?

Today, there is a broad consensus, broader than it has ever been; the six RCMs and the chiefs of all of the North Shore's Indigenous communities are on board. And the people of Labrador are also getting involved. When Mr. Champagne, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, visited the North Shore on January 23, 2019, people came from Goose Bay and Wabush to talk about the devastating effects of isolation in their communities. The key point was unquestionably the high suicide rate among young people. The provincial government is dragging its feet, attributing its inaction to the very large number of issues on the North Shore and the small population. That is extremely disappointing! We are hoping that this will be the right time and that we will finally be heard.

We are asking you to partner with us in our fight so that together we can write a new page in history by opening up this land full of resources and potential for the benefit of the local population and all of northeastern maritime Canada.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1 – Map of the tourist circuit

Appendix 2 – Letters to Premier Legault

Appendix 3 – Resolutions adopted by municipalities

Appendix 4 – Study by the Institut de recherche en économie contemporaine (IRÉC)

Appendix 5 – Regional priorities for land occupancy

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North Shore Regional Priorities

Prepared for the review of the strategy to ensure the occupancy and vitality of territories (OVT) and the implementation of the regions promotion support fund (FARR)

By the FARR-OVT steering committee, composed of the wardens of the six North Shore RCMs, a second elected representative for each RCM and the Minister responsible for the North Shore region, in conjunction with the technical committee, composed of the general managers of the six RCMs and the North Shore regional director of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Land Occupancy (MAMOT)

Adopted at Sept-Îles on June 27, 2017, submitted to the Department of Municipal Affairs and Land Occupancy

The region

The North Shore is a vast region with a total area of 351,615 km² and a land area of 236,664 km², making up 21% of Quebec, according to the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ). It has a very low population density of 0.4 per km². It has multiple, diverse environments, with a maritime portion, a linear route, a hinterland, and a shoreline subject to ongoing erosion. It has a wide variety of landscapes and habitats and diverse natural resources: minerals, forests, wildlife, hydrographic resources and marine resources. More than 99% of its area is publicly owned, and any industrial, commercial or residential project generally involves Crown lands.

The North Shore is made up of six RCMs. It has 33 municipalities and 9 Indigenous communities, accounting for about 14% of the region's population, and 10 unorganized areas. It is one of the regions with the largest unorganized areas in Quebec.

The North Shore is also characterized by limited physical connections to the rest of the province because of the physical barriers—the St. Lawrence River, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Saguenay River—and the incomplete regional road network. A number of communities in the Caniapiscau, Minganie and Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCMs are served by ship, air and rail. Route 138 has a ferry crossing on the west side of the region and stops 400 km before the eastern tip of the region. Most of the communities are linked by just two roads: Route 138 provides a 1,200-km east-west link for some North Shore communities, and Route 389 provides a 563-km north-south connection between the town of Fermont and Baie-Comeau, about 200 km of which is unpaved.

The population

The region's population is 92,541, 1.1% of the province's total population. About 58% of the population lives in the region's three largest municipalities: Sept-Îles, Baie-Comeau and Port-Cartier. The remaining 42% is scattered among the region's other 30 municipalities and the 9 Indigenous communities.

The region's demographic outlook is negative, and its population will continue to shrink, except in Indigenous communities. According to ISQ data for 2015–2016, the North Shore had the largest net loss relative to population size, with an interregional migration rate of -1.6%. In contrast to the previous two years, the number of out-migrants did not increase, but the number of in-migrants remained on a downward trend.

The economy

The North Shore's economy is based mainly on natural resource extraction and, to a lesser extent, natural resource processing. It is built around mineral processing (iron), metallurgy (aluminum), hydro-electric power generation, forestry, use of wildlife resources (hunting and fishing), commercial fishing and tourism. The region has two key ACCORD Niches of Excellence, one in engineering of industrial, mining and metallurgical processes, and the other in marine resources, science and technology.

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Recognize the North Shore and its atypical features as a unique region.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The North Shore is a huge peripheral region, far from Quebec's major centres and isolated from the other regions by natural physical barriers. Its economic development is based on natural resources. It is characterized by uneven distribution of its population, incomes and national resources within its vast expanse.
- A number of municipalities are isolated because there is no road connection with the rest of the region: Schefferville, Anticosti Island, Gros-Mécatina, Côte-Nord-du-Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent, St-Augustin, Bonne-Espérance and Blanc-Sablon. To remedy the insularity and lack of roads, marine, air and rail transportation services are maintained for the movement of goods and people.
- The region has 1,825 km of shoreline, more than 28% (505 km) of which consists of sensitive marine erosion zones and 38% (695 km) of which consists of moderately sensitive marine erosion zones. Most coastal municipalities are affected by this problem. Climate change may exacerbate the problem in the future.
- Conditions vary widely from one RCM to another within the region. Government policies and measures do not always take these differences into account, and as a result, they are often either inapplicable or inconsistent with the areas' needs. Government actions should be responsive to the specific issues of the RCMs and local municipalities. Some actions have been taken to address the North Shore's particular realities, such as the assistance provided to the trust fund to supply fuel to Middle and Lower North Shore municipalities and the 8% retention bonus for public service employees working north of the 50th parallel. More such actions are needed.
- Consequently, a review is needed to adjust policies, programs and measures so that the financial support and assistance provided are consistent with the region's multiple realities. This would help to improve and develop infrastructure, basic public and economic services and so on in areas such as transportation, telecommunications, social services and housing.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Document the specific characteristics of each area in cooperation with the RCMs, and make recommendations for tailoring government actions and making the implementation of those actions more consistent in the North Shore.
- Publicize and promote the North Shore's unique features in the region and the rest of Quebec.
- Ensure that the areas concerned are given isolated and insular status for the purposes of project analysis and government decision-making (North Shore Clause).
- Ensure that the North Shore has a voice in coordinating and decision-making bodies relating to the region and that that voice is heard.
- Support projects and studies to combat shoreline erosion problems.

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Open up the North Shore and its communities by taking action on the transportation and telecommunications fronts.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The use of marine, air and rail services entails high costs for the transportation of goods and people. These additional expenses make businesses less competitive and increase costs for individuals, institutions, retail businesses and industries. These services are often interrupted by inclement weather (wind, ice, tides, snow), regularly leaving the region, or parts of it, isolated. Such service interruptions have an impact on food supply, access to health care, and the economy. In areas characterized by remoteness and isolation, such as the Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCM, this problem has an even greater impact. The effectiveness and efficiency of the Saguenay River and St. Lawrence River ferry services in meeting the needs of residents and the economy are often questioned by various officials.
- There are some 6,287 kilometres of multipurpose roads in the vast unorganized territories. Those roads provide access to resources and support the development of communities, and they require maintenance. Most of them are in the Haute-Côte-Nord, Manicouagan and Sept-Rivières RCMs; there are very few in the Caniapiscau, Minganie and Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCMs. No upkeep is done for many of them.
- There is public transportation in the more urban areas, where much of the population lives; there is none in almost all of the rest of the region. Interregional transportation is available in part of the region, but those services are being cut back year after year because of the high operating costs. The various programs restrict the development of public transportation and do not meet the needs of the North Shore's RCMs.
- Cell phone coverage is incomplete within the RCMs. This problem is exacerbated by the discontinuation of pager service in areas with no cell phone networks.
- High-speed Internet service is uneven across the region. Service is poorest in the Haute-Côte-Nord, Caniapiscau and Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent RCMs.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Complete and improve Route 138.
- Complete the improvements to Route 389.
- Support the development of specialized and public transportation in the territories.
- Maintain interregional and intraregional transportation services and make them available at a fair and competitive price.
- Maintain and improve existing infrastructure to develop access to the territories.
- Support the installation of vehicle charging stations.
- Develop initiatives and measures for transportation providers, for student and youth transportation, and to remedy service cuts.
- Support the deployment and development of Internet and phone infrastructure to provide complete coverage of the region.
- Support efforts to improve connections between the RCMs and local municipalities through information and communications technologies.
- Approve recreation/tourism projects under the Sustainable Forest Development Program (multipurpose roads).

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Support the development and diversification of the North Shore's economy.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The region has low industrial diversity, which makes it vulnerable to the cyclical effects caused by frequent fluctuations in global markets.
- Economic interest in the North Shore is dependent on the demand for its natural resources. Municipalities suffer from the aftereffects of major projects. They need guidance when large-scale projects are planned and carried out in their jurisdiction, and they need support when project activities wind down and come to an end.
- All economic activity in the North Shore is conditioned by low volumes over vast areas.
- Some economic development tools are missing, including natural gas supply.
- The economic vitality index (EVI) for the North Shore's RCMs, local municipalities and Indigenous communities varies substantially from place to place. For most localities (23 out of 39), however, it is in the fourth or fifth quintile. For the 16 other localities, it is in one of the first three quintiles. Hence, the North Shore is one of the regions with the highest proportion of the population living in a locality with a low EVI.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Maximize the benefits of extracting natural resources (forestry, mining, fisheries, agriculture, hydrographic resources, etc.).
- Strengthen natural resource primary processing and support the development of secondary and tertiary processing.
- Promote the establishment of regional economic diversification funds tailored to each of the region's RCMs.
- Minimize fly-in/fly-out jobs.
- Pursue efforts to obtain regional natural gas service at a competitive cost.
- Support research, innovation and knowledge acquisition.
- Support knowledge and expertise transfer from educational institutions to businesses.
- Promote the establishment of research centres supporting the development of Niches of Excellence.
- Support the development of the tourist industry with a view to making the region a world-renowned destination.
- Support the establishment of electricity-intensive industries near generating stations.
- Promote the North Shore brand.
- Create national parks, biodiversity zones and multipurpose pathways.
- Support businesses in remote or isolated areas to offset additional transportation and other costs.
- Extend the summer and winter tourist seasons.

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Develop entrepreneurship in all its forms and build entrepreneurial capacity.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The North Shore has a weak entrepreneurial culture. According to 2001 and 2006 Census data, the number of business owners in the region is down slightly. However, the proportion of women entrepreneurs, though low, is higher than the provincial average (25.7%).
- The region has a higher social entrepreneurship rate than any other region in Quebec, according to the Entrepreneurship Foundation. However, it does not have very many microbusinesses, and it has more large corporations than the provincial average. The region's survival rate for cooperatives is below the Quebec average.
- Entrepreneurial initiative is low in the region. Increasing it is an important issue for future growth and diversification. In addition, there are some taxation barriers impeding the transfer of businesses from parents to children.
- Entrepreneurs need tools, human resources and technical assistance in starting their businesses; administrative support and access to venture capital; and assistance in transferring businesses to the next generation.
- It is also important to support female entrepreneurship and collaborate more with Indigenous communities and immigrants.
- The municipalities need more tools for developing their economies and supporting entrepreneurship.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Generate interest among entrepreneurs and the young generation in the region's attractive features and strengths.
- Tailor assistance and support measures for SMEs, including cooperative and social economy enterprises.
- Support young entrepreneurs, including those who get into business through family transfers, and their planning in various ways, including a special tax regime.
- Improve training for business and entrepreneurship assistants in their consulting role (incubation).
- Establish and maintain access to business mentoring services.
- Inventory and support businesses' training needs and develop customized training courses.
- Support and encourage the development of social economy enterprises.
- Encourage the sharing of assistance and support services in the administration component.
- Support networking activities and promote local subcontracting.
- Promote export and innovation activities.
- Facilitate e-commerce initiatives for North Shore businesses.
- Promote entrepreneurship in all its forms.
- Encourage entrepreneurship among Indigenous people and immigrants.

Region: North Shore **Priority** 5

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Make the North Shore a region that is attractive for its jobs, lifestyle, culture and environment.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The North Shore's key characteristics include a shrinking population, a vast region far from the major centres, and an economy in which big business is overrepresented and skilled labour requirements are expected to be significant in the future. The region's ability to attract people and keep them here hinges on promoting its lifestyle and jobs.
- To make the North Shore attractive and make it easier for people born in the region to return after they have pursued their education elsewhere, we need to improve living conditions and boost people's pride in and attachment to the North Shore.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Promote the types of jobs that are available based on the profiles of the workers being recruited (outside the region, students, education profile, etc.), avoiding fly-in/fly-out jobs.
- Perform constant, regular monitoring of businesses' labour requirements and worker education.
- Support initiatives to help attract skilled labour, young people, immigrants and Indigenous communities.
- Promote access to newcomer assistance services and settlement services for immigrants and Indigenous people, and improve existing services.
- Promote the features of the various RCMs and make North Shore residents aware of them, to boost their pride and sense of belonging.
- Promote an image of the North Shore as a positive, sophisticated, friendly place.
- Promote the North Shore's history, cultural heritage and assets, including its regional culture.
- Support artistic and literary creativity and culture in all its forms.
- Make greater use of information technologies to increase access to the culture.

Region: North Shore **Priority** 6

Regional priority statement: *A general objective, including a general target*, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Build the capacity of North Shore residents and their communities.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- We need to maintain and improve individual and collective living conditions by taking action on employment and working conditions, housing, and health and social services and by creating environments conducive to healthy lifestyle habits to build the capacity of all North Shore residents and reduce disparities.
- Access to basic and essential social services needs to be promoted in order to reduce social disparities and prevent people from leaving their towns and the region.
- A key issue for the North Shore is its small population scattered over a vast area, an issue that is exacerbated by the devitalization of municipalities. This pushes the region into a vicious circle: the fewer services available, the smaller the population, and the smaller the population, the more difficult it is to justify providing services. Communities are becoming less attractive and less able to take action.
- Small, remote, sometimes isolated communities often have difficulty meeting expectations and legal and regulatory requirements because of their geographic location and limited resources.
- Some industries, such as tourism, wildlife resource exploitation and commercial fishing, provide seasonal jobs that can be less attractive and unstable. They are also less lucrative and less robust, but they are essential to the economy.
- Awarding contracts to regional businesses and hiring regional workers must be promoted to keep jobs in the region. The initiatives implemented by the committee on hiring regional labour in the North Shore are a good example.
- High construction costs in the region hamper the development of affordable housing that is consistent with individuals' and communities' ability to pay and would help keep people from leaving the region.
- The North Shore has an impressive hinterland that is good for recreation, vacationing and resource exploitation. Access to that hinterland, which is so important to the region's economic and social vitality, varies widely in scope and quality from one RCM to the next.

Near-term actions: *Specific objectives, each with a specific target*, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Give priority to the availability of regional labour and access to regional jobs.
- Pursue the development of initiatives to encourage businesses to hire regional labour.
- Promote credential and skills recognition.
- Promote the sharing of seasonal labour between companies, and recognize employment seasonality.
- Revitalize communities.
- Develop, maintain and deliver essential social services.
- Support active aging.
- Promote equitable access to affordable housing by harmonizing housing programs and taking remoteness and isolation into account.
- Support access to public lands.

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Promote access to education, training and knowledge.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- The North Shore does not have any universities, although some services are available. There are only two CEGEPs, in the larger population centres of Baie-Comeau and Sept-Îles. Students have to move within the region or leave it for their secondary, college and university education. This problem is more prevalent in the Minganie, Golfe-du-Saint-Laurent and Caniapiscau RCMs. Leaving home, sometimes as early as age 13, is difficult, and the need to do so may encourage students to drop out, especially since the conditions of employment offered by big companies for unskilled workers in the region are so appealing. Some 18.9% of the North Shore's population does not have a degree, certificate or diploma; the provincial average is 12.8%.
- The two CEGEPs need to make a greater effort to attract students and develop their range of programs. Because of the difficulty of recruiting students, it may be necessary to go after international students.
- Maintaining small schools in communities with shrinking populations is a challenge for the North Shore's school boards. We need to ensure that schools are available and that there are local education authorities.
- The minimum numbers required to have single-grade classes are often unattainable in many communities. This situation deprives people of an education and usually forces them to leave their municipality and their region without compensation for the costs incurred.
- Important development tools are needed to guide land use management and development decisions. With no universities in the North Shore, there is little research and development on the region's potential, which limits the capacity for innovation, diversification and new development.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Resume coordination between key regional leaders concerned about education at all levels, for both francophone and anglophone students.
- Support the development of small single-grade classes.
- Support the development of customized training programs to meet local needs.
- Improve university-level education and research infrastructure.
- Encourage research and innovation in connection with the region's natural resources.
- Ensure that the entire North Shore region receives newspaper and electronic media coverage that is accessible to all residents.
- Support campaigns to attract college students.
- Keep elementary and secondary schools in the municipalities.
- Ensure that education authorities are located in the area they serve.
- Support students who have to study outside their home area.
- Develop initiatives to help families cover the costs of educating their children outside the region.

Region: North Shore Priority 8

Regional priority statement: A general objective, including a general target, which the region intends to work toward over the next five years.

- Work together.

Background information associated with this priority: This can be explanatory material or supporting evidence.

- Because of the region's size, its diverse characteristics, its low population density and the disparities between RCMs, all parties need to join forces to ensure the occupancy and vitality of the entire region.
- Those strengths are scattered among local municipalities, RCMs, Indigenous communities, ministries and agencies, quasi-public organizations, private business and civil society. Everyone needs to work together and support each other.

Near-term actions: Specific objectives, each with a specific target, which the region intends to pursue. The emphasis is on objectives and not on specific means or plans.

- Enhance relations and alliances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Promote concerted action by the RCMs, ministries and agencies, municipalities, businesses, workers and Indigenous people to prevent economic decline and support the execution of major projects.
- Support the North Shore's autonomy by establishing and maintaining decision-making bodies, government services and regional offices of ministries and agencies.
- Encourage networking initiatives.
- Support regional discussion and coordination activities.
- Promote the development of "buy local" policies.
- Harmonize local and regional development planning and government action.
- Enhance the advisory role of the North Shore Regional Administrative Conference.