

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

Approved by Board – June 29, 2020

**SHUBENACADIE CANAL
COMMISSION**

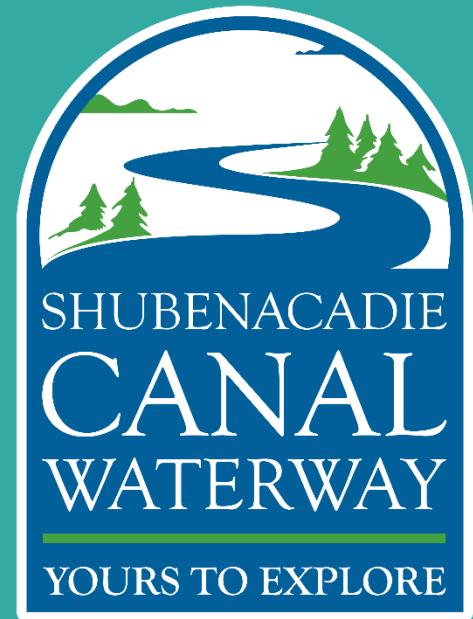


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Executive Summary

This strategic plan is intended to provide high-level guidance to the Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC) for its operations between 2020 and 2023. The framework was approved by the SCC board in April 2020 following several rounds of consultation.

The Shubenacadie Canal Waterway is recognized as a unique natural, cultural, and heritage resource. As expressed in the strategic planning process, the SCC's vision for the waterway is as a "world-class destination". Its identified mission is to restore, protect, and promote this resource, which derives directly from the SCC's founding legislation.

From this mission and vision, the main identified strategic priority was to market the waterway "as a unique heritage experience and an exceptional recreation destination." The two identified secondary priorities involve strengthening both our partnerships with other organizations and promoting greater community involvement.

The SCC's strategies for achieving these goals are outlined as three broad strategic actions:

1. Explore and initiate new opportunities that support each of the stated priorities;
2. Develop joint projects with strategic partners for synergistic outcomes; and
3. Supplement staff capability and capacity with active board members and committee work plans.

Included at the end of this strategic plan is a screening questionnaire to help guide the SCC with future opportunities.

Background

The Shubenacadie Canal Waterway

The Shubenacadie Canal Waterway is a world-class destination for recreation, historical interpretation, and cultural heritage that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Bay of Fundy. Completed in 1861, the canal system includes nine locks, two marine railways, seven lakes, several natural and artificial channels, and the Shubenacadie River. It begins at Halifax Harbour in Dartmouth and ends at the Bay of Fundy in Maitland.

Today, the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway includes a diverse range of resources. The Fairbanks Centre in Dartmouth serves as the main interpretive hub for the system, including a small museum and a working model of a set of canal locks. Lock 5 in Wellington is fully restored, although not operational, and three more locks in Dartmouth have been mostly restored. The waterway also includes the Shubenacadie Canal Marine Railway in Dartmouth, which was largely reconstructed in 2018 and opened to the public the following summer. The system is dotted throughout its length with mixed-use trails and parks, docks for small watercraft, and interpretive panels explaining the history of key sites.

The Shubenacadie Canal Commission

The Shubenacadie Canal Commission (SCC) was established through an Act of the Nova Scotia Legislature in 1986. Its mission is to restore, protect, and promote the historical, cultural, and natural heritage of the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway for all Nova Scotians, visitors, and future generations. The SCC operates and maintains several parcels of land in conjunction with provincial and municipal governments. It is headquartered at the Fairbanks Centre in Dartmouth, which it also operates.

The SCC is a registered charity with a board composed of 15 volunteer commissioners. As of 2020, it has two permanent staff positions, with additional staff often hired during peak tourist periods.

Strategic Plan Process

Beginning the Process

The previous five-year strategic plan was approved in June 2016. In 2019, the board determined that it would be prudent to create a new strategic plan, moving to a three-year cycle. The planning process for the present document began shortly thereafter.

The SCC undertook two rounds of consultation in preparation for this strategic plan. The first round took place in November 2019. A strategic planning worksheet was circulated to stakeholders in advance of an in-person planning session. This session took place on November 30, 2019, at the Fairbanks Centre. The second session took place at the SCC board meeting on February 24, 2020, and only involved the board.

Following the second planning session, a framework for the strategic plan was drafted. After multiple rounds of editing, it was approved by the board on April 19, 2020.

Drafting and Assumptions

The current strategic plan builds directly upon the framework approved on April 19. The priorities, actions, goals, impacts, and appendix from the framework have been directly incorporated into this document.

The SCC depends in large part on government funding. This strategic plan assumes that the SCC will continue to receive operational funding and support from the Province of Nova Scotia and its municipal partners at a level similar to the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

On March 22, 2020, the Nova Scotia government declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, many services were shut down, and travel was severely restricted. As of June 22, 2020, COVID-19 has been largely contained in Nova Scotia. Much of what was shut down has been reopened, but borders remain largely closed. Given the rapidly-changing nature of the pandemic, the chance of a second wave, and the uncertainty of when a vaccine may become available, it is difficult to predict the long-term effects COVID-19 will have on the SCC. It has the potential to profoundly impact our budget and the way the SCC does business. The SCC acknowledges the need for flexibility in the implementation of this plan in order to be able to seize new opportunities as they might arise.

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Vision

The Shubenacadie Canal Waterway is a world-class destination for recreation, historical interpretation, and cultural heritage that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Bay of Fundy.

Mission

To restore, protect, and promote the historical, cultural, and natural heritage of the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway for all Nova Scotians, visitors, and future generations.



Strategic Priority

Marketing the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway as a unique heritage experience and an exceptional recreation destination.



Partnership Priority

The Shubenacadie Canal Commission's ongoing viability and financial sustainability will be attained through strong partnerships, established and fostered through the initiatives of board members and staff.

Community Priority

The Shubenacadie Canal Commission will prioritize a deeper community appreciation of the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway through improved communication and designated projects.

Strategic Action 1:

Explore and initiate new opportunities that support each of the stated priorities



The Shubenacadie Canal Waterway is many things to many people, so it is important that the work of the SCC reflects this reality. At the same time, the SCC is a volunteer-run organization with limited staff capacity, and must be wary of overextending itself.

This strategic action seeks to balance the diverse needs and wants of the community with the SCC's capacity, while also leaving room for growth.

1.1

Apply screening questionnaire (Appendix A) to qualify issues and opportunities considered by board and staff.

1.2

Proactively engage communities along the waterway to develop mutual opportunities.

1.3

Develop an action plan to establish the Shubenacadie Canal Commission's long-term financial stability.

1.4

Develop an action plan to target and secure fundraising objectives. Track and report results to board and funders.

Impacts

Projects approved and initiated align with the values and stated strategic priorities of the SCC.

The SCC achieves an acceptable level of financial stability going forward.

The community understands and acknowledges the important role of the SCC.

Strategic Action 2:

Develop joint projects with strategic partners for synergistic outcomes



Three municipal governments and innumerable organizations have interests in certain aspects of the Shubenacadie Canal Waterway. The SCC is the only organization with a provincial mandate spanning the entire system from Dartmouth to Maitland.

By joining with partner associations across the province, the SCC can build on common ground while also assuming a leadership role.

2.1

Develop a qualified list of potential partners for SCC initiatives.

2.2

Commit to collaborative networking activities by staff and SCC committees to build awareness and networks.

2.3

Build and feed an informed pipeline of community leaders and compatible projects for SCC consideration.

2.4

Cultivate relationships with officials and stakeholders to further our vision and mission.

Impacts

The SCC demonstrates collaborative leadership in developing partners and building networks.

The SCC establishes itself as a reliable strategic partner with government, business, and the community.

Strategic Action 3:

Supplement staff capability and capacity with active board members and committee work plans



The SCC cannot survive without active volunteers. There are currently only two permanent staff members.

Without a substantial and sustained increase to operating funding or donations, further hiring is unrealistic.

Thankfully, the SCC already has a large community of engaged volunteers. Putting in place new procedures and guidelines will help these volunteers' contributions make an even bigger impact.

3.1

Improve board processes, appointments, and representations.

3.2

Each committee will build a work plan compatible with the strategic priorities of the SCC strategic plan.

3.3

Develop initiatives that build on present capacity and adapt new resources to that effort.

3.4

Build SOAR/SWOT analysis techniques into the committee plans.

3.5

Develop metrics to report on progress against plan goals and objectives.

Impacts

The SCC builds the internal capacity to engage and manage volunteers.

The SCC delivers projects and initiatives aligned with its strategic goals.

Appendix A

Screening questions to filter new initiatives and opportunities

1. Does this opportunity align with our mission and strategic priorities?
2. Do we have the capacity and capability to implement this with present staff, board members and volunteers?
3. Does it advance our strategic positioning as a unique heritage experience and exceptional destination?
4. Does this contribute to our financial health through funding viability and/or organizational resilience?
5. Is it relevant to the SCC mandate and the needs of the community?
6. Does it enhance public visibility by building appreciation of our history, culture and natural heritage?
7. Does it embrace inclusivity through diversity and diverse communities?
8. Is it environmentally sustainable and innovative?