



# **ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to express our sincere thanks to the amazing community members, dedicated councils, hardworking staff, and valued partners who have been crucial to the success of the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity initiative in 2024.

## Advisory Council

Dolly Williams – Co-Chair – East Preston  
Irvine Carvery – Co-Chair – Africville  
Viola Fraser – North Preston Community Rec Centre  
Sherry Bernard – Lake Loon / Cherrybrook  
Gina Jones-Wilson – Upper Hammonds Plains  
Patsy Crawford – Beechville  
Tamar Pryor Brown – ANS Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO)  
Veronica Marsman – Akoma  
Trianda Loppie – Akoma  
Tammy Ewing – Engage Nova Scotia  
Matthew Martell – Black Business Initiative  
Mamadou Wade – Black Business Initiative  
Rosella Fraser – North Preston Community Rec Centre  
Shelley Fashan – Preston Township  
George Frempong – Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute  
Wayne Talbot – Deputy Mayor, City of Truro  
Jenée Jarvis – Halifax Partnership  
Carolann Wright – Halifax Partnership  
Trayvone Clayton – Halifax Partnership  
Dena Williams – Halifax Partnership  
Crystal Mulder – Halifax Libraries  
Curtis Whiley – Upper Hammonds Plains  
Jasalynn Skeete – ANSAIO  
Devon Parris – ANSAIO

## Elder Council

Melinda Daye – Chair – Halifax  
Darlene Lawrence – South Shore  
Iona Duncan-States – Halifax  
Charles Sheppard – Cape Breton  
Chuck Smith – South Shore  
Craig Smith – Halifax  
Cameron Brown – Caribbean

## Youth Council

Chelsea Slawter-Wright – Co-Chair – East Preston and Beechville  
Shekara Grant – Co-Chair – Halifax  
Mamadou Wade – Halifax  
Kjeld Conyers-Steede – Caribbean

## ANS Road to Economic Prosperity Staff Team at Halifax Partnership (2024)

### Partnerships and Collaboration

Carolann Wright, Executive Director of ANS Road to Economic Prosperity and Director of Capacity Building & Strategic Initiatives, ANS Communities

### Community Liaison and Support

Jenée Jarvis, Governance and Capacity Building Liaison, ANS Road to Economic Prosperity

### Events

Dena Williams, Event Coordinator, ANS Road to Economic Prosperity

### Community Engagement

Trayvone Clayton, Community Engagement Specialist, ANS Road to Economic Prosperity

## African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office, Halifax Regional Municipality

Jasalynn Skeete, Coordinator of Outreach and Research  
Tamar Pryor Brown, Senior Advisor  
Devon Parris, Diversity & Inclusion, ANSCAP Lead - Planning & Development HRM

OUR PARTNERS







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Irvine Carvery



Dolly Williams



## A message from the **ADVISORY COUNCIL**

As we reflect on 2024, the theme of our fourth annual Summit, “Sustain and Remain”, serves as both a call to action and a commitment to our future. It reminds us that economic prosperity for African Nova Scotian communities is not just about progress—it’s about ensuring that progress is long lasting and built on a strong foundation. We must remain steadfast in our efforts to strengthen community leadership and build sustainable infrastructure that supports our long-term economic success.

This year, we’ve seen powerful examples of what is possible when we come together with a shared vision. The Road to Economic Prosperity (REP) officially launched the African Nova Scotian Economic and Well-being Index in May 2024, two years ahead of the next scheduled Canadian Census. We aim to raise awareness and encourage people of African descent in Nova Scotia to participate in this important data collection to better understand our economic disparities and benchmark our progress. In addition, communities have advanced land and infrastructure development projects this year and our team continues to actively support research in the area of community-led economic development.

We call on communities, organizations, and supporters to stay engaged, support Black-led economic initiatives, and continue shaping a future where African Nova Scotians have full agency over our economic destiny. Together, we will sustain our progress and remain on the path to long-term prosperity.

Sincerely,

**Dolly Williams and Irvine Carvery,  
Co-Chairs, Road to Economic Prosperity**

Carolann Wright



# A message from

# **THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TEAM**

We're excited to share highlights of the Road to Economic Prosperity accomplishments in 2024. Heading into the final year of the first five-year REP plan, we continue to build momentum through community-led projects, partnerships, and advocacy that will sustain our community's economic development for generations to come.

We extend thanks to our Youth, Elder and Advisory Council members, community volunteers, partner organizations, and everyone who has supported our vision in 2024. We invite you to review highlights of our year's accomplishments and ongoing initiatives, and to reach out to our team if your community or organization would like to join or support this work.

Sincerely,

**Carolann Wright,**  
**Executive Director of ANS Road to**  
**Economic Prosperity and Director of Capacity Building**  
**& Strategic Initiatives, ANS Communities**

# ABOUT THE ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY PLAN

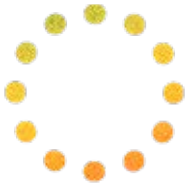
Launched in 2021, the Road to Economic Prosperity Plan (REPP) is a five-year economic development and empowerment strategy created and owned by the African Nova Scotian (ANS) community to address historic and systemic issues and improve economic and quality of life outcomes for African Nova Scotians.

The Plan is the result of two years of community consultation. It builds on generations of community economic development work, honouring and representing the diverse lived experiences and historic and current circumstances in African Nova Scotian communities.

The updates in this report highlight our progress from October 2023 - October 2024. Detailed reports on progress against actions are available for download on the Road to Economic Prosperity website at [anseeconomicprosperity.com](https://anseeconomicprosperity.com).







## **PRIORITY: BUILD UNITY AND CAPACITY AMONG AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS**

### **How We Work: Directly Engaging Community**

Our economic empowerment strategy extends across African Nova Scotian communities throughout the province. We conduct in-community engagements and connect communities to this work through the ANS Prosperity and Well-being Index, our annual Summit and International Conference, and other targeted initiatives. We work with communities and partners to develop action plans, mapping each community's assets, unique needs, and vision for community economic development.





## Strengthening Capacity for Community Planning

Under our Unity and Capacity Building pillar, REP continues to work closely with Halifax Regional Municipality's African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning (ANSCAP) program to strengthen community planning capacity. This partnership exemplifies our commitment to ensuring that African Nova Scotian communities lead their own planning and development processes.

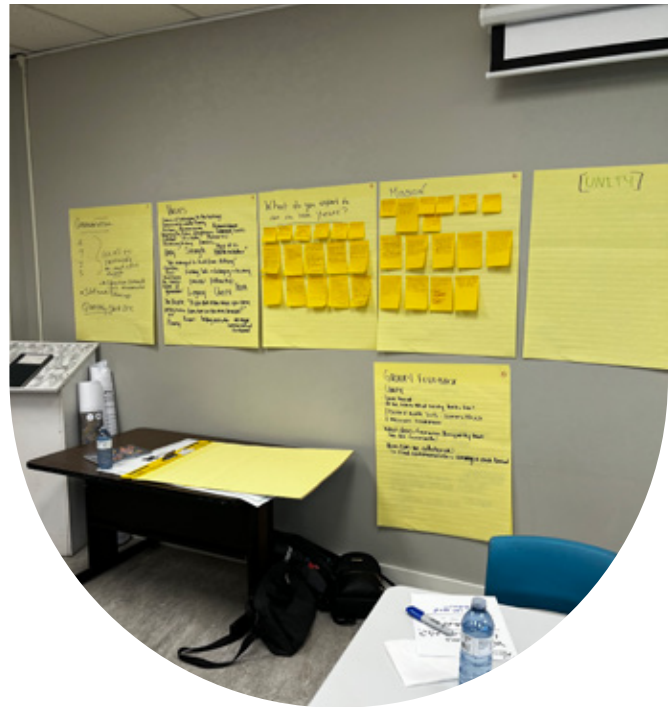
In 2024, several communities achieved significant planning milestones. Beechville and Upper Hammonds Plains completed their community plans and received HRM staff reports, while Lucasville and East Preston are actively advancing through their planning processes. REP's work has extended beyond Halifax Regional Municipality, as we are providing guidance to the Town of Truro in initiating their community planning process with African Nova Scotian residents. We recognize and celebrate the dedication of community volunteers and leaders who have invested countless hours in community planning.

The ANSCAP program has expanded its capacity, now operating with four dedicated planning staff with plans to recruit four additional team members. Their mandate aligns with Halifax Regional Council's endorsement and support of the Road to Economic Prosperity Plan and includes several key initiatives:

- Establishing an interdepartmental municipal working group to align budgets and business planning with ANS community action plans.
- Reviewing and improving municipal processes that impact African Nova Scotian communities.
- Investigating opportunities for community boundary reviews.
- Exploring options for returning surplus municipal lands to African Nova Scotian communities.
- Supporting historical research initiatives.
- Developing partnerships to create funding programs for community land trusts and cooperatives.

Our ongoing collaboration with HRM demonstrates how African Nova Scotian communities can shape their own economic development futures while preserving cultural heritage and creating opportunities for shared sustainable growth.

To engage your community in the ANSCAP process with support from REP, contact Jenée Jarvis, Governance and Capacity Building Liaison, ANS Road to Economic Prosperity [jjarvis@halifaxpartnership.com](mailto:jjarvis@halifaxpartnership.com).





## RESEARCH

The Road to Economic Prosperity's commitment to evidence-based decision-making and community-driven research has been central to our approach since the beginning. Early in our journey, the REP councils established a dedicated Research Working Group to guide and inform our economic development initiatives in African Nova Scotian communities. This group of community members, academics, and economists works to ensure research activities align with the community, ensuring we are developing research partnerships and projects that directly support the goals outlined in our 5-year strategic plan.

### Research Collaboration with Toronto Metropolitan University and the Black Planning Project



The Road to Economic Prosperity continues to strengthen its collaboration with Black planning organizations in the country, most recently with the Black Experiences with Planning in Canada (BEPIC) research initiative as we enter the final phase of an important three-year study. Our collaboration has been instrumental in documenting African Nova Scotian communities' unique experiences and challenges in their interactions with municipal planning processes. As we approach 2025, we are preparing to host a critical focus group with REP council members to gather insights about their experiences with the Halifax Regional Municipality Planning Department. This engagement will contribute valuable Atlantic Canadian perspectives to BEPIC's national framework for Black-centered planning practices while also informing our ongoing work to advance economic prosperity in African Nova Scotian communities.



Abigail Moriah, Registered Professional Planner (RPP)



## Launch of the African Nova Scotian Prosperity and Well-being Index

In May 2024, the Road to Economic Prosperity marked a significant milestone with the release of the first-ever African Nova Scotian Prosperity and Well-being Index (ANS Index), providing statistical data on Black Nova Scotians across six key areas: population, income, labour, housing, education, and well-being. Prior to the public launch, REP hosted a “Knowing Our Numbers” community symposium at the Black Cultural Centre in Cherry Brook, where community members gathered to examine the data and share their insights and recommendations for future policy and program development aimed at closing economic and social gaps and inequalities.







The Index reveals both encouraging trends and areas of concern requiring focused attention. Nova Scotia's Black population has experienced unprecedented growth, increasing by nearly 29% between 2016 and 2021. However, notable disparities persist. Black Nova Scotians continue to face higher unemployment rates than the provincial average and earn approximately 85 cents for every dollar earned by non-visible minority Nova Scotians. Housing accessibility remains a pressing concern, with 13% of Black Nova Scotians experiencing core housing need.

What distinguishes this Index is its foundation in community engagement. Beyond statistics, it represents a collaborative effort to understand how these metrics translate into real lived experiences for African Nova Scotian families and communities. Through extensive community consultation, we developed 14 recommendations spanning areas such as education, employment, housing, and data collection methods.

The ANS Index establishes a baseline for measuring progress and will serve as an essential tool to inform policy decisions and program development affecting Black Nova Scotians. Created according to our guiding principle of "For Us, By Us, and With Us," this work reflects our commitment to community-led advancement and provides clear evidence for where strategic investments and policy changes are most needed.

We extend our appreciation to Halifax Partnership and our other research partners, community members, and our many supporters who contributed to this groundbreaking initiative. This Index represents an important step forward in building a stronger foundation for African Nova Scotian prosperity.

[Download the ANS Index](#)

**"Knowing Our Numbers is crucial for our Black communities. This index is a vital tool for tracking our progress and guiding economic interventions. We recognize the impact of anti-Black racism and systemic barriers that have hindered our prosperity, and this data helps us address these challenges head-on."**

- Irvine Carvery,  
Co-Chair, REP Advisory Council

**"Our community and partners see this inaugural ANS Index as a pivotal starting point in providing an accurate baseline for a range of social and economic indicators for people of African descent in Nova Scotia - a measure of how far we have come and how far we have to go."**

- Carolann Wright,  
Executive Director of the Road to Economic Prosperity and Director, Capacity Building and Strategic Initiatives, African Nova Scotian Communities, Halifax Partnership

## Building Community Capacity: An Upcoming Guide for Africentric Facilitation

Under our “Unity and Capacity Building” pillar, REP has been working on the development of a comprehensive Facilitation and Leadership Guide for working with African Nova Scotian communities and organizations. This resource, drafted in May 2024, aims to strengthen community engagement capacity to improve research, collaboration and advocacy for economic development in African Nova Scotian communities.

The guide embraces an Africentric lens, recognizing that effective facilitation must honour African Nova Scotian communities’ unique experiences, traditions, and cultural heritage. The guide emphasizes the importance of creating spaces where community members feel valued and empowered to participate fully in shaping their economic future. It will provide facilitators with practical tools and strategies for fostering meaningful community engagement while ensuring our perspectives, values, and voices remain central to decision-making and action-planning processes.

Currently under review by REP Councils and collaborators, the Facilitation and Leadership Guide is scheduled for release in 2025.





## SUSTAIN AND REMAIN: CHARTING A FUTURE FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS

As we approached our fourth annual Summit in October 2024, REP partnered with Saltwire to share our vision for sustainable economic development in African Nova Scotian communities. The article “Sustain and Remain: Charting a Future for African Nova Scotians” highlighted our commitment to long-term community-led development grounded in systemic change.

*African Nova Scotians are leading the way in redefining economic development for Black communities through the Road to Economic Prosperity Initiative.*

**By Nzingha Millar**



In Nova Scotia, historic Black communities such as Beechville, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Preston face a constant struggle. These long-established enclaves, rich in culture and history, battle rapid changes, cultural erosion, and the stark reality that younger generations may never afford to live in the places their ancestors built. For African Nova Scotians, it is the latest chapter in a long history of systemic exclusion.

The Road to Economic Prosperity is an initiative taking bold steps to redefine economic development for Black communities in Halifax Regional Municipality and other parts of the province. REP offers a different approach one that seeks to disrupt systems long marginalizing Black communities.

The REP five-year plan is stewarded by advisory, youth, and elder councils and is being implemented in collaboration with public, private, post-secondary, and community partners. REP's approach is clear: sustainable economic development requires systemic change led by, for, and with African Nova Scotians.

## Why systemic change?

Issues facing Black communities are not entirely unique. Yet, when it comes to Black Nova Scotian communities, the legacy of systemic racism and exclusion has compounded challenges, creating significant barriers to progress.

Black communities have been sidelined, with decisions made for them instead of by them, says Dolly Williams, Co-chair of the Road to Economic Prosperity Advisory Council. "We want to shift that dynamic, ensuring African Nova Scotians are not just participants in the economic conversation, but leaders."

The REP initiative looks at economic development through a non-traditional lens, not limited to individual success or business growth. Instead, the focus is on community well-being, recognizing that economic outcomes are linked to housing, employment, education, and even mental health.

## Tracking progress

In May 2024, REP launched the [African Nova Scotian Well-being and Prosperity Index](#), a groundbreaking report that reveals the economic reality for Black communities in Nova Scotia. Black Nova Scotians are twice as likely to live in core housing need compared to the general population. The wage gap between Black and non-visible minority Nova Scotians remains significant, with Black workers earning just 85 cents on the dollar compared to non-visible minority counterparts. This gap worsens for Black Nova Scotians

with a bachelor's degree or higher, earning just 79.2 percent of what their peers make.

The index points to progress from previous census data in 2016 but remains a reminder that systemic barriers persist.

## Reclaiming land and development

Historically, Black communities in Nova Scotia were denied land ownership or displaced through discriminatory practices. Now, REP is working with government and community partners to support land reclamation and adjust zoning policies to meet the current needs of Black communities.

Land ownership and stewardship is about ensuring Black communities have the power to shape their futures for generations to come, says Carolann Wright, Executive Director of the ANS Road to Economic Prosperity. We are seeing this happen in Beechville where new working relationships between the community and the Halifax Regional Municipality are transforming the way development is done.

Devon Parris, the African Nova Scotian Community Action Planning Lead Advisor with the Halifax Regional Municipality's Planning and Development business unit, says the African Nova Scotian Community Action Program is working with African Nova Scotian communities to develop community action plans, which are owned by the community and evolve as work progresses.

REP has been spearheading the adoption of Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) by the Halifax Regional Municipality. The municipality is supportive of CBAs and has requested that the Province make legislative changes that will allow the municipality to negotiate and enter into CBAs with African Nova Scotian communities and developers. If approved, CBAs could be a game-changer in helping to ensure new developments benefit the local community.

## Building capacity and leadership

Community empowerment and capacity building form the foundation of REP's sustainable development strategy, realized through leadership training and ongoing support provided to communities, ensuring they have the tools to sustain progress.

"The success we are seeing is because Black communities are at the centre of this work," says Wright.

As Williams puts it, This next chapter will create a future where Black Nova Scotians and all Nova Scotians can thrive.



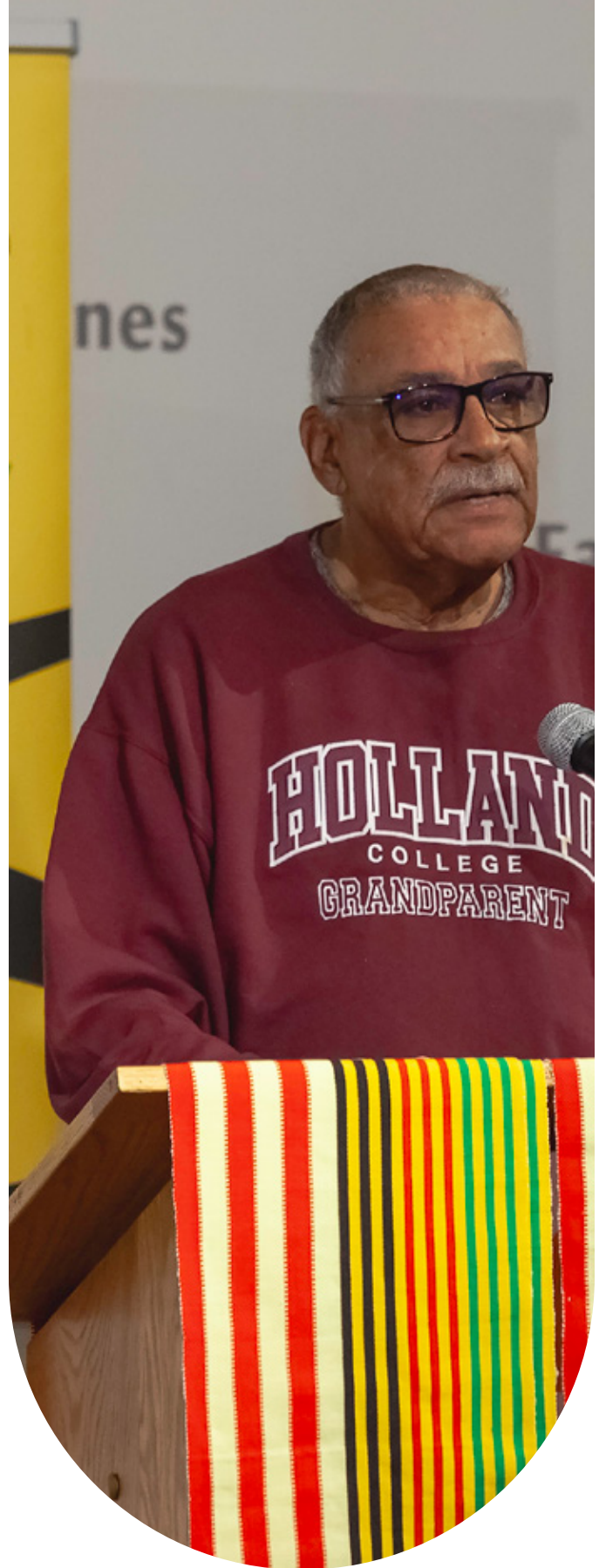
To learn more about how African Nova Scotians are shifting the economic development landscape for their communities visit [anseconomicprosperity.com](http://anseconomicprosperity.com).





## Community Summit

The 2024 Community Summit, themed “Sustain & Remain”, brought over 100 community members and partners together at the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia. Through focused discussions on sustainable funding models, community benefits agreements, and governance structures, participants explored strategies that will drive long-term success. Key conversations centred on building effective partnerships, strengthening community advocacy, enhancing local decision-making processes, and developing funding and revenue generation opportunities that will allow for reinvestment in African Nova Scotian communities. These discussions helped shape priorities for the next phase of the Road to Economic Prosperity. Summit presentations are available for download on the REP website.





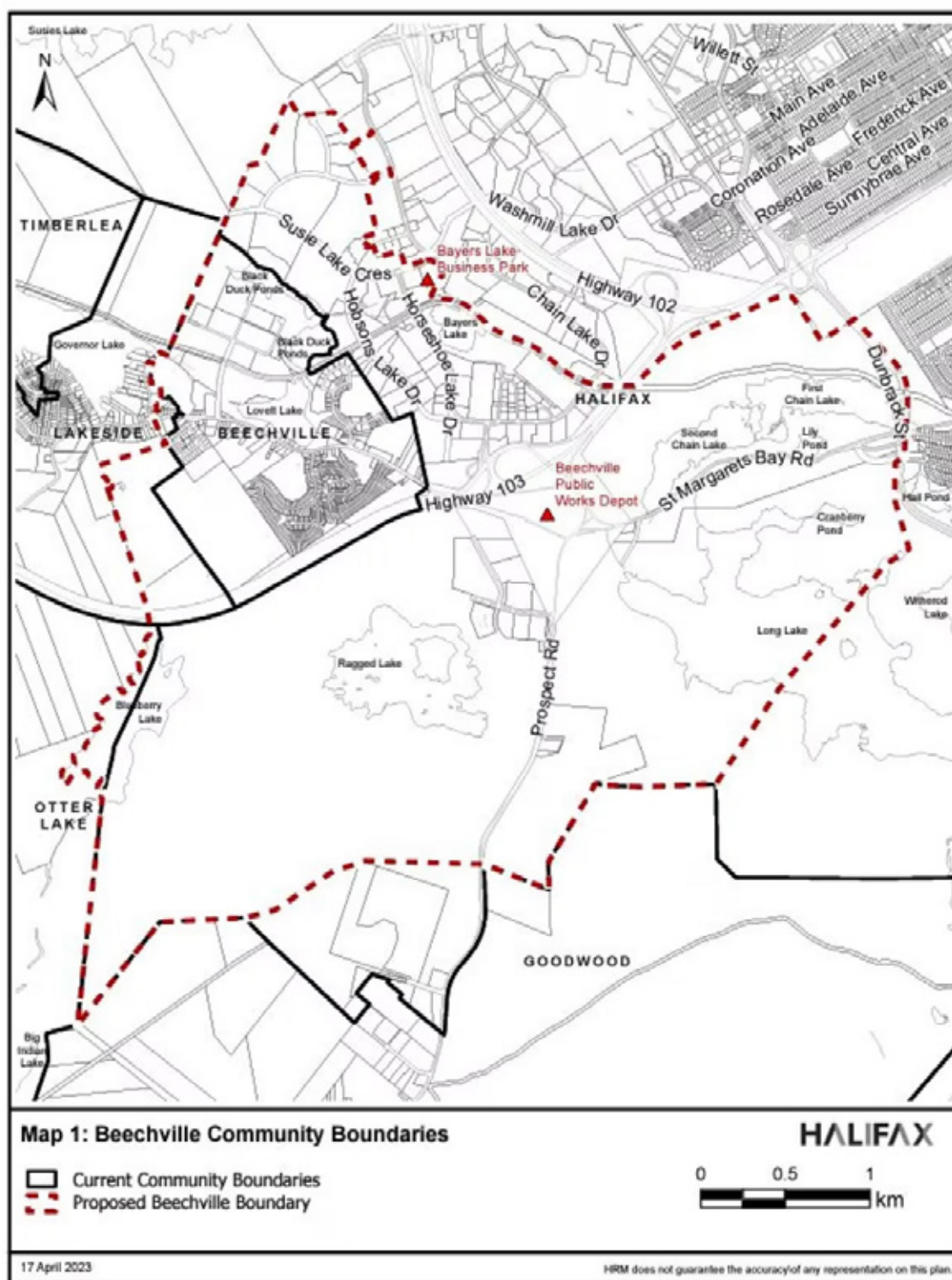


**PRIORITY: ESTABLISH LAND OWNERSHIP,  
DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE AND ATTRACT  
INVESTMENT.**

Significant progress has been made in addressing historic land and zoning issues in African Nova Scotian communities. In a landmark decision, Beechville successfully advocated for the restoration of its community boundaries, expanding them to six times their previous size – a vital step in rectifying decades of exclusionary development practices. This expansion was approved in September 2024, following extensive community engagement and advocacy.

The historic Beechville Baptist Church, (Craig Paisley/CBC)





A map of the Beechville area shows the previous and new boundaries for the community. (Halifax Regional Municipality)



Similarly, Upper Hammonds Plains recently achieved important zoning changes that will help preserve the community's historic character and prevent further gentrification. These successes demonstrate the effectiveness of community-led advocacy in protecting and reclaiming African Nova Scotian land rights.

REP continues to support other African Nova Scotian communities in reviewing their boundaries and zoning regulations, working closely with HRM planning staff to ensure transparent processes that honour community interests.

As part of the community action planning process, ANS communities and HRM staff have identified surplus properties that could be transferred back to the community. Beechville reclaimed eight properties within the community in 2023/24. REP is also working with HRM to develop an approach to preventing properties in ANS communities from proceeding to tax sale without community notice.

For more information about surplus properties and the impacts of zoning and bylaws in your community, please contact us.

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## PROGRESS ON COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENTS

One of REP's most significant ongoing initiatives has been advocating for the implementation of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) in Halifax Regional Municipality. Throughout 2024, we have continued to build momentum for this transformative policy tool.

CBAs represent a crucial mechanism for ensuring African Nova Scotians have a meaningful voice in development decisions that affect their communities. These legally binding agreements would help address historical inequities by requiring developers to provide specific benefits such as local hiring commitments, affordable housing, environmental protections, and investment in community initiatives.

Halifax Regional Council supports CBAs and has formally requested that the Province of Nova Scotia grant the municipality the power to enter into and enforce CBAs. REP is actively engaging with the Province to advocate for this critical legislative change.

Our team can provide information about CBAs and how these agreements could support sustainable inclusive development in your community.



To learn more about Community Benefits Agreements and have your voice heard on the potential positive impacts on ANS communities, scan the QR code above or email Carolann Wright, Executive Director of ANS Road to Economic Prosperity and Director of Capacity Building & Strategic Initiatives, ANS Communities

**[cwright@halifaxpartnership.com](mailto:cwright@halifaxpartnership.com)**



## **PRIORITY: EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Increasing African Nova Scotian Workforce Attachment**

Based on lessons learned in implementing the ANS Connector Program over the past three years, the REP team and councils recommended that the talent pool and scope of the work aimed at increasing African Nova Scotians' labour force attachment be broadened to support unemployed, underemployed, and disabled African Nova Scotians.





These groups will be connected to mentorship, professional networking, training and job opportunities that are aligned to labour market needs and job seekers' education, experience, and career goals.

The new African Nova Scotian Workforce Attachment Program supported by the Province of Nova Scotia will build upon the successes, partnerships (with government, industry, and community partners), and lessons learned in implementing the ANS Connector Program to better serve ANS job seekers and increase their attachment to the labour force.

Through this expanded program, we will connect African Nova Scotians to mentorship, professional networking, training and job opportunities that are aligned to labour market needs and job seekers' education, experience, and career goals. We will also work with employers across sectors to develop diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce development strategies and workplace cultures. This includes continuing to work with the public and private sectors to ensure that African Nova Scotians can participate in and benefit from employment opportunities related to major infrastructure development projects such as the Cogswell Redevelopment project.







# BECOME PART OF THE JOURNEY

We are seeking new partnerships and collaborations. For inquiries or to support the work of the Road to Economic Prosperity, contact our team:

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

### **Carolann Wright**

Executive Director of ANS Road to Economic Prosperity  
and Director of Capacity Building & Strategic Initiatives,  
ANS Communities  
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## OPERATIONS

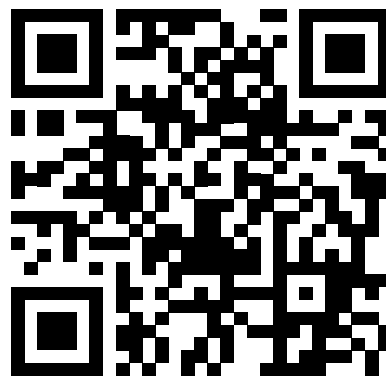
### **Tamar Pryor Brown**

Director of Operations, ANS Road to Economic Prosperity  
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## COMMUNITY LIAISON AND SUPPORT

### **Jenée Jarvis**

Governance and Capacity Building Liaison, ANS Road to  
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[jjarvis@halifaxpartnership.com](mailto:jjarvis@halifaxpartnership.com)



For up to date information about our  
work and events, visit our website, and  
follow REP on Facebook and Instagram.

[anseconomicprosperity.com](http://anseconomicprosperity.com)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVENTS

### **Chelsie Skeete**

Community Engagement and Events Specialist  
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## ANS WORKFORCE ATTACHMENT PROGRAM

### **Cora Rogers**

Workforce Attachment Specialist  
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Progress Report 2024



# **ROAD TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES**