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Item No. 13.1.1
Community Planning and Economic
Development Standing Committee
November 20, 2025

TO: Chair and Members of the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee

FROM: Brad Anguish, Commissioner of Operations

DATE: November 4, 2025

SUBJECT: Update -- ANS Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan

ORIGIN

Staff initiated.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the implementation of the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Plan (REP) that started as a five-year, community-led strategy endorsed by Halifax Regional Council in 2020. The Plan is designed to address systemic barriers and improve economic and quality-of-life outcomes for African Nova Scotians through three strategic priorities: building unity and capacity, establishing land ownership and infrastructure, and increasing participation in education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Since September 2023, significant progress has been made across all pillars, including ongoing community action plans in Beechville, Lucasville and Upper Hammonds Plains, the launch of the African Nova Scotian Workforce Attachment Program, and the advancement of Community Benefit Agreements and infrastructure upgrades in underserved communities. Planning is also underway for the 2026–2031 phase, with a focus on governance, expanded community engagement, and strategic investment.

The recommendation is to forward this report to Halifax Regional Council for information. The implementation of the Plan in 2025/26 is being undertaken within the approved municipal budget of \$365,001. No significant risks or environmental implications have been identified. Community engagement remains central to the Plan's success.

A separate request for \$1 million annually for 2026–2031 has been submitted for Council's consideration as part of the 2026/27 budget process.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee:

1. Forward the staff report dated November 4, 2025 to Halifax Regional Council as an information item only.

BACKGROUND

[The African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Plan \(REP\)](#) started as a five-year, community-led strategy endorsed by Halifax Regional Council to address systemic barriers and improve economic and quality-of-life outcomes for African Nova Scotians. The Plan was developed through two years of community consultation and is governed by the Road to Economic Prosperity Advisory Council (REPAC), supported by Elder and Youth Councils, and implemented in partnership with the Halifax Partnership, HRM's African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), and the African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning Program (ANSCAP).

The REP was a key commitment in Halifax's Inclusive [Economic Strategy 2022–2027](#), which identified the need to support community-led economic development and address racial inequities in employment, income, housing, and education. The Plan builds on generations of community economic development work and responds to the historical exclusion of African Nova Scotian communities from land ownership, infrastructure investment, and decision-making processes.

The broad REP and its [Years 1–2 Action Plan](#) were approved by Halifax Regional Council in 2020. The [Years 3–5 Action Plan](#) was endorsed by Council in April 2023, with a funding commitment of \$365,001 annually through 2026. The Plan includes three strategic priorities:

1. Build Unity and Capacity
2. Establish Land Ownership, Infrastructure, and Investment
3. Increase Participation in Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship

The REP team's [2021-24 annual progress reports](#) document milestones, community engagement, and measurable outcomes across all three strategic priorities..

The REP is a government-endorsed, community-led action plan. It is guided by the principle "For Us, By Us, and With Us," and reflects a shared commitment between HRM and African Nova Scotian communities to advance inclusive, sustainable development.

DISCUSSION

RECENT PROGRESS

This section provides an update on work completed since September 2023 by both the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity (ANS REP) team and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) in implementing the Plan, organized by plan pillar.

Strategic Priority 1: Build Unity and Capacity Among African Nova Scotians

- **Community Planning.** Community planning is a foundational tool for enabling African Nova Scotian communities to shape their own development futures. It ensures that land use, infrastructure, and policy decisions reflect community values, history, and aspirations. Since September 2023, there have been ongoing community action plans in Beechville, Lucasville and Upper Hammonds Plains. Other ANS communities through HRM, including East Preston have begun to organize themselves in preparation for community action planning. REP is also supporting the Town of Truro in initiating its own ANS community planning process.

In September 2024, Regional Council approved the [ANSCAP report](#), which directed HRM staff to undertake Planning Strategy Reviews and Community Action Plans for Lucasville and Upper Hammonds Plains. The report also included amendments to the Beechville Planning Strategy Review Actions and endorsed the Beechville Community Boundary Project Report, which expanded the community's boundaries sixfold based on historical research. The intention of the ANSCAP report is to

formalize a framework for community-led planning and ensure municipal alignment with ANS development priorities.

- **ANSCAP Origins and Engagement.** The African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) initiative was developed in direct response to REP's work and collaboration with communities. Working jointly with HRM Planning and ANSAIO/D&I, ANSCAP was created to formalize this partnership approach. Importantly, ANSCAP does not enter communities independently; readiness is first established through REP, and even then, REP continues to partner with ANSCAP throughout the process.

The ANSCAP team has built strong relationships through regular meetings with community leaders in Beechville, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Lucasville. These sessions have focused on explaining municipal land use bylaws and preparing Public Participation Programs to enable broader engagement. The team has also supported infrastructure upgrades in Beechville's Monroe Subdivision and is collaborating with the Beechville Community Development Association and HRM's Heritage Team to commemorate the historic Baptismal Path. These efforts have strengthened trust and created momentum for future planning phases.

- **Capacity Building Capacity.** building is essential to ensure that African Nova Scotian communities have the tools, knowledge, and leadership to drive their own development. Parks & Recreation has delivered Afrocentric leadership and training sessions in Spring and Fall 2025 in collaboration with ANS community groups. Topics included Leadership & Communication, Conflict Resolution, Strategic Planning 101, and Asset-Based Community Development. These sessions were complemented by resource toolkits on grant writing, succession planning, and risk management. ANS community groups also participated in the 2024 Volunteer Conference.
- **Cogswell Social Benefits.** The Cogswell Social Benefits Advisory Committee (SBAC) concluded its work in September 2025. Over the four-year project, 10% of total project hours were completed by African Nova Scotian workers—exceeding the 5% target set in the tender. Overall, 35% of project hours were completed by workers from equity-deserving groups. \$1.1 million in services were invoiced to self-identified ANS suppliers, representing over 50% of all diverse supplier services. These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of targeted social benefit strategies in major infrastructure projects and provide a model for future inclusive procurement.

Strategic Priority 2: Establish Land Ownership, Infrastructure, and Investment

- **Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs).** Community Benefit Agreements are legally binding contracts between developers and communities that ensure new developments provide tangible benefits to local residents—such as local hiring, affordable housing, environmental protections, and investment in community initiatives. In November 2022, Halifax Regional Council endorsed [a report](#) recommending a request for legislative change to enable HRM to enter into and enforce CBAs. In June 2024, HRM staff and REPAC met with the Province to discuss this request. Planning staff continue to explore best practices and interim approaches using existing legislative tools.
- **Surplus Land and Taxation.** Access to land is a critical component of economic empowerment and community stability. HRM Corporate Real Estate has prepared the Africville Road property for conveyance to the Africville Heritage Trust Society. ANSCAP has been working with Beechville leaders to identify surplus parcels within the community. In 2025, ANSCAP began exchanging information with the Provincial Crown Lands Information Management Office to resolve title issues on ancestral lands. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to support community land trusts and ensure land ownership aligns with historic and cultural realities. Parks & Recreation will also initiate a park plan for Fog Lane Park in Beechville this fiscal year.

- **Infrastructure and Facilities.** Infrastructure investment is essential to improving quality of life and enabling sustainable development in ANS communities. In 2024–2025, HRM prioritized deep energy retrofits in underserved communities. Design work is underway for East Preston, North Preston, and Wallace Lucas Community Centres. Retrofit work at Upper Hammonds Plains Community Centre is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

The Munroe Subdivision in Beechville received upgrades to sidewalks, a park pathway, and a new crosswalk in Fall 2025. In September 2025, eight new hydrants were installed in Upper Hammonds Plains. The new Beechville–Lakeside–Timberlea Recreation Centre and splash pad, scheduled to open in 2026, will provide expanded recreation opportunities for residents and supporting active living in the BLT area. North Preston also saw the addition of a community garden, greenhouse, and outdoor pizza oven at its Community Centre, creating new spaces for food security, learning, and social connection.

Parks & Recreation also delivered two additional capital projects in African Nova Scotian communities between November 2024 and September 2025:

- Highland Park Junior High School Park – sport court rehabilitation and installation of new lighting (2025/26 budget).
- Ross Road School Park – playground replacement in Westphal (2025/26 budget). While not directly in Cherry Brook, Ross Road School serves students from Nelson Whynder Elementary in North Preston, making this project relevant.

These improvements enhance safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency, and reflect commitment to equitable infrastructure investment.

- **Planning and Development.** Planning and Development plays a central role in aligning municipal policies with ANS community priorities. Since September 2023, HRM Planning staff have embedded ANSCAP into the Regional Plan and initiated Planning Strategy Reviews for Beechville, Lucasville, and Upper Hammonds Plains. Staff are reviewing zoning provisions to support community visions and exploring options for transferring surplus lands to ANS non-profit organizations. Planning continues to support Akoma's short-term development goals under existing planning frameworks and is completing the Future Serviced Communities (FSC) study to guide long-term urban development. The Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan, launching in 2026, will further assess infrastructure needs in ANS communities. Planning staff are also working to develop zoning provisions that reflect historic development patterns and support multi-generational housing and community land trusts.
- **Public Works.** Public Works is a vital partner in delivering visible, place-based improvements that reflect and celebrate ANS communities. Since 2024, Public Works has collaborated with ANSAIO to implement ANS-themed crosswalks, gateway signage, and cabinet artwork. The East Preston multi-use path project, including upgraded bus stops, new crosswalks, and watercourse improvements, is currently under construction. These initiatives enhance mobility, safety, and cultural visibility, and demonstrate how infrastructure can support cultural recognition and community pride.

Strategic Priority 3: Increase Participation in Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship

- **Workforce Attachment.** In 2024, REP launched the [African Nova Scotian Workforce Attachment Program](#), inspired by the Halifax Partnership's Connector Program. The new program expands support to unemployed, underemployed, and disabled ANS job seekers. Participants are connected to mentorship, professional networking, training, and employment opportunities aligned with labour market needs. The program also works with employers to develop inclusive workforce strategies. Early results show increased engagement and improved job matching outcomes, with several participants securing employment in infrastructure and public sector roles. The program is structured around personalized career pathways and employer partnerships.

- **Human Resources.** HRM is working to benchmark ANS representation in its workforce. In 2024, self-identification options were added to the Employee Engagement Survey. HRM is implementing a new recruitment module to capture self-identification data at the point of hire. A communications strategy is underway to encourage participation and improve data quality.
- **Youth Engagement and Recreation.** Youth engagement is critical to building future leadership and ensuring community resilience. Parks & Recreation partnered with the Community Safety Office and George Dixon Recreation Centre to deliver youth art workshops and safety consultations. Programming expanded in East Preston and North Preston, basketball courts at George Dixon Centre were resurfaced in August 2024, and a Jump Start Inclusive Playground was added at George Dixon Park to promote accessible play.

In partnership with IOTA Studios (IOTA Institute), HRM also launched the Cogswell District Outdoor Art Gallery Pilot in 2025—a two-year program focused on professional public art opportunities for Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian artists. This initiative, including the InterCHANGE program, stems directly from community engagement findings and supports community history and ownership in the redevelopment of the Cogswell District.

- **Community Needs Assessment.** In partnership with Parks & Recreation, the North Preston Ratepayers Association developed the "North Preston Community Needs Assessment Survey" to inform a future action plan. The survey, launched in January 2025, gathered data on housing, recreation, economic opportunity, and community priorities. This work began following consultations with REPAC and reflects a growing emphasis on data-driven planning and community-led development.

PLANNING FOR 2026–2031: GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

As the Road to Economic Prosperity Plan enters its final year, REPAC is preparing for the next phase of implementation. The 2026–2031 planning cycle will build on the successes of the first five years and formalize a governance model that ensures long-term sustainability and community leadership. This includes developing a new five-year strategic framework, deepening partnerships with orders of governments, and plans to expand community capacity building.

Key priorities for the next phase include scaling the Community Action Planning process to additional ANS communities, establishing a province-wide ANS community land trust model, and embedding Community Benefit Agreements into municipal and provincial development policies. The Strategic Growth and Infrastructure Priorities Plan will serve as a foundational tool for aligning infrastructure investments with ANS community needs.

Governance enhancements will focus on strengthening the role of REPAC, Elder and Youth Councils, and community organizations in decision-making. The ANSCAP team will continue to lead land-use planning, supported by interdepartmental coordination. The next phase will also prioritize data collection and evaluation, building on the ANS Index to track progress and inform policy. Together, these efforts will ensure that African Nova Scotian communities remain central to shaping their economic futures.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Plan in 2025/26 is being undertaken within the approved municipal budget. Specifically, \$350,000 plus net HST of \$15,001 was allocated, for a total of \$365,001, under account E401 – Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO.

Looking ahead, REPAC has submitted a funding request of \$1 million annually for 2026–2031 to support the next phase of implementation. It has been incorporated into the annual budgeting process for Regional Council consideration.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No significant risk considerations were identified. The continued implementation of the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Plan mitigates reputational, equity, and operational risks by ensuring HRM fulfills its commitments to inclusive economic development. Failure to sustain support could result in loss of community trust, delays in planning and infrastructure, and missed opportunities to address systemic inequities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Extensive community engagement has occurred throughout the creation and implementation of the Plan. The ANSCAP team has supported community engagement through the ongoing community action plans in Beechville, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Lucasville. REPAC, Elder and Youth Councils, and community organizations have been actively involved in planning, decision-making, and program delivery. Community engagement is embedded in all aspects of the Plan and continues to guide its evolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified. However, infrastructure upgrades such as deep energy retrofits at community centres and the East Preston multi-use path project contribute positively to environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

ALTERNATIVES

The Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee could refuse to forward this report on to Council.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Schedule 3 - Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee Terms of Reference, Administrative Order One, the Procedures of Council Administrative Order

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

(a) provide good government;

(b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and

(c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

70(1) The Municipality may

(a) beautify, improve and maintain property owned or leased by the Municipality;

(b) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting or beautifying a business district and for airport, wharf or waterfront development;

(c) identify and promote a business district as a place for retail and commercial activity;

(d) establish or maintain parking facilities.
[...]

71(1) The Municipality may

(a) solicit and encourage the establishment and development of new, and the establishment, development and expansion of existing institutions, industries and businesses in and around the Municipality;

(b) publicize the advantages of the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for the establishment and expansion of institutions, industries and businesses;

(c) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for institutions, industries and businesses;

(d) prepare and disseminate information about the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas for the assistance of institutions, industries and businesses intending to locate or expand in the Municipality or the surrounding area.
[...]

ATTACHMENTS

None

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