



ANNUAL REPORT
2018 / 19





Remembering

WHERE WE CAME FROM

In June 2012 approximately 75 Nova Scotians gathered to address how our province could do better. The organization developed from a grassroots desire for us to be more innovative, collaborative and open to change. By 2014, we had grown enough to bring on a permanent board of directors and professional staff to bring to life our vision.

Since then, we have gathered in groups large and small to question and imagine how Nova Scotia can – through the energy and insight of its citizens – become a more vibrant, resilient and inclusive society.

Our provincewide network has grown to thousands of people from all walks of life, bound by a common affection and concern for our province.



A note from

THE CHIEF ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Dear Friends,

I want to start by expressing my appreciation for the incredible support we have received from partners, collaborators and volunteers from one end of the province to the other.

We are fortunate to have deepened and formed new relationships with several dozen organizations and hundreds of people across the province. A quick scroll through our Quality of Life website at www.nsqualityoflife.ca will give you a feel for the scope and range of those connections, and reinforce a sense that support for our work is growing.

First amongst those community partners has been Nova Scotia Community College. We could not have enjoyed the success we did without the dedication of their senior administration and principals.

I'd also like to thank our incredible staff and board of directors for their dedicated and exceptional work. The last year required an "all hands on deck" commitment and they delivered.

Engage substantially deepened its commitment to the Quality of Life Initiative. We believe this initiative has tremendous potential for the province as a whole. It brings unprecedented clarity to how we're doing as Nova Scotians – where we are excelling and how we need to do better.

This initiative is not just a measurement exercise – it's a change exercise. Change begins with clarity, but it also requires courage, determination, action and patience. Over the coming years, we are confident that positive change will happen, because we experience it in the relationships we have with partners who share our belief that Nova Scotia is a particularly special place – and we can do better.

We will continue to work with communities to build capacity for public engagement, because datasets will only be useful if they enable strategies that build on the struggles and aspirations of everyday citizens. Anything is possible for Nova Scotia. If we continue to be more collaborative, inclusive and adaptive to change we will live up to our potential.

Thank you for your interest in the work we are doing. We invite you to become involved. This work doesn't belong to a few of us. It belongs to all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Danny Graham".

Danny Graham
Chief Engagement Officer



OUR MISSION & ASPIRATION

Our mission is to cultivate engagement, contribute to an evolving provincial narrative and catalyze actions aimed at strengthening social cohesion and improving the quality of life for all Nova Scotians.

Our aspiration is that as Nova Scotians, we better understand our advantages, opportunities and the hurdles in front of us. More people are stepping up with greater ability to improve our shared quality of life and economic conditions. We are more collaborative, inclusive and adaptive to change.

We want Nova Scotians to be more ready, willing and able to build our best future.



A word from THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

It was an honour to be asked by the board of directors to pick up the mantle of the first – and standard-setting – chair of Engage Nova Scotia, Ramona Lumpkin. Ramona’s leadership over the four years of her term saw Engage grow to an organization that has galvanized the participation and enthusiasm of individuals from one end of the province to the other.

I am grateful that my time as a board member and my work as a public health physician helped prepare me for this role, as the scope and scale of the opportunity created by the work we are undertaking is huge.

I am particularly encouraged when I witness the Engage staff team and its countless community partners at work. An energy, fueled by creativity, comradery and a sense of shared adventure is building and our hope is that it becomes contagious and inspiring.

Our quality of life work, in particular, has the potential to be a game-changer for this province. It will require many partners to join us in making it a reality. If the idea of getting involved inspires you, please reach out about opportunities in your community.

I look forward to continuing to learn and contribute in whatever ways I can.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Watson-Creed'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed
Chair of the Board



PAUL KENT

Director,
Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation



**DR. GAYNOR WATSON-CREED,
CHAIR**

Public Health Physician



RAMONA LUMPKIN

Past President & Vice-Chancellor,
Mount Saint Vincent University



RON SMITH, VICE CHAIR

Experienced Corporate and
Not-for-Profit Director



EMILY LUTZ

Deputy Mayor of the Municipality
of the County of Kings



ADAM RODGERS

Lawyer, Mac Mac & Mac



SARA NAPIER

President & CEO,
United Way Halifax



DOUG KEEFE

President, Doug Keefe Consulting



RANKIN MACSWEEN

President & CEO,
New Dawn Enterprises



JAIME BATTISTE

Treaty Education Nova Scotia, Lead



JAIME SMITH, SECRETARY

Executive Lead,
STFX University Extension Dept.



BRAD OLSEN, TREASURER

CPA, CA



JIM MUSTARD

Counsellor, Municipality of the
County of Inverness

OUR 2018/19 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2018/19

A YEAR IN REVIEW






QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVE

Building on the strong foundation established in previous years, the Quality of Life Initiative not only continued to be a priority for Engage in 2018-19, it took on an even more significant role than anticipated.

We began our quality of life work with the idea that a sensible starting point for building the Nova Scotia we want is a clear understanding of where we are now. We saw that while there was a lot of information about how the province is performing economically, there wasn't a lot of information about the quality of our day to day lives – even though, across demographic and geographic boundaries, Nova Scotians valued that highly.


To that end, we worked with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing at the University of Waterloo to release the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Index Report on June 26, 2018. The report measures how Nova Scotia compares to Canada across eight domains of wellbeing over a 20-year period: living standards, education, environment, healthy populations, community vitality, leisure and culture, democratic engagement and time use. The intention was not to provide the definitive word on how to assess progress in any of the eight domains, but rather to introduce a common language and new lens for evaluating success – one that looked at the full range of what matters to Nova Scotians' quality of life.





**NOVA SCOTIA,
You have mail.**

CHECK YOUR MAILBOX for the
Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey

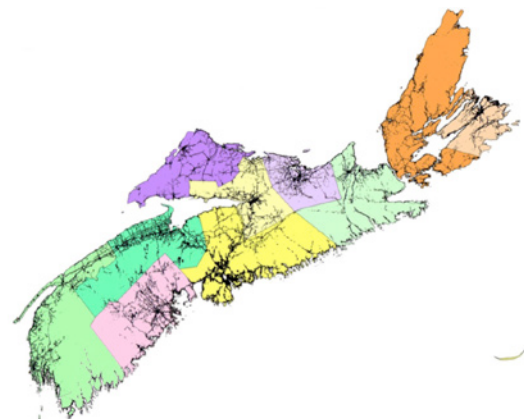


nsqualityoflife.ca

The launch of the report was well-received. The data was comprehensive, and gave us a good idea of where we stood as a province overall. The launch gave us the opportunity to introduce the notion of quality of life to the public through the media. And the report was a useful tool with which to begin our outreach to the broad range of groups with which we needed to engage in order to make the overall initiative a success.

Once the Index was complete, we were particularly focused on connecting one-on-one with groups and individuals representing demographic and geographic subsets, subject specialties and underrepresented communities to make sure the Survey phase of the Initiative, planned for the Spring of 2019, was well-designed and received.

During this process, Engage was introduced to a Functional Economic Region map of Nova Scotia developed by Statistics Canada to indicate the general zones where people live, work and play in Nova Scotia. This learning encouraged a deeper look at the sense of belonging and connection Nova Scotians feel to the areas in which they live, and ignited efforts to go beyond creating a provincial report, to preparing ten unique datasets for these regions. It became clear that the effort needed to provide insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by Nova Scotians in their daily lives would be best supported by the collection of meaningful data at the community level. And while the increased benefits of such an exercise would be significant, so too would be the proportionate upfront efforts: a larger sample size required higher participation rates and greater community involvement.



Overall lack of
Public Engagement
Topic
Rural Bandwidth

engagement, interest



In order to mobilize this vision and undertake the associated outreach, we were fortunate to establish a partnership with Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). Their mission – to “build Nova Scotia’s economy and quality of life through education and innovation” – along with their geographic spread throughout the province, made them the perfect partner for this initiative. With the leadership of their campus principals, we formed nine regional cross-sectoral Local Leadership Teams (LLTs). The work of these groups was imperative to raising survey awareness, driving survey participation, mobilizing outreach and getting us ready to deliver an anticipated 80,000 survey invitations by mail to an average of one in five households across the province in late April.

It’s important to emphasize that we are not the sole holders of this Initiative, which will take years to develop into its full potential. We have worked consistently with an advisory group of community leaders during the development of this initiative and we are actively partnering with governments, educators, businesses, community organizations and inspired individuals who care deeply about the future of this province. The future will involve many more.

SHARE THANKSGIVING

Share Thanksgiving was once again an emotional highlight of Engage's year. The heartwarming testimonies and photos of smiling faces are a testament to why gathering and sharing a meal is such an important part of building community.

The weekend of October 8 marked our fifth annual Share Thanksgiving program, in which we ask Nova Scotians to open their doors to newcomers and share a meal. This year, in cooperation with EduNova, we targeted international students exclusively.

Share Thanksgiving 2018 saw 439 participants, representing 21 countries and 29 languages. Evaluations showed a very positive experience by those involved, with almost everyone rating the experience as a 5/5.





PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement and building trust continue to be at the core of what Engage aspires to encourage in our communities and across the province as a whole.

This year, we continued to support the growth of relationships between community organizations, business leaders and other public leaders by hosting hands-on public engagement clinics for mayors, councillors and staff in the District of St. Mary's and in Truro for municipalities in the Northern Mainland.



ENGAGE ST MARY'S

On September 22, over 40 community members of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's came together to discuss and define their priorities as a community. The event was designed to review the Municipality's strategic plan and build engagement in municipal matters. The focuses of discussions were population growth, economic prosperity and communication between the municipality and its citizens.

We provided the municipality with a report that summarized citizen concerns captured during the conversation. Evaluations were strong and the municipality was appreciative of the leadership role we played. A favourable news report on the event was published on the front page of the Guysborough Journal.

TRURO ENGAGEMENT CLINIC

After consulting with seven municipalities across the northern mainland on their individual needs, Engage invited municipal leaders to the Best Western GlenGary in Truro on January 17 for a five-hour engagement clinic. The workshop was well attended, with over 30 mayors, wardens, councillors, CAOs and other senior staff from Colchester, Guysborough, New Glasgow, Truro, Stewiacke, Oxford and Port Hawkesbury.

The purpose of the clinic was to build capacity for public engagement by reinforcing basic principles (Engagement 101), provide opportunities to share knowledge and tools, and to begin forming a learning network of engagement champions. Key themes were: how and when to get people out; how to organize a good meeting; how to engage people beyond the usual ways; and how to follow up. Municipalities identified key issues they were facing and we workshopped collaborative and creative ideas to overcome those challenges.



CEPI YOUTH CONFERENCE

CEPI (Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative) is a longstanding collaboration amongst all three levels of government and the Mi'kmaq First Nations of Cape Breton. Its goal is the preservation and advancement of the Bras D'Or Lakes. This year, Engage was invited to provide "backbone" leadership for a CEPI youth conference.

The CEPI Youth Conference 2018 was a forum for Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq youth to discuss key issues around the pillars of Leadership, Sustainability and Entrepreneurship. It consisted of an informative two days of presentations from environmental champions on and around the Bras d'Or, and a time for debate and discussion about the future of the Unama'ki with the very individuals who will shape it.

The conference's focus on bringing a diverse group together around shared opportunities fit well with Engage's strategic framework, making it a worthwhile project for us to take on. The event was a success and the Mi'kmaq leadership in Cape Breton was particularly appreciative of the assistance we were able to provide.



ONE CAPE BRETON-UNAMA'KI SUMMIT

In collaboration with Membertou First Nation and the Cape Breton Partnership, we coordinated the second One Cape Breton-Unama'ki Summit on April 4 and 5, 2019.

The purpose of the gathering was to build on the theme of a more unified Island generated in the first summit in Port Hawkesbury in November 2017. Invitees included mayors, wardens, chiefs and councillors from local communities, as well as leaders from business and academic institutions.

Using Audience Response Technology, Engage led the group in checking back on the priorities identified in last year's session. Finding them largely unchanged, the remainder of the session focused on a series of round-table conversations in which participants discussed the future of the Island and strategized new ways for municipalities and Mi'kmaq communities to begin to work together more closely. A spirited conversation from a panel of successful young Cape Bretoners was a highlight of the gathering.

Working with the Cape Breton Partnership, Engage will help support the early stages of future meetings bringing municipalities and Mi'kmaq communities together along with non-governmental partners to make progress on shared objectives.

We continue to feel privileged to play a role in supporting the evolution of this remarkable and inspiring relationship.



LOOKING AHEAD

While each year of Engage's existence has deepened in scope and scale from the last, it feels like this one in particular has rooted us to take an even larger leap forward in the future. Our work with the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative will continue to be our priority. As bold as our imaginings were about its potential, we may have underestimated what it will take and what it can deliver.

With that in mind, we will likely limit the amount of work we do in other areas.

Since the program started five years ago, Share Thanksgiving has played an important role in stirring the welcoming hearts of Nova Scotians and telling newcomers how much we value them as neighbours. That work will continue, but in the hands of others.

Soon we will have the good fortune to share in a treasure trove of data about the day-to-day lives of Nova Scotians from one tip of the province to the other – more and richer information than we have ever had before. What we do with that information represents a huge opportunity – one that could quite literally change our future. We think that deserves not only our full attention, but a significant portion of the attention of the many partners standing ready to work with us.

We have a road map for the coming year, but more importantly we have a compass: a more vibrant, inclusive and resilient province – one where more people are stepping up with greater ability to improve our shared quality of life.