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# FROM AFRICVILLE TO NEW ROAD

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How four communities planned their development

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Althea J. Tolliver  
James A. Francois

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*Typesetting and printing;*

McCurdy Printing & Typesetting Limited, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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The authors, the Watershed Joint Action Committee and the Black United Front wish to express their appreciation for the financial support of the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs which supplied funds for the preparation of the manuscript. They also wish to thank the Federal Secretary of State's office for a grant to aid in the publication of the work.

Copies of this publication may be obtained from the Watershed Joint Action Committee, Box 2832, Dartmouth East, Nova Scotia, B2W 4R4 or from the Black United Front of Nova Scotia, Queen Square, 45 Alderney Dr., Dartmouth, B2Y 2N6. Please send \$2 for postage and handling.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their organizations. The quotations in the text, unless identified, are taken from material gathered in the course of the planning study.

New Road was the original name given to the black community of North Preston.

Africville, a black community on the shores of Bedford Basin, near Halifax, was planned out of existence in the Sixties, and its residents relocated.

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## Preface

The Municipal Development Plan and Zoning By laws for the communities of North Preston, Lake Major, Cherry Brook/Lake Loon and East Preston were adopted by Halifax County Council on May 25, 1981. The subsequent approval of these documents by the Minister of Municipal Affairs of the province on July 22, 1981, was a significant milestone in the development of these communities and for "people participation in development." The Municipal Development Plan was the rewarding result of a long and involved process which began on November 3, 1977 when the Ross Commission began its enquiry into the conflicts which had arisen between the growth and development of the communities within the watershed and the efforts of the City of Dartmouth to protect its water supply. The approach to development planning demonstrated an extremely high degree of co-operation, sensitivity and good will among the principal actors; The Joint Action Committee, representing the communities, the Black United Front of Nova Scotia, concerned with social change through self determination, the consultant H.J. Porter and Associates, Montreal Engineering, and the senior officials of the City of Dartmouth, the County of Halifax, the province of Nova Scotia and the Federal Government who comprised the Working Committee. The plan was developed through a process of dialogue, consultation, and co-ordination involving the Joint Action Committee, the consultants, and the Working Committee. A major factor in the success of the plan was the participation by many of the community residents in the process. However, the plan is only the first phase of the overall development of the communities.

The Municipal Plan embodies two concepts. One is the regulatory process and the other is concerned with development and growth. The zoning by laws has been put into place to regulate development, and the communities are now turning their attention to areas of growth.

This publication is in three parts. The first deals with some of the events and activities which went into developing the plan, and which created a sense of pride and achievement in community residents and in others who participated in the planning process. The second section attempts to analyse the process and to suggest why it was successful. The conclusion contains quotations from individuals who participated in the process. It is hoped that this material will be useful to teachers, planners, practitioners, politicians, students, community groups and others concerned with community development, social development, adult education and community planning.

This plan was the first of its kind in Nova Scotia. It clearly demonstrates that ordinary citizens, given the opportunity, can and will work with government and other agencies as equals in the planning process. This approach will provide an example for developmental strategists in the future as more people and planners become convinced of the need to use it as a way of handling the tensions of change.

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The geographical location may change, the goals differ, the schedule prove to be longer or shorter, but the concept is the first step towards meaningful planning and development in communities as they adapt to change. We wish to thank the members of the Lake Major Joint Action Committee and the residents of the communities for allowing us to share their story.

J.F.  
A.T.

February, 1983.



**Arnold Johnston**  
Chairman, Joint Action Committee

The Lake Major Watershed dispute began unexpectedly.

Several residents came to see me because I was former municipal councillor. They asked me why they had to go to the City of Dartmouth to get a building permit, only to be turned away.

I approached the building inspector, on their behalf, and was told that no building permits could be issued on the watershed lands because of a by law that was twenty years old.

I called a meeting of the residents of North Preston, and out of this came the Joint Action Committee.

After several meetings with the City of Dartmouth and provincial officials we met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Minister told us that Dartmouth would continue to get its water from Lake Major, and the residents would continue to live and build in the communities. Things would be worked out so the situation could be to the benefit of both the City of Dartmouth and the residents of the community concerned.

A report was made by Mr. Tony Ross, and from this came the studies done by H.J. Porter and Associates and Montreal Engineering. Many proposals came from these studies, including our Communities' Municipal Development Plan.

I am pleased with the results of the many years of interesting but hard work.

Some of our plans are now being carried out, including the connector road between North and East Preston, the Community Development Corporation, and the land assembly.

I'd like to express my appreciation to everyone who helped up to accomplish what seemed to be an endless struggle.

**Arnold Johnston.**  
Community Leader. North Preston.

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## Introduction

*“A regional development plan may require, or the Minister may any time by order require, a municipality to prepare a municipal development plan for all or part of that municipality.”*

Part III, The Planning Act, Chapter 16, Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1969, as amended.

On March 28, 1978, ten men met in the second floor meeting room of Dartmouth City Hall. They represented the County of Halifax, the City of Dartmouth, the provincial departments of Municipal Affairs, Health and the Environment, the Black United Front and the communities of North Preston and Lake Major.

Thus came into being the Lake Major Watershed Working Committee.

Its main objective was to resolve a land use conflict around the lake which serves as the source of water for the City of Dartmouth. The people of North Preston, a black community, had settled on this land over 200 years ago. Lake Major, a mainly white community, had grown up recently near the lake from which it took its name. Both communities saw their survival and future growth threatened when the City of Dartmouth asked Halifax County to implement regulations to protect the quality of water from Lake Major.

This publication tells the story of how this conflict in land use was resolved by local residents, government officials, consultants, and other concerned people working together to develop a community plan.

The plan was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in July, 1981. It resolved the conflict by ensuring that the communities on and near the Dartmouth watershed would remain in existence, and be allowed to grow and to develop. Zoning regulations and the proposed designation of the watershed under the Provincial Water Act would protect the quality of the water in Lake Major.

The planning approach avoided both confrontation and hoopla, but it was not free of tensions and stress. In writing this account, we have stressed the processes that were used to handle the tensions of change and to give local people more control over their own destinies.

## The Communities

In all, four communities were involved in the planning process — North Preston, Lake Major, East Preston, and Cherry Brook-Lake Loon. As a Halifax County Councillor put it — *“It’s not a set of communities — it’s a culture.”*

The land in the area was originally parcelled out between Theophilus Chamberlain, Deputy Surveyor of the Crown, and 163 Anglo-Saxon Loyalists who moved to Nova Scotia after the American War of Independence; the original land grant is dated October 15, 1784. Most of the land grants were not claimed, and the properties reverted to the Crown in 1814 and 1815. Before this happened, free blacks from St. Augustine had received land grants in 1785, and other black settlers from Sierra

Leone were also given land in the watershed area. Few stayed, and the next wave of blacks who arrived in Nova Scotia — the Maroons from Jamaica — left both the area and the province, moving on to Sierra Leone in August, 1800.

Some blacks stayed and made a home in this wild land.

The lakes contained fish; wood was available for the cutting; berries grew in profusion; gardens could be made on patches of good soil that dotted the area; houses could be built with local materials.

No-one knows how one original black community became three, but the lifestyle in all these communities has much in common.

From the middle of the last century, the Black Baptist Church has been the anchor of the people in the Prestons and Cherry Brook — Lake Loon. It has provided continuity and a focus for life in the area, helping blacks to better themselves, materially and spiritually.

The research carried out during the community development process showed the social, economic and human dimensions of the communities. The map shows the location of the communities in relationship to Dartmouth and the Metro Halifax area. Although the four communities are quite close to a large urban area, they are mainly rural in character.

The population of the study area totalled about 2,600. About 1,150 lived in North Preston, and 850 in East Preston. Cherry Brook — Lake Loon had just over 400 inhabitants, and Lake Major just under 200. Lake Major has grown up over the past twenty years, starting as a collection of summer cottages. Its white residents are mainly young people holding good jobs, living in large houses on lakeside lots. Average household size is 2.9 persons, and the population is stable, with no outmigration.

In contrast, the largest black community, North Preston has households holding 6.25 people on average. Here, an aging population faces a declining birthrate and the outmigration of young adults. Homes are less crowded in East Preston; they have an average of 4.2 people in them. But the young adults have been leaving the community in recent years. Cherry Brook — Lake Loon has 3.35 people per household, and a sharply declining and aging population.

In the black communities, the average education is around Grades 7 to 8, and there is high unemployment. Most of those employed hold low-paid jobs, and have low skill levels. Some residents have established small hog farms; others operate small businesses.

Most of the residents own their homes, and have improved them over the years. In all there are 570 houses in the watershed area, and most stand on large lots. Few houses in the area have central sewer and water services, relying instead on dug or drilled wells and septic tanks; some houses have no indoor plumbing.

Traditionally, those who lived in the black communities had difficulty



securing mortgages. And in a number of places there were long standing disputes over land titles and the ownership of lots. The residents felt that the government had neglected them. No public transport serves the area, recreational facilities are limited, police and fire protection levels low, dental care lacking, and social services few.

Whatever problems the people in the watershed area faced, this land was home to them. When things went wrong, they retreated to the backlands, as they had done for centuries, to ponder their past and their future.

Respondents to a questionnaire stated:

*"I enjoy the clean air, no pollution, quietness, safe to walk around at night. Good family environment." Land — ". . . something I can call my own." "No one can take my property away from me."*

## The Legacy of Africville

In 1956, a writer from a national magazine visited New Road Settlement, as she called North Preston, and described it in a very negative way. The article annoyed the residents. They saw themselves portrayed in unflattering terms, and the piece contained misinformation, rumours, and distortions of fact. The lifestyle of the people of North Preston in 1956 was very similar to that in many isolated rural communities of Nova Scotia.

A short history of North Preston summarizes the problems and aspirations of the people there:

*"As in early times, the community of North Preston is still having problems on every side. Life for black people has been and is a continual struggle due to poor standards of education, high levels of unemployment, and lack of opportunity. Despite all its trials and troubles the residents of the community are hoping for more brighter and prosperous days ahead."*

Also, in 1956, a consultant's study identified Lake Major as an important source of water for Metropolitan Dartmouth and new subdivisions.

The study recommended restricting building permits as one way of protecting this important water supply source. Over the years the residents of the communities also became aware that Dartmouth was buying up land in the watershed. The County of Halifax passed a bylaw prohibiting building on the watershed lands. But this law was never enforced until 1977, when a resident of East Preston applied for a building permit to expand his home. He was refused a permit.

This was the trigger that started a mass protest.

The community residents remembered what happened at Africville, a black settlement on the shores of Bedford Basin, near Halifax. In the 1960s, it had been planned out of existence, and its residents relocated.

*"That Africville, although now non-existent, has become something of a rallying symbol for blacks is illustrated by the remarks of one black leader heavily involved in community organizing among Nova Scotia*

blacks. When he enters a new community to organize the residents there, he discusses the plight of Africville relocatees who lost their community and their land and got little in return. He urges the residents, "Let's pull together, or else we'll be another Africville." . . . "Nowadays with developing industrialization in certain areas of the province — especially in Halifax County — many blacks are apprehensive lest their lands be expropriated. One black leader from Preston pointed out the lesson of Africville:

*Some of them (people in the community) realize that if they don't pull up their breeches and look to their needs and get their businesses in order the same thing could happen here that has happened in Africville."*

**Africville. The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community.** Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis Magill, Toronto, 1974, p. 247, 249.

The memory of what had happened to the people of Africville, the suspicions of the activities of the City of Dartmouth as it sought to protect its water supply, and the fear of losing what they had created the conditions for mass opposition to the attempt to enforce the building bylaw on the watershed.

On October 27, 1977, the building bylaw was repealed, subject to approval by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This was given on December 31, 1977, after the Minister had appointed a lawyer, Anthony Ross, to undertake a study of the watershed area.

## The Ross Report

Section 21 of the Building Bylaw 23 of the County of Halifax reads:

*"No permit shall be issued for any new building where the proposed building lies in the Watershed areas of Lake Major, Topsail Lake, or Lamont Lake, Birch Cove Lakes, First and Second Chain Lake, Spruce Hill Lake, Narrow Lake, Big Indian Lake System, including Otter, Blueberry and Ragged Lakes, Five Bridges Lake System and Tomahawk Lake with the exception of a **temporary building** within the watershed areas until such time as the watershed areas are being used as a **public water supply**, at which time the structure shall be removed at the owner's expense."*

The reason for the Ross Enquiry was to examine the consequences of the repeal of this bylaw for local residents and the Dartmouth Water Supply. The terms of reference of his inquiry included the following tasks:

1. To investigate the needs and problems of community developments in the Water Shed areas of the Water Supply system serving the City of Dartmouth and adjacent areas of the Municipality of the County of Halifax, as they affect the residents of the area and as they affect the water supply system.
2. To seek out and obtain, as informally as possible, the views of the residents of the area, the municipal units concerned, and any others affected.
3. To review and analyze any relevant studies or reports.
4. To review the provisions of any relevant legislation.

5. To report on the degree to which problems of land use conflicts exist or might exist.
6. To recommend solutions to any problems or difficulties that exist or may develop.

The enquiry began on November 3, 1977, with informal meetings, and then with more formal ones with residents and the Joint Action Committee and its legal counsel. The City of Dartmouth prepared a policy paper which indicated its concern about "what density of development would be tolerated without sacrificing water quality . . ."

Although the area formed part of the County of Halifax, municipal officials stated that they saw the issue as one between the City of Dartmouth and watershed residents. The communities, through their solicitor, stated that they were in no way disposed to permit the slightest erosion or diminution of their property rights. The Ross Report concluded:

*"For all intents and purposes, the attitude developed by the conflicting parties over the inquiry period answered many questions of concern on the part of the residents, and put the City of Dartmouth on record as, not only recognizing the full rights of the communities to exist, develop and continue to develop, but also pledging co-operation with and support for the residents in their efforts to have the area serviced at absolutely minimal or no cost to the residents between now and the estimated date at which services would have normally been provided to the area by the Municipality of the County of Halifax."*

The report contained the following recommendations;

- (a) That the catchment area be properly surveyed and marked for "identification" purposes.
- (b) That land ownership within the established communities and in the water supply area be surveyed and staked for identification.
- (c) That the Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to authority under the Planning Act, designate the water supply area a "*Special Development Control Area*."
- (d) That the residents of the established communities, at the expense of the City of Dartmouth, retain a planning consultant to work with the appropriately authorized representatives of the City of Dartmouth, the County of Halifax and the Department of Municipal Affairs in the development of a Development Plan for the area with particular emphasis on the installation of full water and sewer service in the established communities at no cost to the residents.
- (e) That every avenue of funding be investigated to finance full service in the established communities at no cost to the residents.
- (f) That any lands affected by buffer zoning be acquired by the City of Dartmouth at current land values plus additional compensation based on development value.

- (g) That until such time as recommendations (a) through (f) are realized, that there be a general relaxing of the building permit and regional development permit requirements to allow development in the communities.
- (h) That the community of Lake Major, being downstream from the intake to the Dartmouth water supply system, be allowed full and unrestricted development.

The report also recommended that the Policy Paper prepared by the City of Dartmouth be adopted and included as part of the inquiry.

The Ross Report recognized that a conflict existed between the desires of the residents of the watershed and the City of Dartmouth. But Mr. Ross concluded that a measure of goodwill existed between all parties interested in resolving the conflict. Some urgency was needed if the situation was to be resolved in a manner satisfactory to both parties.

Mr. Ross presented his Report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on January 6, 1978.

Just under three months later, the planning process for the watershed began.

## Planning with People

The traditional planning method involves a group of people with specific technical skills studying an area and its residents, bringing together all the available information, and then drawing maps and making recommendations to create the conditions for a better life there. Sometimes the planners work for the local government; at other times, consultants are used to prepare the plan.

All those concerned about the future of the watershed area appreciated that a new approach was needed. There was a realization, from the beginning, that the planning process had to involve the residents in discussions about their future. It could not follow the traditional methods.

Funding for the planning process came from the Provincial Department of Municipal Affairs, the County of Halifax, and the City of Dartmouth, with the first agency paying half, and the other two splitting the rest. Two studies were funded — one on the water resources and their condition, the other on the future of the communities on the watershed. Submissions were requested from planning and engineering consultants.

The water resources study, carried out by Montreal Engineering Company, concluded that the communities on the watershed were not polluting Lake Major.

H. J. Porter and Associates, a Halifax consulting firm, was hired in August, 1978, to develop the community plan. The Lake Major Watershed Working Committee selected both consultants. Total cost of the

planning process came to a little over half a million dollars.

The structure that came into existence to handle the planning process consisted of two committees. The Working Committee brought together government officials and local representatives who met on a monthly basis and received information from the consultants, and progress reports. It developed a technical subcommittee to handle specific problems of this nature. At the local level, the Joint Action Committee represented the communities and acted as a sounding board for their concerns.

H. J. Porter and Associates hired three community workers selected by the local communities. They served as part of the consultant team, acting as bridges between the people in the community and the outside organizations, forces and individuals affecting their lives. They worked to involve community residents in the planning process as partners — and also to strengthen the sense of community in North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook — Lake Loon, and Lake Major. The three workers all had some kind of affiliation with the Black Baptist Church. They knew the communities — and the residents knew them; each worker set up an office in his or her community and made themselves available to anyone concerned with the planning process.

Much of the success of the planning process can be attributed to the sensitivity of the workers to the local situation. Their job was both rewarding and taxing. They attended meetings of the Joint Action Committee and of the Working Committee, interpreting information from the communities, providing input at every opportunity, determining how different groups and individuals viewed the problems in the watershed area. Much of their work took place after five in the evenings, and on weekends.

The community workers had to handle a number of tensions. The community residents had their view of the situation — and a number of demands. The government agencies involved in the area had their perspectives. Local people were concerned with immediate solutions to pressing problems; governments had to take the long term view. Government officials saw the need to protect the water supply of Dartmouth, and the integrity of the environment on and around the watershed. Local residents gave priority to making their communities attractive places, and maintaining their identity and integrity. During the planning process, the communities' priorities emerged out of the collective concerns of the residents.

The communities saw the problem as that of government agencies — specifically the City of Dartmouth. They did not see the problems about the development of the watershed as theirs. For two hundred years the communities had survived with little interference — or help — from outsiders. All of a sudden they had been told that they could no longer develop as they liked.

At the time that the planning process began, the County of Halifax was just completing its plan. The County, a large body of diversified terrain

lying mainly to the east of Halifax, had encountered problems in generating public participation in the planning process.

The communities on the watershed asked that they be excluded from the County's planning process. The Working Committee also agreed that two other black communities, East Preston and Cherry Brook — Lake Loon, should be included in the planning process. Their existence was not threatened by Dartmouth's plans to protect its water supply. But the residents there expressed concern about being overwhelmed by the urbanization process around Dartmouth.

When the boundaries for the area to be planned were set, they enclosed the "territory" of the blacks. Some minor adjustments were made later, but the area as originally defined was one that local people recognized and accepted. The boundaries were not drawn in an arbitrary manner.

## The Planning Process

The planning process was neither dramatic, nor spectacular. It involved a great deal of hard work at the local level, and in committees. The Executive Director of the Black United Front sat on the Working Committee, and also chaired many of the meetings of the Joint Action Committee (JAC). The community workers collected, ordered and distributed information at the local level and to government officials and outside agencies. The Working Committee operated in a highly structured manner; the meetings of the Joint Action Committee tended to be more informal. The committee meetings took place after working hours, after people had finished their jobs. Over the winter of 1978-79, people got to know each other. And the community workers kept everyone sensitive to the views of local residents. The consultant and his staff gathered information from a variety of sources.

## The Identification of Needs

The planning process worked from two directions.

As the two committees met on a regular basis, each began to understand the perspectives from the government end — and from the local level. The community workers encountered a lingering distrust in certain parts of their communities where people rebuffed them when they came seeking information. The government representatives had to avoid the temptation to hurry the planning process until a sense of mutual trust had been established.

A questionnaire was drawn up with the co-operation of the JAC; the community workers went from door to door with it, gathering basic information and the views of residents.

The responses of the local people began to form a pattern. Most striking was a sense of loss — and a fear of the future. Young people were leaving the black communities, lured by the bright lights of Dartmouth and Halifax, or going down the road to Upper Canada. This is an age-old phenomenon, but in the closely-knit, family-centred world of the black communities the feeling of loss was strongly felt. The people wanted to be able to develop their communities so that young people could stay

and make a decent living. And some of those who left might return in the future.

The residents also feared that they might lose their land. Confusion over land titles was one of the first problems encountered by the planners. Land in the communities was never laid out in neat parcels as is done in new subdivisions; the size of the lots varied greatly. The community workers helped residents to secure title to their land; the provincial Land Titles Clarification Act, passed in 1972, helped this process. The City of Dartmouth owned land in the watershed, and the future of the backlands as a community resources had to be determined.

But, from the beginning, there was a commitment by government and the consultants to work at the point of need of local residents. No attempt was made to plan for people. Their lifestyle and viewpoint were respected, not ignored.

It was a hard winter in more ways than one.

Everyone involved in the process realized that they were engaged in something new, that they were pioneering an approach about which they knew very little, but which would have an impact on their own lives and futures — and those of the residents of the watershed and the adjoining communities.

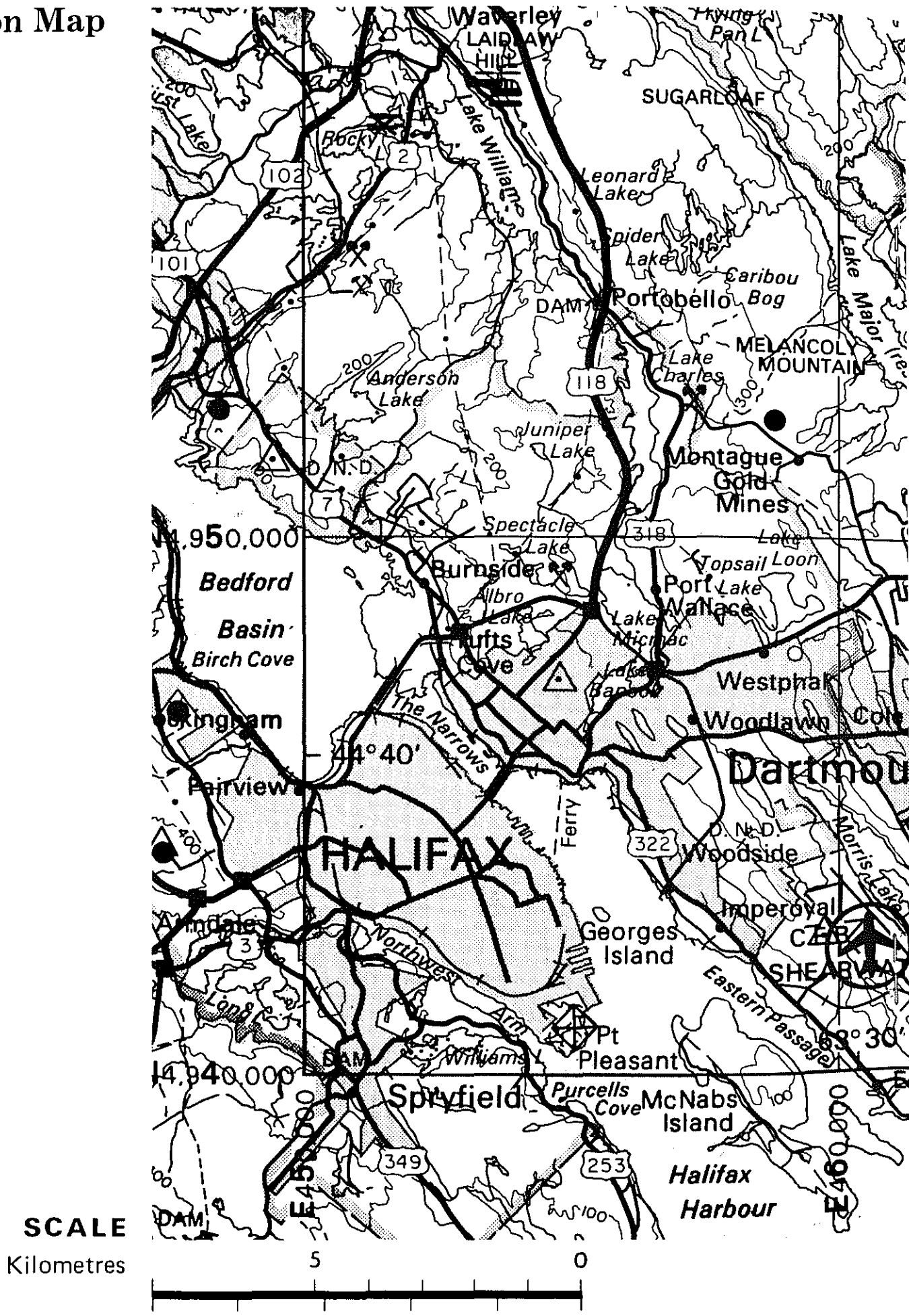
Suggestions of the Joint Action Committee were welcomed by the Working Committee as they started to understand the lives of the residents. The Joint Action Committee held more effective meetings as the goals of the planning process became clearer; at one time, all community concerns found their way on to the agenda. On the front lines, the community workers knocked on doors, met with ratepayers' associations, and talked to a wide range of people. The fears and the concerns of the residents surfaced as the workers became more visible and more credible, and as the implications and style of the planning process were grasped by more people.

A newsletter was issued, but a public meeting of all community members was not held until March 1, 1979.

Tensions ran high at this meeting in Graham Creighton Junior High School. Residents did not hesitate to express their anger and confusion over the planning process. Press coverage pointed out the conflict between the goals of the residents and those of the City of Dartmouth. People in the communities suddenly became aware that their whole way of life was threatened, but that the planning process could give them some control over their destinies.

Looking back, it becomes obvious that the March 1 meeting was the turning point in the planning process. The approach taken had been based on an honest attempt to respect and protect the identity and the integrity of the black communities.

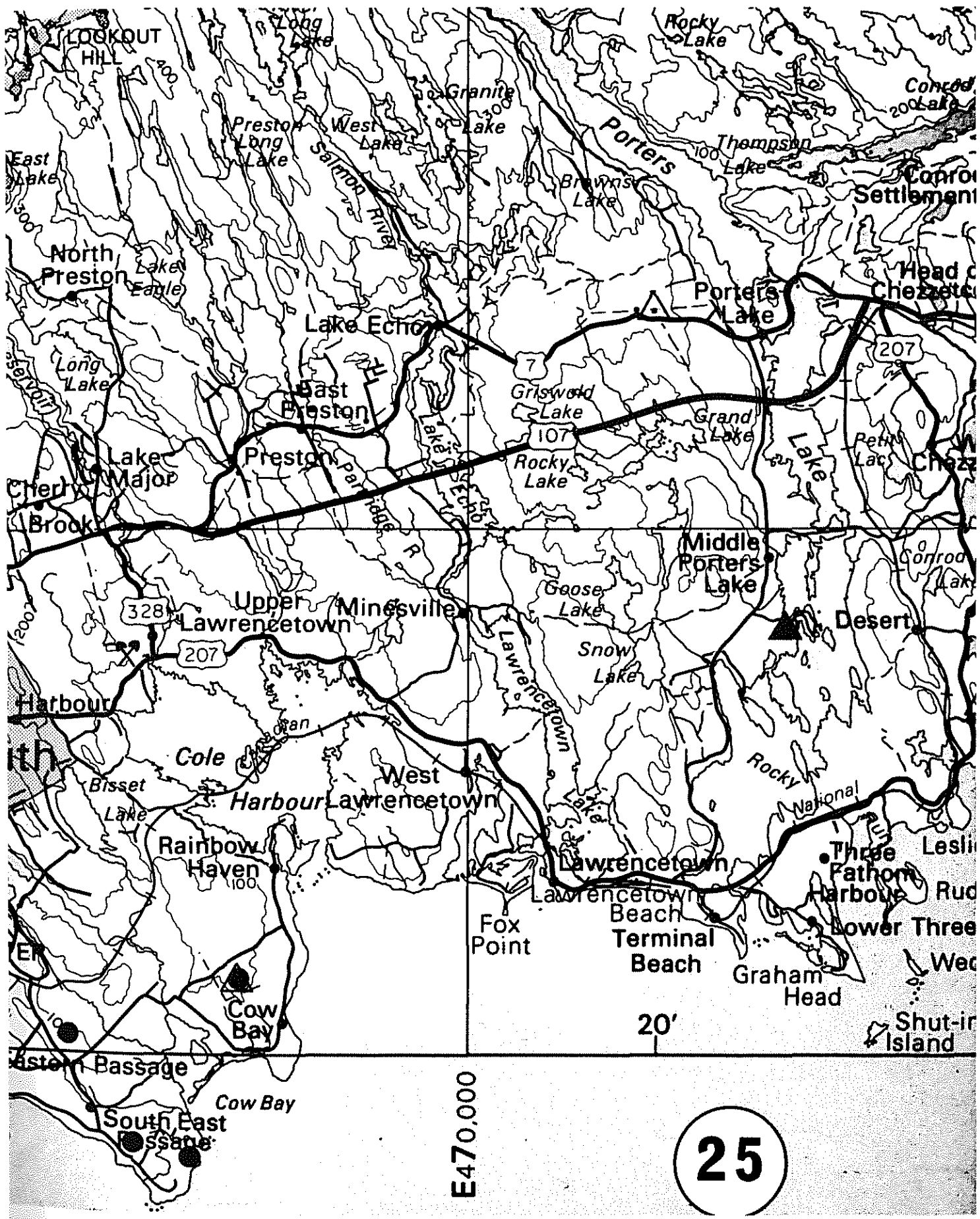
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Instead of reacting against what might have been seen as government interference in their lives, the community residents acted to meet the challenges posed by the planning process.

Suspensions remained, and so did tensions between the various actors. But they were kept within limits, and did not hinder the planning process. Excerpts from the Minutes of the Joint Action Committee clearly reveal this:

*“ . . . a valid concern of the community workers was that too many government programs were all of a sudden being funnelled into the area.”*

*“ . . . (he) said his people have an inner desire to carry on, no matter how hard the times, and how little education they possess . . . ”*

*“He expressed concern that information in preliminary plan may get into the wrong hands and be used against the communities . . . all issues are rolling together and confusing people . . . it was felt that the government was taking too much initiative away from the community.”*

But community members learned to work as partners with government as the planning process proceeded. In 1979, an outbreak of trichinosis was traced to meat from local piggeries. A committee of local residents and representatives of outside agencies worked together to eliminate the problem.

## The Plan Proceeds

The community leadership began to realize the perils of allowing government agencies, with the best of intentions, to take over and run their communities. If they'd felt neglected by government in the past, they now faced the possibility of being overwhelmed by it. The planners and government officials began to realize that no plan could solve all the problems of the communities. A sense of mutuality developed as the groups recognized the possibility of co-operation in the search for solutions to problems. All began to appreciate that the process through which they were working might be just as valuable as the maps and guidelines that would emerge.

In May, 1979, the consultants issued a report on the socio-economic aspects of the communities of Lake Major, North Preston, Cherry Brook — Lake Loon, and East Preston. It stated baldly:

*“The adoption of this plan is intended to show that these communities are no different from others, regardless of race.”*

With this report, residents were able to get a better grasp of their situation and their common problems. They began to understand that their individual problems formed a pattern, and that solutions could only be developed on a community basis.

The research had shown that the communities had improved greatly over the past ten years, through their own efforts. But they lacked experience in working with outside agencies as partners in projects. And old rivalries and jealousies prevented effective community action on issues that concerned all residents.

The next step involved using the draft report to start discussion in the communities. Larger issues affecting the communities emerged. The impact of changes in the area on the Cole Harbour Salt Marsh; the possibility of Highway 107 cutting through the area; the growth of subdivisions on the Eastern Shore — these were some of the factors that would influence life in the black communities.

**During 1979, every effort was made to strike a balance between dialogue and decision making. The plan was not presented as an answer to everyone's problems, but rather as a framework that would help those inside and outside the watershed area to make better decisions to guide development in the future.**

No attempt was ever made to "sell" the plan.

Certain conditions, like the soil, were fixed and unchangeable. Others might be changed, depending on the needs of people as they expressed them. The main aim of the plan was to respect the lives and wishes of the residents of the communities. At the same time, it was impossible to meet the needs of every single individual. People had to be organized to work with outside agencies to solve problems that affected all.

By December, 1979, based on feedback from residents, a draft plan for the area had been developed. One of the community workers resigned to join the Dartmouth Police Force, but agreed to do what he could to further the planning process. This was but one indication of the level of commitment of those involved in the planning process.

In February, 1980, a public meeting was held. This time, the response was positive and the feedback encouraging. This was mainly because the government officials and planners had become sensitized to the communities' needs and the way of thinking of the residents. The attitudes of the people had also changed as they came to understand how government agencies and civil servants operated. Trust had grown on both sides.

In February also the Montreal Engineering Report was ready, showing that the practices of community residents were not threatening the quality of Dartmouth's water supply.

The Working Committee began to phase itself out as arrangements were made to set up a structure for managing the watershed. The communities recognized that they needed an organization to maintain continuity and co-ordination of activities in the watershed, and to encourage community economic development. In August, 1980, the Watershed Joint Action Committee was incorporated, the plans put on foot to bring into being a Community Development Corporation.

The final plan consisted of two parts. One section showed the possibilities and limitations for land use in the communities. The other section consisted of a set of regulations aimed at helping the growth and development of the communities, while protecting the Dartmouth water supply.

## The Plan Becomes Law

By May, 1981, agreement had been reached by those inside and outside the watershed on the goals and details of the plan. It had been presented by community representatives to key people and groups — the Halifax County Council, Dartmouth City Council, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and others in the Cabinet.

The essence of the plan was contained in the following statements in it:

*“Overall goal of the Plan is to make the area a more attractive and desirable place to live.”*

*“. . . the traditional planning approach must be adopted and applied in a more comprehensive context than that of pure regulatory mechanisms.”*

*“The community development process must go beyond physical planning and deal with people themselves.”*

The communities' priorities were identified and made clear. The future land use map suggested how existing and new operations could be integrated. Land was identified for mixed uses, for residential purposes, for highway commercial, institutional open space use, conservation and resource development. The Plan recognized that business was done from the home or nearby building and was “an accepted and often necessary part of rural life.” Those areas best suited for agricultural use were mapped, and suggestions made for rodent control and garbage cleanup in other areas. A range of housing types was suggested to meet the differing needs of residents. No buildings were to be erected within 250 feet of Lake Major and Long Lake.

A variety of clean-up measures was recommended — to be carried out with local residents.

Recognition was given to the excellent job being done by the public health nurse, but it was recommended that health services should be delivered on a co-ordinated basis, with the local people treated as partners and given the chance to accept and understand the health programs.

The delivery of social services should also be done on a co-ordinated basis. Education, job training and social programs should be more closely integrated. Education, too, came under scrutiny, with emphasis being placed on enriching the academic content, upgrading trades training, and providing courses on black history.

A Priority and Needs Chart was drawn up for each of the four communities, indicating the major areas of need, and giving a possible time table for meeting them. The needs ranged from community school upgrading at \$50,000 to the installation of central sewer and services costing \$3 million.

The understanding was that the communities would grow away from the watershed lakes. The governments agreed to acquire 750 acres of land and to deed them to the Joint Action Committee to ensure that the communities had land to expand.

The planning process enabled community leaders to understand how governments worked, and one of the goals of the plan was to encourage

local leadership and control in the future. Hand in hand with this should go improved co-ordination of programmes and services in the area.

The planning process took longer — and cost more — than was originally anticipated. Tempers flared, meetings broke up in disorder, agency representatives became protective of their interests — in short, everyone involved acted like human beings. At the end of the planning process, some problems remained, such as the funding of servicing for the communities and the route of Highway 107.

At the beginning of the process, a community leader said;

*"The people in these communities are survivors . . . they have the strength in themselves to survive in the future."*

The planning process helped to move residents and their leaders beyond the simple concept of survival. They learned that they could meet and work with government officials and planners as equals. They also learned how to deal with forces and organizations outside their communities that could affect their lifestyle. They established better relationships with each other — and with outsiders, learning their own limits, and coming to understand what others had to offer them in pursuit of common goals.

In July, 1981, the Plan was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and signed into law.

Planning throughout the world has run into problems at the human level. People feel threatened when others enter a community and talk of planning their destinies. The identity of individuals is bound up with their homes and their communities, and if they feel that they are losing control over their lives they can become hostile. Public participation efforts often simply generate confrontation, and implacable opposition to any planned changes. Or planning can often split a community into those who believe they will benefit from it — and others who see only losses.

The Lake Major Plan was Halifax County's first area plan. The processes used to bring the plan into being have opened new possibilities for everyone concerned with effective planning in Nova Scotia — and throughout Canada.

A press report in the *Halifax Mail-Star* of July 24, 1981, summarized the results of the planning process:

*"Under the plan, people now feel they have some control over what goes on in their communities. The people have been looking forward for 200 years to controlling their own destiny." (Vice-President, Joint Action Committee).*

*"The Communities were on the fringe, never fully participating in the development around them. The plan is composed of the residents' own ideas and they were in control of the process. And it wasn't easy; the whole thing had to be hammered out through compromise." (Halifax County Warden).*

*"The communities worked their guts out." (County official)*

The black communities still have many problems, and still must live with many uncertainties about their future.

Over 1981-82, the residents, through the Watershed Joint Action Committee, began to explore the possibilities for economic development. With the help of the Black United Front, their representatives visited other parts of Nova Scotia where local people had set up community development corporations.

While they went to these places to learn, they also knew they had much to teach everyone about effective ways of planning with people.

## Why the Planning Process Worked so well

This publication has summarized the processes that contributed to the development of the Lake Major Plan. No words can really capture the essence of this experience, the complexity of the human interactions or the many factors involved. They have become part of the memory of all those who participated in the process.

But the factors that led to success can be isolated, in the hope that this experience will help others to plan in a more human manner.

From the beginning, it was recognized that this was a situation of conflict, where several groups had widely different goals for, and perceptions of, the same piece of land. In the past, the residents of the black communities had been left undisturbed by government. Suddenly, they were the focus of attention. The Africville experience had shown what could happen if blacks did not organize to resist changes that could damage their communities.

Instead of organizing to oppose the City of Dartmouth's plans for the watershed lands, the residents of the black communities recognized that the city had to protect its water supply. On the other hand, the City of Dartmouth recognized that it would be unwise to destroy the lives and homes of people who had managed to survive and to create a sense of community.

At the beginning of the process, people knew little about each other. There was plenty of expertise — but no experts. No one person dominated the planning process. Everyone was given a chance to participate and to contribute what they had to offer. Information flows were important from the beginning, and no attempts were made to control or to restrict them. Instead all information was checked and rechecked against the real world of the government officials and that of community residents.

Nor was the planning process ever viewed as being one that came “from the top down” or “from the bottom up”. Rather, the process worked through fusion, bringing things together, rather than tearing them apart. The media ignored the planning process, and when it provided coverage it was adequate and dealt with the real issues. Government officials and community residents realized they had a lot to learn about each other — and about worlds they inhabited. They came to see each other as human beings, and trust and respect developed.

Senior government people sat on the Working Committee, which was chaired by the Director of Municipal Planning for the province of Nova Scotia. Community leadership came from stable, respected, conservative members of society who had worked in local organizations, and were known to the people. They were not radicals, and they showed great staying power.

The structures developed to handle the task worked well. The Working Committee co-ordinated government plans and proposals for the watershed area, and made community residents aware of them. The Joint Action Committee kept its finger on the pulse of the communities, and fed information forward from them. The Executive Director of the Black United Front acted as a link between the two communities, as did the consultant and the community development workers. They directed and did most of the detailed work, and they bore many of the stresses that arose when the planning process began to gather speed.

The process began on March 28, 1978 and ended when the plan was signed into law on July 22, 1981. The public meeting of March 1, 1979, marked the break point of the planning process. At this meeting, matters came to a head — and the local people began to take control of the process. They began to see the plan as a tool that would help them to protect the identity and integrity of their communities, and assure their futures. Throughout the process, no attempts were made by government to push the plan. Great flexibility was shown in timing and in the budgeting arrangements. As the process moved forward, the confidence of the local leaders and of the residents grew. And the sensitivity of the government officials to the hopes, fears and aspirations of the community residents increased. Everyone showed a willingness to listen, to understand other viewpoints.

The process also respected the political situation. The politicians at all levels were kept informed, and given a chance to participate and to play a role.

In the files on the project is a short history of North Preston. It contains a sentence identifying a major factor in the success of the process.

*"Blacks were continually being put down by society, and picked up, educated and motivated by the church and the spirit within the church."*

The residents of the communities, and their leaders, realized that they were making a humble attempt to create a new Jerusalem. And that their efforts alone would not be enough for this task. The outsiders came to realize the deep roots that the people had in their communities, and the depth of their spirituality. Planners, too, believe that it is possible to create new worlds where the human spirit can flourish and develop in a way that appears increasingly difficult in our present society.

Through the planning process, despite tensions, stress, arguments, despair and weariness, the essential idealism and humanity of all triumphed. And that was due, in no small part, to "the spirit within the church."

The members of the black communities did not let the bitterness of the Africville experience sink into their souls. Instead they created a new road — an example of how people can work together for the betterment of all. And we hope that these, our words, will serve as a guide to others who wish to travel this new road.



## Appendix; Members of Committees

### The Joint Action Committee

#### *East Preston*

Matthew Thomas  
J. E. Brindley  
Althea Tolliver.

#### *North Preston*

Wayne Desmond  
Arnold Johnston  
Ernest Simmonds

#### *Cherry Brook — Lake Loon*

Merlin Johnson  
Brian Johnston  
George Beals

#### *Lake Major*

John McMenemy

#### *Black United Front*

Hamid Rasheed  
James Francois

#### *Preston Housing Fund*

Rev. J. D. Nelson MacDonald

#### *Consultant*

Hugh Porter

#### *County Councillors*

Wayne Adams  
Wes Topple

### Lake Major Watershed Working Committee

Maurice Lloyd	Department of Municipal Affairs
Paul Campbell	Department of Municipal Affairs
Ron Simpson	Department of Municipal Affairs
John Jones	Department of the Environment
Peter Casey	Department of Health
C. A. Moir	City of Dartmouth
Ken Meech	County of Halifax
Hamid Rasheed	Black United Front
Arnold Johnston	North Preston
Tom Rath	City of Dartmouth
Bill Campbell	County of Halifax
John McMenemy	Lake Major
Matthew Thomas	East Preston
George Beals	Cherry Brook
Jack Leedham	Department of Municipal Affairs
J. R. Smith	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
H. J. Porter	H. J. Porter and Associates Ltd (Consultant)
Gordon Tidmarsh	Montreal Engineering Co. Ltd. (Consultant)

#### *Observers*

Russell Fougere	City of Dartmouth
Conrad Sarty	City of Dartmouth
Jim Lotz	Writer
Dave Grantham	Atlantic Health Unit
Jim Vaughan	Department of the Environment

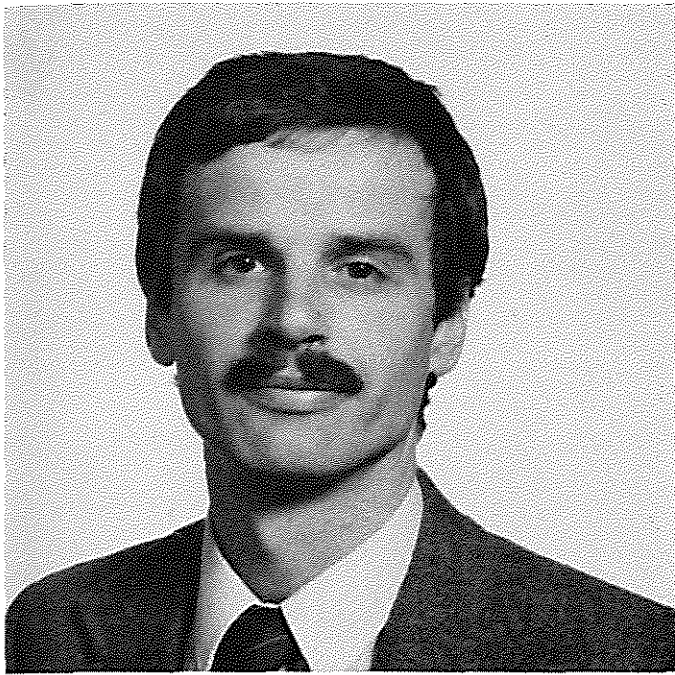
#### *Community Workers*

Brian Johnston  
Wayne Desmond  
Althea Tolliver

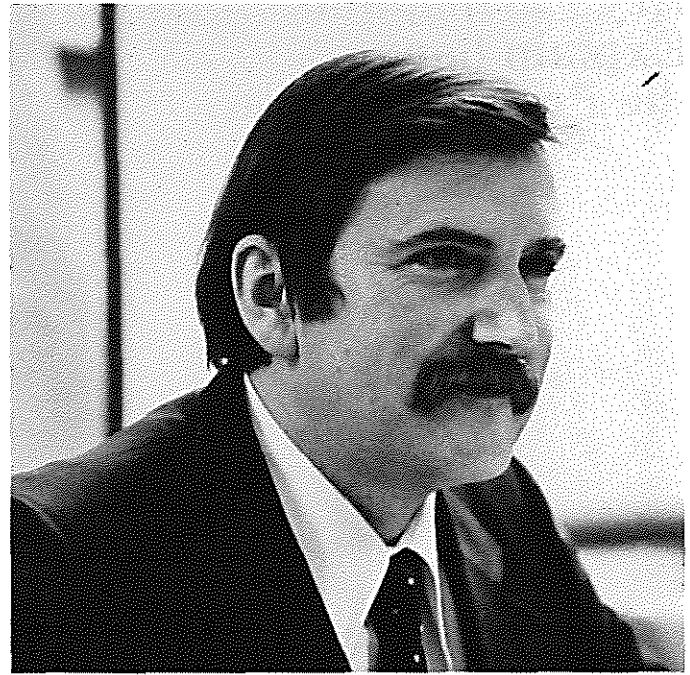
#### *Montreal Engineering Company Ltd.*

W. G. Tidmarsh	
A. H. Somani	
R. P. Canning	
R. Hutt	
N. H. Collins	
G. Maffini	(DPA Consulting)
C. Lowe	(DPA Consulting)
A. Martell	(DPA Consulting)
B. Preeper	(Legal Assistance)

# **Key Participants Explain how the Process Worked**



*Bill Campbell, Supervisor, Policy Division, Municipality of the County of Halifax.*



*Maurice Lloyd, Chairman, Lake Major Watershed Working Committee.*

The key reasons for the success of the Lake Major planning process were:

1. Recognition by community minded residents that a firm, united stand would be the only means of achieving interested, active support and commitment from governments.
2. The Watershed Working Committee, with joint membership from the community and the government, allowed the development of the bureaucrats' understanding of the communities and the communities' understanding of government.
3. Over the three year period there was little variation in Committee membership. Moreover, the fact that senior government officials were continually involved lent an unprecedented level of credibility and capability in getting things done.
4. Involvement of a consultant with a community consciousness, indefatigable ability to listen, and willingness to proceed and volunteer unpaid time.
5. Last but not least, I believe that Chairman of the Committee was largely responsible for the completion of the process in the time available. The honesty and fairness of the Chairman lent immense support to the communities' goals and objectives.

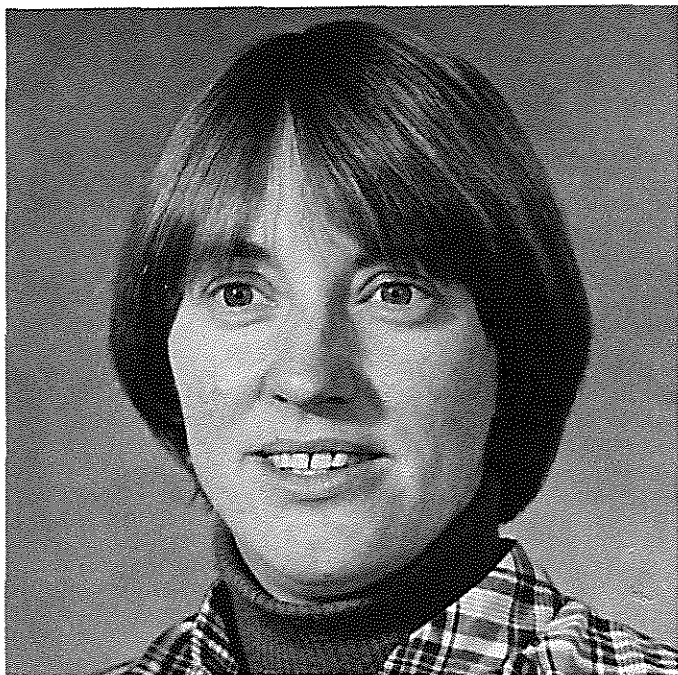
The Working Committee was successful for a number of reasons, which, together, provided an atmosphere for discussion, compromise, and resolution of the problems involved.

First among the reasons was strong and responsible community leadership from the various association representatives, the community workers, and the Black United Front.

Secondly, it was understood and agreed upon from the outset that we were initiating a community development process, and not simply resolving a land use conflict.

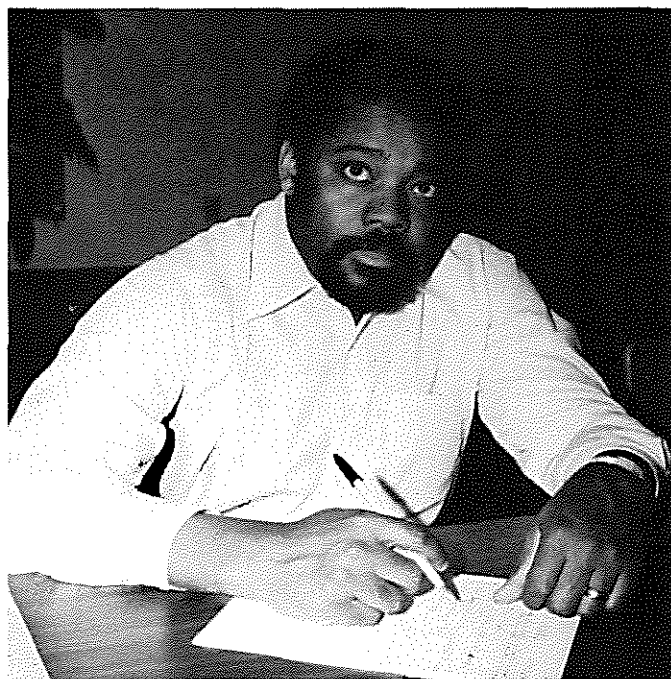
Thirdly, the committee was given the mandate and the financial backing necessary to complete the task from all levels of government. The various government representatives approached the committee in a very positive manner and were anxious to find solutions.

Finally, the process was given the time to develop and mature so that all parties could reach an understanding of the others' problems and limitations. We grew together.



*Lesley Griffiths, Planner, Department of Municipal Affairs.*

If I have to single out one reason why community development is working it is that the sense of community is very real and deep in Preston, and that the development of new economic and social opportunities is clearly seen to be a matter of survival. The watershed issue brought this all into focus for both residents and government agencies. Added to this is the hard work, commitment and staying power of the Joint Action Committee and community workers.



*Matthew Thomas, Treasurer, Joint Action Committee.*

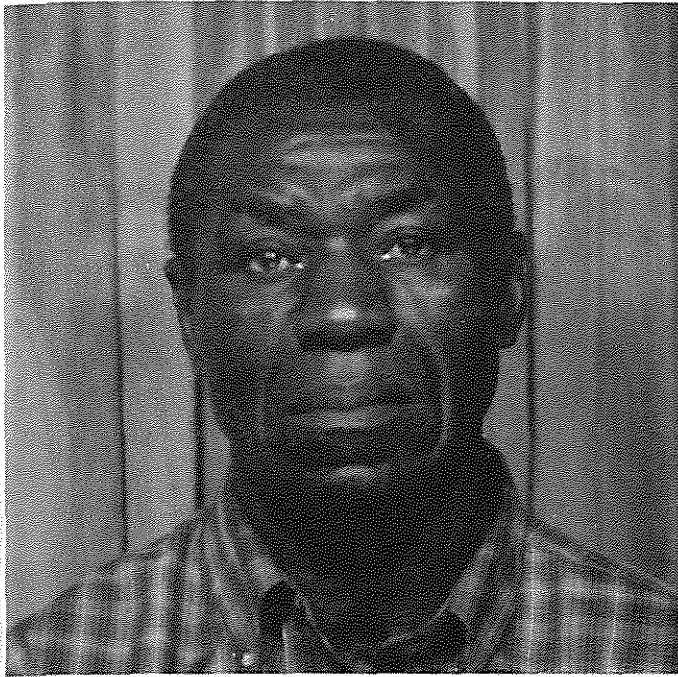
The Preston area community development plan was a fairly smooth process because the people of the communities realized that the land base of the Preston area was growing smaller and that the threat of urbanization was at hand.

The people realized that something had to be done with regard to input into the planning process and gaining control over their own destinies.

There was concern about the outmigration of young people, about inadequate services in the communities such as sewer and water, policing, education, and employment opportunities.

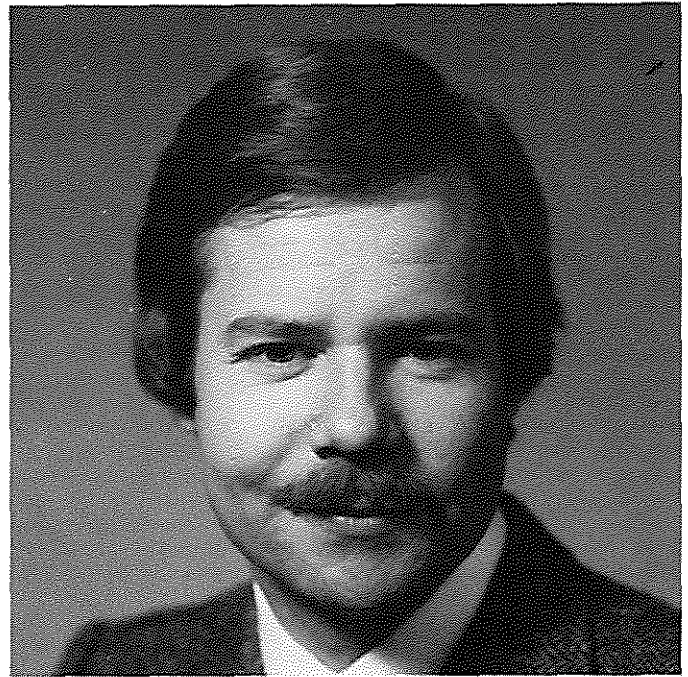
It was the feeling of most people in the communities and government that a community development plan would be for the betterment of all concerned.

The bottom line was that the City of Dartmouth wanted clean water and the communities wanted the opportunity to grow and prosper.



*George Beals, Joint Action Committee, Cherrybrook — Lake Loon.*

It was something that was long overdue . . . It will benefit us down the road . . . With a plan we don't have all the headaches we had before . . . It will never come to that again, where people are denied permits because of the watershed . . . If something happens, we have a board set up to deal with these issues at the community level . . . There was no doubt in my mind that we would succeed . . . It showed us that the black communities could work together and complete one thing, work side by side with whites, and accomplish something . . . The highlight was in standing up for rerouting the 107 Bypass alignment.



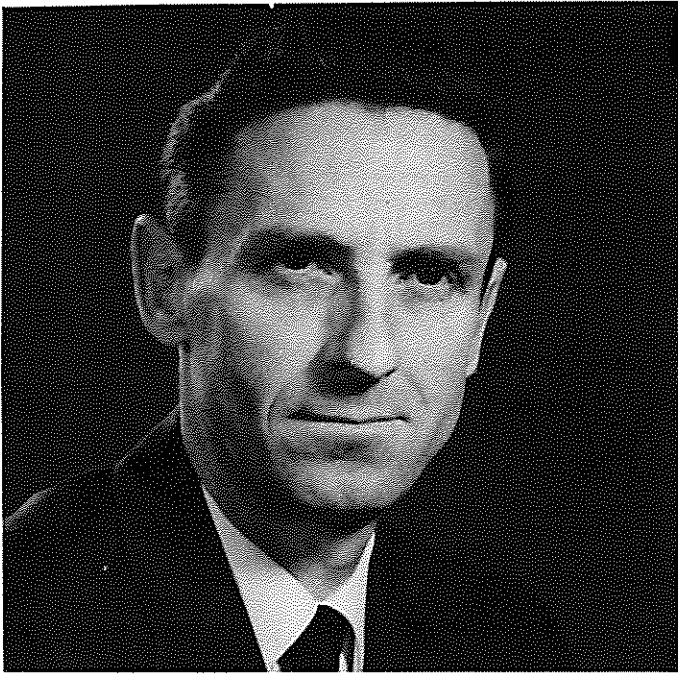
*Paul Campbell, Secretary, Lake Major Watershed Working Committee.*

The process was successful because two parallel and simultaneous planning exercises were initiated from the beginning — community planning and watershed management planning.

The two efforts were linked tightly together by community involvement and government participation in each program. The Working Committee recognized that it was the initiator of a process which would continue for years and even decades into the future.

The participants knew they had to produce results. Failure to do so would severely damage the communities and the watershed.

The spirit of co-operation was fostered from the beginning, and common ground found early in the process. It was discovered that watershed uses and community development uses were compatible, that development and conservation are interdependent. Research and information exchanges were the keys to the success of this project.

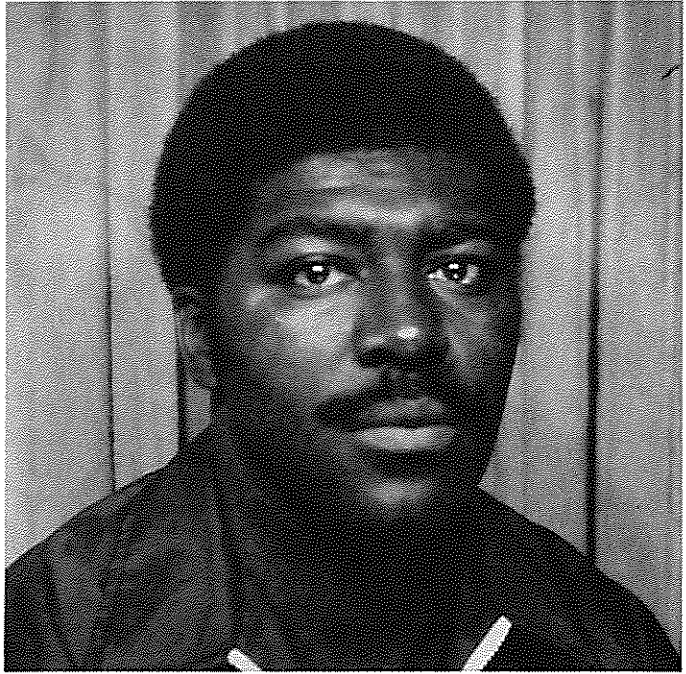


*Wes Topple, former Councillor, District 7A.*

Some five years after the Lake Major bylaw was rescinded by Halifax County, the communities of East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook and Lake Major now have a community owned and developed plan in place.

This plan takes the communities from a situation where they were not allowed to develop to one of growth and development that can be guided by the communities themselves.

I observed at the beginning of the process that a number of determined people were going to persist in their efforts to see the communities develop and progress rather than stagnate. These people formed the Joint Action Committee. And persist they did to the point of having a plan in place. They are now on the way to making sure that development takes place within their communities. I wish to congratulate these people for their untiring effort on behalf of their communities and for achieving the first Municipal Development Plan in Halifax County. The Joint Action Committee needs the continued public and government support to keep the process rolling, and I am sure great things will happen from this support. I must say that the enthusiasm that I see every time I attend one of their meetings leaves me with much more optimism for the future success of the total process.



*Brian Johnston, Community Worker, Lake Loon-Cherry Brook.*

The process of community development worked in the Prestons because of the dedication of the community workers, the consultant and the people of the area. The residents were angry enough about what was happening to them, and welcomed the opportunity to try and develop themselves. It worked because it was the type of development they wanted and saw as being necessary. We wanted a way of life that was in keeping with the character and historical life of the community.

We in the Lake Loon-Cherry Brook area, close to the City of Dartmouth, feel that a community effort in development is essential to maintain our historical existence and our cultural heritage. We were pleased to be involved in the process because it taught our people much and gives the next generation something to look back on in the future.



*Althea J. Tolliver, Community Worker, East Preston.*

The planning process and the adoption of the Municipal Development Plan for the Preston area was successful because of:

- (a) Dedication and commitment of community leaders, the community workers, the Black United Front and all members of the Joint Action Committee.
- (b) Co-operation and communication of the consultant.
- (c) Sensitivity to community needs of the provincial and municipal government representatives on the working committee.
- (d) The degree of community participation. Residents were always there to lend support and to voice disapproval, so that all involved took a second look at what was proposed for the communities.

People remembered the Africville situation, and realized that they had to become actively involved in the planning process, and monitor it to determine how it would affect growth and development within the communities.

We in the Prestons knew the ultimate goal — a plan that would be in keeping with the rural nature of each individual community. Having shared in this process, and being still in the field, I believe that the spirit of co-operation and trust will continue over the years as the communities continue to grow. This process was by no means an easy task. But the end result was a rewarding experience.



*John McMenemy, Lake Major Representative, Working Committee.*

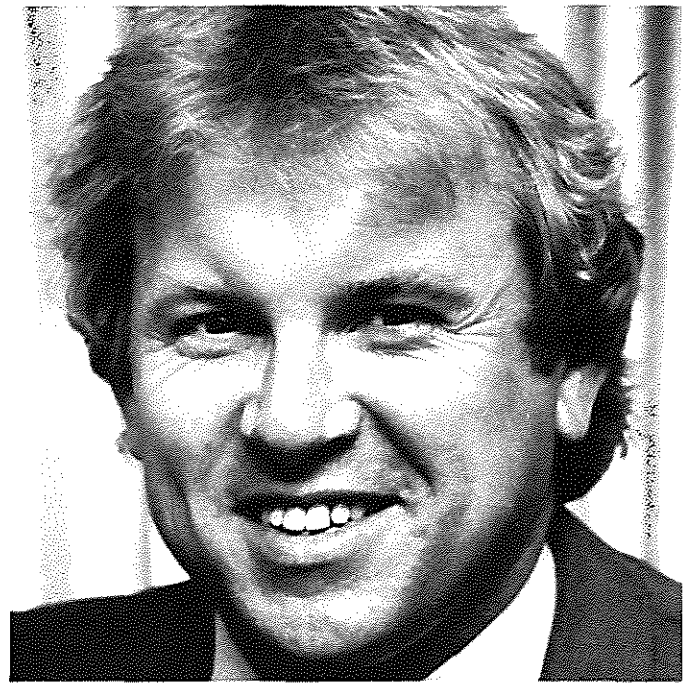
The Lake Major Watershed experience provided an uncommon opportunity for several very diverse communities to unite and develop positive responses to the very real external threat to their separate ways of life. The co-operation and sensitivity to the aspirations and shortcomings of each community which developed between the communities' leaders was remarkable. A leader in one community could speak forcefully on behalf of another's community without embarrassment to the community or its leaders. We were thus able to present a very solid and informed front to our antagonists. That honesty, along with a certain amount of faith in and respect for each other, was perhaps the cornerstone of the success of the Joint Action Committee. Without it we would have been split up and defeated.



*Hugh J. Porter, President, H. J. Porter and Associates.*

The success achieved in the Lake Major planning process was in the first place possible due to a situation whereby the very existence of long established communities was threatened due to development constraints imposed within the watershed. The residents had no other alternative but to become part of an overall planning process. Once this process was initiated by the Province of Nova Scotia, the interests of all parties were openly and objectively assessed through establishing open communication between local residents, the City of Dartmouth, Municipality of the County of Halifax, the participating agencies of the Provincial government and the Consultant.

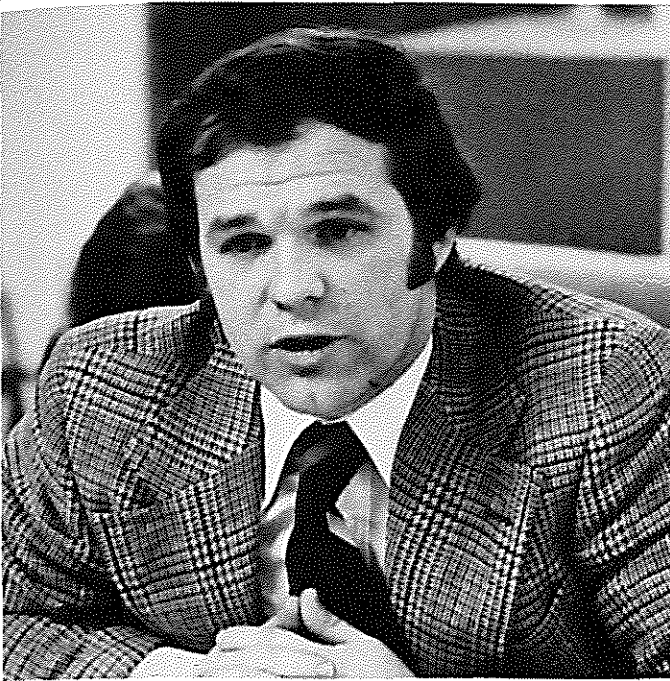
Community level communication was maintained through the dedicated and thorough work of the Joint Action Committee and the community workers. Credibility was established between all the various actors involved. In summary, the conditions of **threat**, **communication** and **credibility** led to a relatively successful planning process.



*Tom Rath, Assistant to the City Administrator, City of Dartmouth.*

The Lake Major Community Development and Watershed Management Plan involved the aspirations of four long established communities to grow and develop, the long term protection and management of a water area supplying the needs of over 100,000 citizens and the involvement of ten agencies at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Over a period of three years, representatives of all these interests, at times in open conflict with each other, came together to develop a strategy. It was to be strategy of accommodation — between the survival and development of the communities and the protection and management of a vital water supply. The need for accommodation was recognized from the outset and was the key factor in resolving the many and complex issues that came before the Lake Major Watershed Working Committee. The studies and reports that contributed to the development of the community development plan and watershed management plan have only been successful because the process of accommodation was successful. The successful implementation of the work of the Lake Major Watershed Working Committee will require the same spirit and commitment.

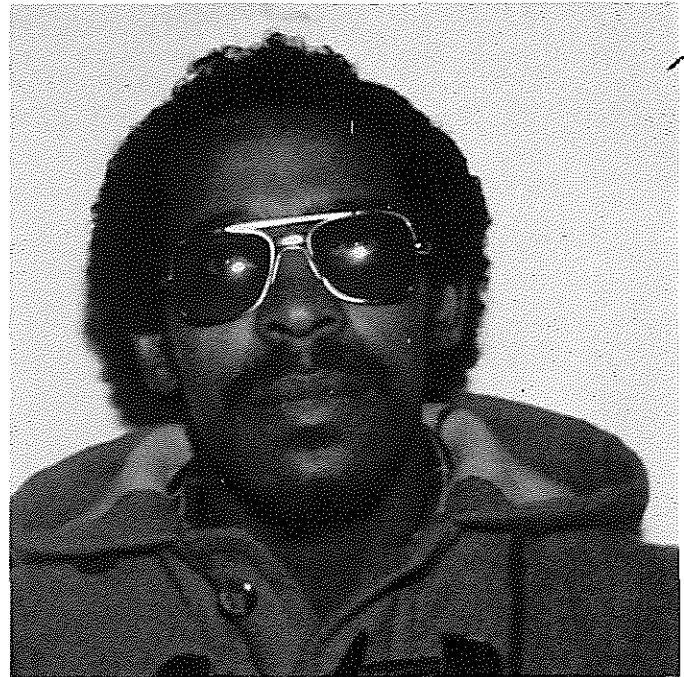




*W. G. Tidmarsh, Manager, Halifax Office, Montreal Engineering Co.*

The consultative process ensured that all parties involved with the process (the Province, the City, the communities, and the consultants) had an understanding of the technical problems of watershed management and that all parties involved had an understanding about their responsibilities in ensuring long-term protection of the water supply without affecting current activities in the area.

The continuing involvement of the community representatives, in reviewing monthly progress and interim reports, provided an important feedback mechanism which ensured that the concerns of the community were presented in their proper perspective in the management strategy ultimately recommended.



*Wayne Desmond, Community Worker, North Preston.*

I believe that much of the success of the planning process can be attributed to the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs, particularly to the work of Maurice Lloyd, Chairman of the Lake Major Watershed Working Committee. He had the community interests at heart, and participated actively in all phases of the plan.

The Department of Municipal Affairs neutralized the antagonism that existed between the other parties involved, namely, the City of Dartmouth and the residents of the community. I observed at the outset that the County of Halifax was willing to let the communities and the City of Dartmouth solve the problem.

Each of the people involved contributed ingredients essential to the completion of the community development plan. Everyone involved in the plan should be commended for their efforts, with special thanks going to Maurice Lloyd and his departmental staff, Hamid Rasheed, Jim Lotz, Hugh Porter and such dedicated community residents as Matthew Thomas, Arnold Johnston, Edward Beals and John McMenemy.



*Althea J. Tolliver* is the mother of two children and a lifelong resident of East Preston. She is a graduate of Graham Creighton, and holds degrees in Child Care and Social Work. She has been active in community and church affairs as Past Clerk of the East Preston Baptist Church and Assistant Superintendent of Sunday School; Past Provincial President of the Baptist Youth Fellowship of the African Baptist Association; Secretary of the East Preston Ratepayers' Association; Charter Member and Vice-President of the East Preston Lioness' Club; Treasurer of the Home and School Association of the Bell Park Academic Centre.

For the past four years she has been a Community Development Officer with the Lake Major Joint Action Committee.



*James A. Francois*, a native of St. Vincent, West Indies, received his early education there and then taught for a number of years. Later he worked as an agricultural extension worker, Curator of the St. Vincent Botanical Gardens, Co-operative Officer, Registrar of Co-operative Societies and manager of a land settlement scheme with the government of St. Vincent.

Mr. Francois took his training in community development at Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, and has travelled extensively in the Caribbean, South America, Canada, the U.S.A., and Europe, gaining first-hand knowledge of community development projects and approaches. He came to Canada in 1977 and now works for the Black United Front of Nova Scotia.