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Local Prosperity 2016 Miramichi Conference Community-Based Enterprises Panel Discussion Synopsis

Moderator: Andy Horsnell, Common Good Solutions

Panelists:

Krysta Cowling, Coopérative La Bikery Ltée., Moncton, NB

Laurie Cook, United Way Hubs Project, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS

Julia Feltham (Sackville Commons and Co-working)

Seth Asimakos, Saint John Community Loan Fund, Social Enterprise Hub, NB

Summary:

In this session, we heard from four different panelists, who each shared their experiences with conceiving and launching four very different community hubs:

1. **Krysta Cowling (La Bikery Co-operative)** La Bikery is a community bicycle centre, offering bike rentals and a workshop space for bicycle maintenance and repairs, located in the heart of downtown Moncton. La Bikery was founded in 2012 by a community of cyclists, thinkers, do-ers, leaders, skill-sharers, learners, and many more. It began when Chrissy Lorette, once a student and cyclist in Montréal and in Ottawa, moved back home to Moncton. She was a frequent user of community bicycle centres and co-ops while away, and found herself missing those spaces upon her return to Moncton. In the winter of 2011-2012, a local community meeting confirmed the thirst for a community bicycle centre in Greater Moncton – support for the project was strong and people were eager to contribute to the project. Research, business planning, fundraising and outreach followed. The City of Moncton allowed the developing co-operative to secure a space in a re-purposed fire station in downtown Moncton. After a summer of renovations, and with the help of many dedicated volunteers, La Bikery opened its doors in the fall of 2012. For more information, please visit labikery.ca
2. **Laurie Cook (The Old School Community Gathering Place)** Located in a Heritage building in Musquodoboit Harbour, the Old School is a centre for arts, culture and innovation. Built in the 1920's, it functioned as a school until 2006, when pupils were transferred to a new school. Eventually, the community acquired the building and, in 2011, it was designated an Historic Property. The Old School is now used by the community as a hub for musical performances, arts and culture, meetings, and Art Gallery and community-based innovation. The Art Gallery promotes and sells the work of local artists. Our music program features local musicians at the House Concerts and Coffee Houses. Space is available for local community members and entrepreneurs of all ages to meet, collaborate and attend workshops. With support from its key funder, United Way of Halifax, the Old School continues to build its local community capacity and leadership by promoting entrepreneurial skills, Eastern Shore heritage and arts & culture. For more information, please visit www.theoldschool.ca
3. **Julia Feltham (Sackville Commons and Co-working)** The Sackville Commons is a community coworking space in which profit-making exists in harmony with working for the social good. The space is a convergence of entrepreneurs, artists, artisans, non-profits and community groups working and sharing together to find and execute tangible solutions for

today's social and economic challenges. It seeks to incubate innovative ideas, programs, services and companies that bring dignity and a sustainable future to people, the local community, Atlantic Canada and the planet. The Sackville Commons provides a shared workspace for like-minded independent entrepreneurs and change workers. Members get their own desk, an ergonomic work chair, vibrant environment, great coffee, affordable rates and the energy and buzz of an active hive of workers. Located in the former Fire hall & Police station of Sackville, the not-for-profit cooperative is in the centre of town. Renovations were done in advance of a soft launch in late September 2016. For more information, please visit www.coworksackville.com

4. **Seth Asimakos (Social Enterprise Hub)** An initiative of the Saint John Community Loan Fund, the Social Enterprise Hub is a three-storey, 15,000 square foot building will be located in the heart of Saint John. The space includes the following: On the ground floor a social enterprise cafeteria used for back to work training, and an Impact Market that features a range of social enterprise products. Down the hall, micro-enterprises launched through the Loan Fund are clustered and focused on a lean start up. A maker space has a 3D printer enabling early stage prototyping. On the second floor training occurs in rooms that can be collapsed and enlarged to accommodate larger community events and pitch presentations. On the third floor, the Saint John Learning Exchange provides a range of services focused on poverty reduction. The building is tied together with the latest technology enabling seamless communication for high level productivity. Lead financial sponsors for the Hub include: Gerry Pond, the Sir James Dunn Foundation and the Regional Development Corporation. For more information, please visit loanfund.ca/sehub

The four panelists' presentations demonstrated that startup and ongoing operation of community hubs can vary widely, according to the needs, resources, values, and aspirations of the founders and their stakeholders. Session participants were impressed by the diversity of strategies used and stakeholders engaged in each community, and got a clear sense of the options and factors they might consider in launching their own hubs.

By Andy Horsnell