

The Goose Bay Town Centre: Plan for Growth

Sterling Peyton

President, Labrador North Chamber of Commerce

In early April, the Goose Bay Capital Corporation (GBCC) held an information session regarding its proposed Goose Bay Town Centre. This Project is a multi-phased, multi-use development designed to first understand and later address the complex needs of the region. If supported by the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, it could prove to be the most comprehensive master planned development in Labrador's history.

Though the proposed Project is to be constructed over the next 15 years, the facilities to be located within the town centre were needed many years ago. In a community filled with residents who pride themselves on their passion, hopefulness and shared vision for a greater future for Goose Bay, the Project will surely respond to the substantial and diverse needs of Central Labrador.

And GBCC is eager to begin construction. Company representative Lyman Langille stated, "a number of positive announcements will be forthcoming soon." For some time, the company has encouraged residents and businesspeople to share their views on the Project and get involved in the process of shaping the development to respond to the demands that come with a fast-growing community.

For years, wealth and potential business opportunities have been leaving the community and continue to be invested elsewhere such as Labrador West, St. John's and other large city centres. This Project will bring substantial community investment, provide products and services that the community has long been asking for, as well as an overall plan for growth that is currently lacking.

The Goose Bay Town Centre will not only prove to respond to the needs of the region that is currently experiencing a 'boom' that can only be compared to areas such as Fort McMurray and now Labrador West, the centre will connect all areas of the community similar to other industrial parks throughout Atlantic Canada.

For years, organizations such as the Labrador Friendship Centre have been struggling with issues such as affordable (or any) available housing and has looked for solutions elsewhere. The Town has virtually no available office space for businesses looking to expand into the Labrador market. And each summer, the Expo Labrador committee has struggled with providing accommodations for its hundreds of participants and often turns to the College of the North Atlantic and 5 Wing Goose Bay to provide support.

As a long-time resident of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, I sympathize with the skepticism and doubt that surrounds such a development. Perhaps we have seen this type of proposal on our doorstep in the past, or perhaps the importance and significance of a town centre has not been clearly communicated. Yet given the enormous economic potential of Labrador that is currently being realized, the time is now for optimism and tangible steps toward a better future for our community.

I encourage businesses of all sizes to approach not only the GBCC, but to communicate its needs and strategic vision for the town to all developers who are looking to capitalize on the region's current economic activity and future potential. Happy Valley-Goose Bay continues to captivate many businesses and organizations from within the province and beyond, and residents must insist on becoming a part of the planning process.