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Energy, Innovation Top Regional Development Authorities Professional Development Conference and AGM Agenda

Liscombe Mills, NS – September 26, 2006 – Over 150 community development practitioners from the public, private and educational sectors gathered last week at the Nova Scotia Association of Regional Development Authorities' (NSARDA) Professional Development Conference and Annual General Meeting in Liscombe Mills, Guysborough County.

The sold-out conference attracted participants and sponsorship from some of the province's largest employers and leading community development organizations, including the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, various government departments from the Province of Nova Scotia, municipal government, Nova Scotia Power Inc., Keltic Petrochemicals, Maritimes & Northeast Pipelines, MacDonnell Group and others. Over the course of the three-day event, these diverse private, public and community leaders focused on finding innovative solutions to one central question: how can we harness and capitalize upon the energy of Nova Scotia's rural communities?

Professional development workshops, breakout sessions and world-renowned panelists focused on the concept of energy as it relates to natural resources, communities, businesses and the economy at large. Each of the diverse conference themes – including resource management, strategic collaboration and leadership development, featured both local and international experts including Phillip Hochman from the Municipality of the District of Guysborough, David Oxner, Director of the Nova Scotia Gateway Initiative, and internationally renowned futurist, Dr. David Fung.

According to Holly Boston, Executive Director of NSARDA, brainstorming and partnership at the local, regional and international levels is crucial to ensuring the continued growth and viability of Nova Scotia's rural communities.

"No single organization or individual has all the answers," she says. "Meeting the challenges and opportunities we face as a province requires collaboration in thought and in action at every level."

Hon. Richard Hurlburt, Minister of Economic Development, was an active participant at the conference and praised the RDAs for their collaborative work in the name of community development. "Collectively, (the RDAs) are helping all of Nova Scotia strive for sustainability, and for growth," he said. "Whether it's downtown revitalization, broadband expansion, e-commerce capacity, immigration activity, or increasing the literacy rate, RDA activity builds strength in communities."

Jo Ann Fewer, Chair of NSARDA, says the Conference and AGM provided an important opportunity for NSARDA members to share best practices and develop new ways to achieve excellence in community economic development.

"We are the voice for economic development – present in all of the nooks and crannies in Nova Scotia. If we adapt the Nova Scotia goal collectively to become the best place in Canada to live, work and raise families, we need to think and act together."

Last year, the RDAs made headlines when it became one of the first Community and Economic organizations of its kind in the world to achieve ISO 9000:2001 registration.

NSARDA is the link between Nova Scotia's community-based Regional Development Authorities (RDA), providing support and collective strength. Since 1999, NSARDA has helped the RDAs in developing grassroots, made-in-Nova Scotia solutions to community enhancement.

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