

Two-year plan aims to develop Fundy as tourism destination

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TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Residents of the Upper Bay of Fundy hope a new initiative will make the region a better destination for tourists while strengthening ties between communities.

The non-profit Friends of Fundy organization has launched a two-year project, with funding from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the provincial government.

Executive director Micha Fardy said the Rural Upper Bay of Fundy Destination Development process is not a tourism strategy.

"It's about destination development," said Fardy. "When we're thinking about developing destinations, the communities have to be at the core."

Fardy said over the past 20 years, there have been a lot of tourism strategies developed for the region.

"But we've really only seen incremental progress," she said.

The rural communities involved in the plan stretch from Hillsborough, Riverside-Albert and Alma through to Sussex and St. Martins.

A news release sent last week said the 24-month process will bring together rural residents, business owners and municipal leaders to improve and maintain the long-term health of the region.

Encompassed within that area are some of the province's most iconic sites, including Fundy National Park, Hopewell Rocks, Cape Enrage and the Fundy Trail Parkway.

"The communities have been hosting four gargantuan attractions, three of them are provincial, plus the national park," said Fardy. "Tying all of those attractions together, there is a really rich cultural story."

Hillsborough Mayor Bob Rochon said the initiative means the village's interests will be integrated into a broader tourism and destination strategy.

That collaboration becomes even more important when the area outside of Riverview all the way to Alma becomes one municipality when they amalgamate in 2023.

The village has a lot to be

optimistic about.

Quest Carbon Cycles opened in 2021, Rocco's Cucina has been popular for years and the village's former grocery store is being transformed into a market. Rochon is hoping to grow momentum.

"This regional development destination strategy is only going to benefit that," said Rochon.

It's one thing to add business, but Rochon wants people to stop and stay. He said there has been a lot of traffic at White Rock Recreational Park this winter.

"If we can have places for people to stay, then we can really see some benefit from that," said Rochon.

Using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a guide, a 13-person working group co-led by Fardy will aim to create and build industry in communities.

Jordan Jamison, owner and operator of Red Rock Adventure in St. Martins and president of the village's Chamber of Commerce, said he was reading up on the United Nations World Tourism Organization and its sustainable development goals on Thursday.

"It's really cool to be working on a similar stage as a lot of other places that would be considered so much more world-class, but we can actually get there with this kind of project," said Jamison.

Jamison, who noted he wears his chamber of commerce hat when with the working group, said the project is a good opportunity to communicate with regions around them with everyone working toward the same goals.

"That's the coolest part about this project, the high level of communication that's happening between these smaller, rural communities," said Jamison.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is providing \$296,000 in funding with the province pitching in \$98,000. The first of four phases will be completed in May.

Fardy said tourism should be benefiting communities first and foremost.

"Each of these communities are unique in telling the Bay of Fundy story," said Fardy.