

DRAFT

Call to Order	18:00
Present	Members: Chair Michael Tompkins, Vice-Chair Councillor Holly Sanford, Connie Arnold, Teresa Carlisle, Sharon Hall, and Laura Robinson Administration: CAO Sandi Millett Campbell, CDC Ken Knox
Absent	None
Additions to the Agenda	None
Approval of the Agenda	NA
Edits to the Minutes	NA
Approval of the Minutes	NA

1. BUSINESS ARISING

i. Committee Projects

a. Updates- All Members

Members presented various options (see attached) to enhance marketing as well as other economic opportunities. Discussion primarily focused on strategies which will see the greatest return on marketing efforts given limited budgets and the current uncertainties related to Covid 19. It was generally agreed that there exists an opportunity for the Town, Annapolis Board of Trade, and other local business to work together to produce a coherent marketing plan.

Also, the level of the funding recommendation to Council, as well as its structure was discussed. In order to give the greatest flexibility, the final sum (when determined) will be considered “General Marketing”. This will allow for latitude in spending (related to marketing) giving access to various channels and activities. At the next MEDC meeting (9MAR21) final figures for both Grants and Donations and the General Marketing will be determined in order to make the recommendation to Council. **Discussion Tabled.**

2. Next Meeting: March 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

3. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION #MEDC2021-2-24-01 regularly moved to adjourn at 19:12

Annapolis Royal Short Term Tourism Marketing Campaign

Proposal to MEDC Special Meeting re: Projects Feb 24-2021

2020 was a hard year for all Annapolis Royal tourism operators, and Bed & Breakfasts were affected most detrimentally. Without the hope of Covid-19 restrictions being eased as we move into a new tourism season, it is a reality that we will be facing much the same this summer. Some local B and B's and other tourism operators may not survive, unless immediate action is taken to help attract more visitors to book overnight stays.

While concerning, this situation also provides a unique opportunity for Annapolis Royal. Nova Scotians, restricted from travel abroad, will be keen to plan staycations this summer, like never before. Because our demographic's travel region has been defined for us, we can efficiently put marketing dollars to targeted use.

The Strategic Plan for the Town that is being developed in the coming months, will give us a better idea, of the Town's longer-term tourism marketing plan, including priorities, actions, and costs. However, it won't be ready in time to make the impact that is needed right now.

Until it is in place, there is an immediate need and opportunity to produce a small, yet effective marketing campaign to sway Nova Scotians' to decide to come here, and stay longer, as they begin making vacation plans.

A group of local B & Bs, restaurant owners, AIRO and the Annapolis Board of Trade have been collaborating in the past few weeks and sharing their collective knowledge of the needs and interests of potential local visitors. Several are also members of MEDC and have brought good suggestions on marketing needs to the group. Within the group there is considerable marketing and proven social media marketing experience, and information on visitor needs and priorities, which we have drawn on to create this proposal.

The result is a very strategic, targeted and cost-effective marketing campaign that uses a mix of Social Media, and magazine advertising. Magazines "stay put" and are picked up and read more than other print media and their embedded photos stimulate interest from target audiences.

This campaign will directly target two specific age demographics with good disposable incomes who are most likely to be attracted to come here and stay one or more days in local accommodation this summer:

- Facebook – 44.5% of users are between the age of 25 – 44, and 21.8% of users 45+.
- Instagram – 52.8% of users are between the age of 25 – 44, and 14% of users are 45+.
- Saltscapes Magazine – 60% readers are between the age of 45 – 65 (avg age of reader 44)

We need to use these ads effectively to showcase the benefits of staying overnight and taking part in our wealth of local activities including visits to our shops and art galleries, restaurants and pubs, and visiting local attractions and taking part in outdoor recreation. When people stay here overnight, they spend much more money in a very wide range of local businesses. That has a much higher impact on the local economy than day-trip visitors, and ultimately has a positive financial benefit, not only tourism operators, but to local business and the Town itself.

We need to encourage guests to “Stay Another Day”. This is a “campaign” approach that has been used here in the past. It can be revitalized to showcase the plentiful experiences that travelers can be a part of when they visit Annapolis Royal.

We are also proposing that this short-term campaign not be funded solely by the Town of Annapolis Royal’s marketing budget, but be a collaborative effort to attract overnight visitors, that is cost-shared between the Town. Potentially a small portion could come from the Annapolis Board of Trade, depending on the results of its current funding applications. The broad “staycation” marketing campaign will also create an opportunity for local businesses who wish to take part, to invest in aligned magazine print ads that promote their own operations.

We have also researched what other Towns who are our major competitors for tourism dollars are doing – including Mahone Bay, Wolfville and Lunenburg. At the moment, they are doing very little to attract overnight stays and their websites are poor compared to the Town of Annapolis Royal’s website. We can provide suggestions for a few targeted tweaks, to enable the Town’s website to play an integral role in our proposed campaign and help Annapolis Royal stand out from the crowd even more. This would support driving social media interest to the Town’s website for tourism information.

Phase One: Attract: "Plan Your Staycation"

When: Early Spring, March through May
Social Media:

- Create an Facebook/Instagram ad campaign, using an NS cold look-alike & warm audience, 25-65+ demographic, men and women. This will use available video, and/or still imagery to promote Annapolis Royal and area as a unique NS destination for "Staycationers". Increase website traffic as "action" intended. Recommending a \$6 daily spend for 30 days at a time, each month throughout the period of March through May.
- Work with a *Content Creator (influencer)*, to do a donated package giveaway (ie. one night stay & dinner) on Instagram or Facebook in return for developing new "community" members. Increasing traction for future unpaid postings. Ideally, this would happen after Easter when most B&Bs reopen.
- Start weekly *General Asset* promotional posting on social media. The logo of business, or a photo of their business or product, even a share of that business's posts with custom copy added. (This would work really well for packages). These posts would ideally be done three times weekly, and could easily be facilitated by ABoT or Visitor Information Centre, then shared to ToAR pages. This should begin after work with a content creator has transpired.

Magazine Ads

- In years past, the Town has acted as the coordinator for a series of community marketing ad buys. Create a collaborative advertisement using "Stay Another Day" campaign, partnering with local businesses to subsidize cost of securing the ad space. To be released March/April.
- As a result of an exclusive Nova Scotian market, the images should not be Fort Anne or the Historic Gardens - these are the two most commonly seen images and to attract "staycationers" we need images that provide a new view of the Town. Perhaps the Amphitheatre, Harvest Moon Trail, a view along the beachfront, kayakers in the water, or images of Fort Anne or the gardens that are unusual and different (not the usual perspectives).
 - Saltscapes demographic reach is over 225,000 Nova Scotian readers, with an average age of 44, who have a median household income of \$78,000.
 - Because Saltscapes is Atlantic province wide, should the bubble resume, we will already be targeting the bubbled regions.

Costs:

Action	Cost
Monthly social media paid advertisements.	\$540.00

One full page ad in Saltscapes Magazine	\$4,495.00
Content Creator (Influencer) & Business Collaboration	\$0.00
Weekly Posting	\$0.00
Total	\$5,035.00
Business Collaboration Subsidization	-\$2,247.50
Final Total	\$2,787.50

Phase Two: Act: "Stay Another Day"

When: Summer, June through October

Social Media:

- Create an FB/IG ad campaign. using an NS cold look-alike & warm audience, 25-65+ demographic, men and women. Using video, and/or still imagery to promote Annapolis Royal and area as a unique NS destination for "Staycationers". Increase website traffic as "action" intended. Recommending a \$6 daily spend for 30 days at a time, each month throughout the period of June through October.
- Work with a second *Content Creator (influencer)*, to do a donated package giveaway (ie. night stay & dinner) on IG or FB in return for new "community" members. Increasing traction for future unpaid posting.
- Continue to promote *General Assets* on social media. The logo of business, or a photo of their business or product, even a share of that businesses posts with custom copy added (this would work really well for packages). These posts would ideally be done three times weekly.

Magazine Ads:

- Create a second collaborative advertisement or advertorial using "Stay Another Day" campaign, partnering with local businesses to subsidize cost of securing the ad space. To be released in June/July.
- As a result of an exclusive Nova Scotian market, the images should not be Fort Anne or the Historic Gardens - these are the two most commonly seen images and to attract "staycationers" we need images that provide a new view of the Town. Perhaps the Amphitheatre, Harvest Moon Trail, a view along the beachfront, kayakers in the water, or images of Fort Anne or the gardens that are unusual and different (not the usual perspectives).

Cost:

Action	Cost
Monthly social media paid advertisements.	\$900.00
One full page ad in Saltscapes Magazine	\$4,495.00
Content Creator (Influencer) & Business Collaboration	\$0.00
Weekly Posting	\$0.00
Total	\$5,395.00
Business Collaboration Subsidization	-\$2,247.50
Final Total	\$3,147.50

Phase Three: Act: Off Season Promotion

When: Summer, October through February

What:

- A campaign highlighting the year-round nature of Annapolis Royal and area. Focusing on winter activities and opportunities in the area. For example, Founders House in partnership with several B&Bs, sold out their Valentine's Day weekend. The Town is "open in the winter".
- The skating rink has been a resounding success with lots of community activity and the Comfort Station available for their use. We are open in the winter.
- Fort Anne is one of the best sledding areas around. We are open in the winter.
- The Winter Market is in full swing with local goods. We are open in the winter.
- We have the potential for an incredible Parade of Lights - we just need to add some lights (lantern making workshops anyone?!). You guessed it, we are open in the winter. Just keep it all "winteresting"!

If we want to be a year-round destination, we have to start telling people that we are! This is a project that would kick in for next winter but planning must begin now - working out the details of what to promote and how is critical. These things need to get added

to NovaScotia.com - they will promote winter activities and packages if we provide them with the information!

- Using similar marketing methods as listed in the earlier Phases of this campaign.

Phase Four: Act: Town's Long Term Marketing Plan – Learning from Experience

As the Town's own long-term strategic marketing plan begins to form, we can continue to plug these smaller marketing action projects into the larger plan, with refined audiences & therefore, refined outcomes.

List of Proposed Projects for MEDC/Town to consider undertaking

January 12-2021

From MEDC Member Sharon Hall

1. **Make better use of the Annapolis Basin and our nearby waterways for both local use, to attract more young people to the area and to attract tourists** interested in the new international trend in travel for rugged outdoor recreation

- a. **Develop a marina close to downtown** or on the west side of the causeway close to the NS Power Building.

It would stimulate the development of local businesses to serve the marina, and create opportunities for tours guide business around hiking in the extensive un-promoted Annapolis Valley recreation trail system and canoeing and kayaking on the Annapolis River and other Valley waterways

2. **Increase Town's tax base by expanding the borders of the Town** to include Lequille, Granville Ferry and possibly all the way down Granville Road to Victoria Beach to include those areas that are using Annapolis Royal as a shopping and services hub.

- a. It would allow for larger retail stores to be developed just outside the historic downtown, in Granville Ferry, keeping more local money in the hands of local business and further adding to the Town's tax base.
- b. This would likely improve local municipal services to those areas. Care would have to be taken to manage it in a way that doesn't penalize the new areas by ensuring their taxes reflect the differing levels of municipal services they would receive from the Town.
- c. This would expand the geographic area that could be one-day be designated as an internationally protected UNESCO world heritage site, so that Fort Anne, the Habitation and the Melanson site, Granville Road

(oldest road in Canada) would all be included, along with the multi-cultural aspect of recognizing unceded Mi'kmaq lands, and the significance of the Lequille area to both Acadian and black loyalist settlers.

3. **Develop improved recognition by the Province for the iconic significance of our historic Town**, in the Provincial and Canadian historical landscape as a National Historic site and seek funding for marketing and promotion of our Town as the centre of a natural tourism corridor. This would benefit regional tourism both east and west of the Town, attract both tourists and potentially new residents and businesses to both the Annapolis Valley and out toward the Acadian shore.
 - a. Will need to work with the new Premier to move this agenda forward ASAP.
4. **Address Historic and old building eyesores in Town**: deterioration/lack of building and yard maintenance. This presents a bad image of the Town to both visitors and newcomers as we promote the Town as a great place to live.
 - a. There are a few buildings in town that are empty and appear uncared for, with messy, weed-filled yards: #364 St. George Street, the empty white apartment building on the corner of Drury Lane and St. Anthony Street, and a few on Victoria Street that look like they may be lived in but are not being taken care of in the cared or exterior. And there are probably others if we look around.
 - b. Can the Town take steps to contact the owners about stepping up repairs and yards maintenance? In some municipalities, they serve notice on owners that clean-up is required by a deadline and if it's not done, the Municipality can then come in and have it done and charge the cost back to the owners.
5. **Develop small, attractive promotional and wayfinding signage within the Downtown core** to encourage better circulation of walking traffic around the Town so visitors discover a wider array of shopping opportunities. This will also enhance the experience of being in the Town by helping both local people and

tourists appreciate the historic and cultural significance of what they are seeing as they stroll through the Town. These signs can help to tell our story and increase local pride and send visitors away with a sense of having visited a magical place they want to tell others about. Also create signage that points to useful things like washrooms, the Market, art galleries, restaurants etc. This could be an action under a New Town Marketing Plan.

6. **Gordonstoun School** has the potential to provide great benefit to the Town and through increasing the demand for a variety of personal, professional and maintenance services. It would be good if the Town starts to liaise with Ed Ferren Construction, the development firm in charge, and also works with Annapolis County to ensure the potential benefits and potential challenges are recognized and addressed so the local economy can grow and the whole area can benefit from this large scale project that could affect our area for many years.
7. **Work with the new Annapolis County Council** to collaborate effectively on common issues such as Gordonstoun, tourism marketing etc.
8. **Develop a 3-year Town of Annapolis Tourism Marketing Strategy and Implementation plan** (with the help of a marketing professional) so the Town can establish its marketing and promotion priorities and budget, to attract new residents and to support the attraction of more tourism visitors who will stay overnight and spend more money on local attractions and services. This will benefit broad local business growth, and in turn benefit the growth of the Town's tax base.
 - a. Under the Marketing plan develop more effective slogans and taglines that will speak to the different types of target audiences we are trying to attract to the area. Considering using the Cradle of our Nation tagline differently, perhaps in conjunction with language that speaks more effectively to visitors who are interested in coming here for other reasons than history.
 - b. Develop more effective promotional signage (not just way-finding) that points out significant landmarks and historically and culturally significant

- areas of the Town and which encourages more foot traffic circulation from the Market and up the hill to Fort Anne and beyond.
- c. Support the creation of a local walking guide for visitors and locals by Annapolis Country Recreation in partnership with the Annapolis Board of Trade. It would describe short and longer walks and areas of special interest.
9. **Address the use of the NSPI Power station building** to help preserve the Town's tax base while creating a viable enterprise that enhances interest in the town by visitors and residents alike.
10. **Public Washroom development near the "O" Amphitheatre**
Public washrooms at least Porta-potties (not ideal) are needed near the theatre for people strolling the Town in the evening after Fort Anne is closed. Seniors and young children may have urgency issues and not be able to make it down to the Comfort Station.
- a. Ensure the Comfort Station is open later in the evening and on weekends in the tourism months with good signage at the station and in the upper business district of St. George Street.
- While other cities may not need to do this, we don't have a lot of food and beverage businesses or large retail stores open late in the evening with good washroom facilities for people to come in and use, so its incumbent on the town to be welcoming and service oriented toward visitors if it to compete with the experience travellers are having elsewhere.
11. **Get proactive with the County to push for faster progress on getting better Internet services into the Town and surrounding area.** Poor internet is a huge impediment to attracting new residents who will bring new businesses and jobs to the area and add to our Town tax base. And its an annoyance to tourists and locals alike who can experience big gaps and patchy Wi-Fi service downtown, and then can't go online to find out what's going on and take advantage of the many local service and attractions offerings.

- 12. Develop a campaign to attract younger people to the area in and around Annapolis Royal,** especially once our internet service is better. They are able to work and run businesses remotely. Many young people want to live in the countryside and raise their kids in rural areas and the cost of living and buying a house is prohibitively expensive in most other parts of Canada.
- 13. Commit to participating in becoming a UNESCO world heritage site through participation in a local Committee to initiate the process and seek funding to put forward an application.**

The Annapolis Board of Trade and local Parks Canada reps are interested in taking part in such a committee and other interested groups will also want to come on Board, once it's started.

We have as many, if not more, legitimate reasons to be granted this designation than Lunenburg and Grand Pre, who have already attained the designation. We need to start research with them to find out what needs to take place, and start seeking funding to help us develop an effective, well-researched application.

A great deal of other comprehensive and complex background work must be started soon to develop a meaningful and well-presented application that will merit consideration by this prestigious international body. If we wait, we won't be ready to be first at the door, when the application process re-opens and it could cost us decades more of wait time.

Marketing Tourism Proposal for Annapolis Royal During COVID19 “Bubble”

Connie Arnold (16 November 2020)

1. **Promote packages:** My main thought is that we need to draw people in for more than a day trip – even aiming for multiple night stays. This could be tested via packages that include lodging, some meals, admissions/tickets, etc.. This should be a good approach to drawing visitors from other provinces. As we know, Haligonians typically come for the day – and because it’s just a 4-hour round trip, this is not an easy problem to solve. While others may have better ideas, these are some packages that come to mind:
 - a. *Culture packages* – tickets to Kings and ARCAC events, and other cultural (art, music, film, drama, dance) activities that might be available. If they are presented during 2021, Paint the Town and FODAR (I’d be cautious here since anything can get shut down with little notice).
 - b. *History* (dovetails somewhat with culture) – Fort Anne, museums, Alan Melanson tours. It would be good to drum up an architectural history tour.
 - c. *Food/drink packages* – wine tastings, special dinners, farm-to-table experiences (if available), etc.
 - d. *“Specialty” packages* – could include bird-watching guides, genealogy (assuming O’Dell is open), and gardening for various ‘niches’ (could be hosted by HG; some topics are native plants, pollinators, herbs, landscaping/garden architecture, etc., and combined with plant sale.)
 - e. *Sports/Recreation* – fishing, kayaking, canoeing, cycling, etc.
 - f. *Nature* – hiking, birdwatching, etc. I think there are tours offered (by reservation) of the French Basin Trail.
 - g. *Family fun* – skate park, Raven Haven and frankly, mostly just the ‘nature’ list now, with a side of history? A farm vacation side trip might be a draw, especially for families with kids 11 and under. Or even a one-day pass at AR’s public pool. With the loss of the amusement park, there’s no nearby ‘big draw’ attraction for families that I know of. Closest might be Aylesford’s Oaklawn Zoo, which for inter-provincial visitors might be a draw. (NB’s last zoo shut down this year, as I recall.).
 - h. *Holidays* – Valentine’s, Easter (assuming Eggstravaganza happens) Canada Day, Natal Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving, Xmas. Many would be good for family gatherings, but obviously a lot of things shut down except for summer, so it would take some interested parties (accommodations/restaurants) to ‘open up’ for a 2-3 day weekend. I think it’s an interesting test, though, to make AR tourism more ‘year-round’. Cross-country skiing, ice skating or bird-watching are the only ‘activities’ I can think of that might happen in winter, and could be dicey...very hard to predict weather conditions.
 - i. *Off-season bargains* – offer 3 nights for price of 2, and/or activity choices such as tickets to Kings.

Just got this pop-up ad from Charlottetown PEI, and boy, it’s exactly what I’d envision for AR. Separate website: DiscoverCharlottetown. Package deals: romance – shop - island getaway - ‘value,’ etc. Wide range of hotel prices and amenities. Food coupons sometimes to specific restaurants. Link to sport tourism. I’d love to know how they do. It’s targeted to Xmas travel. (My daughter is thinking of PEI vacation in Jan., and we might go together and include Charlottetown!)

At any rate, you might want to check it out: www.discovercharlottetown.com/places-to-stay/packages/

2. **Promotion vehicles:** This is the biggest challenge. I’m assuming online promotion only, though it would be wonderful to find other vehicles. (Radio comes to mind, though I’ve never done radio commercials, and best approach I can think of is a prize – weekend trip – to get leads and publicity. Main attraction is that from what I remember, radio is generally cheap and easy to test.)

While it's very possible that I've just not run into the best online sites for NS, I've not seen any one site that sticks out from the crowd or draws many viewers. Those I have seen: Visit Nova Scotia, Doers and Dreamers, novascotia.com, capture nova scotia, we love nova scotia, nova scotia travel (or maybe travel nova scotia – can't read my notes!), inn-spired travel nova scotia, inns at nova scotia, nova scotia nice. – Frankly, IMO a whole lot of wheels but not one 18-wheeler to command the road! Not that we could do this, but it makes me gnash teeth that we couldn't just access AirBNB or other international site – even marketing to attract local travelers, they would get far more hits.

3. **Accommodations.** I am not sure how the BOT would operate here. Obviously town of AR is mainly interested in our own accommodations, which are largely B&Bs. I'm of the persuasion that 'a rising tide lifts all boats' so I wouldn't quibble with listing some that are close to AR. However, the main focus of this would be to boost tourism in AR itself... with focus on activities in or near AR ... so a bit of a conundrum here. Without getting into slicing the markets too thin, I would suggest offering some packages with a choice of accommodations -- mostly cheaper/more rustic vs. higher end. Especially for families, cabins or camping options might work best, and also attract those who bring dogs.. I don't have strong opinions here (other than I think we need to offer options, in part because it increases response and makes analysis more valuable), but this could be a good brainstorming session.
4. **Measuring response:** This dovetails into budget. I come out of direct response marketing, which famously focuses on traceable response, so the marketer knows quickly which offers and markets are the most profitable. For this, packages are ideal, because tourists will have reserved much of it in advance. However, there are some packages that might be harder to trace anything other than accommodation, so that's when I think discount coupons are useful. For example, restaurant meals (at specific restaurants that participate) could be a flat amount, or offer 20% off, or a free drink (wine at fine dining places; coffee or soda at others) and/or free salad or dessert, etc. Shops could also offer discounts, and BTW, the general rule of thumb in direct marketing is that dollar figures are actually better than percentage discounts, and discounts of under 20% are not very compelling. (Shop discounts or even 'real money' coupons could be offered in any package deal, of course, and might help revive the many shops nearly shuttered by COVID.)

This brings up the issue of who pays for the discounts? (Discounts could be emailed for printing, or passed out at the accommodation at check-in, or simply available as an app to show the restaurant or shop.) I think it might work to make it a 50-50 split between the business and whoever picks up the rest of the tab (town marketing budget or BOT). Not all shops would want to participate anyway, and those that participate help pay their way by absorbing 50%. The important thing is for ALL merchants to keep track of who used them – not with full info on the person, but noting whether it's a couple or family, for example, and especially what province/town they're from. That helps build a more useful analysis. For example, if you see that 10 people came from NB and 7 from PEI, it looks like NB brings in more tourist dollars. But if you review the records, and discover that NB tourists stayed in cheaper accommodations and ate at cheaper restaurants and used no coupons in shops, while PEI traveled with larger families, and brought in more high-end spenders who bought from the shops – the bottom line is the name of the game – not just numbers, but how much is spent.

I hope all this is clear, but in the interest of brevity, I'll stop here and you can follow up if need be.

5. **Budgeting**: As indicated already, MEDC thinks this entire project would dovetail more with BOT than with town. I think it might make a good partnership. If a proposal that seemed to attract approval from MEDC and Town Council could be ready before the town budget is finalized, it's possible they could contribute. So I think we'd have until January to propose and get something approved. Then budgeting starts. (Note: we could test something for Valentine's or Easter, which might be instructive. Again, Atlantic Bubble folks are getting cabin fever, so it's a good time to entice them to AR for a good time!)

So that's what I've thought of so far. Please let me know what you think, and if BOT might be interested.

Thanks!

Connie Arnold (arnoldconnie@yahoo.ca; 902-286-2060)

Councillor Tompkins reminded all that the deadline for projects is the January meeting.

Action: Develop project ideas which align to the Committee mandate Responsibility: All members of MEDC Date: for 12 January MEDC meeting. **Connie Arnold suggested a marketing tie-up with local businesses. Action: further research on business/town tie-ups (as appropriate).** Responsibility: Connie Arnold. Date: for 12 January MEDC meeting

I'm going to restrict my observations and suggestions to **marketing approaches**. I have no experience with blogs/influencers. I think Teresa recommended this approach, so perhaps she can suggest some initiatives. My background is direct marketing so I'll stay in that sphere.

BTW, I agree with Sharon that it's best to partner with nearby destinations (Digby especially, but also Bear River and Bridgetown) because it's hard to persuade tourists to travel a significant distance to one small town. Best to have enough for the destination to be considered a multi-day stop to explore. This will be especially important if the 2021 tourist season is still depressed and mostly accessible to those in other Atlantic provinces. (Vaccine rollouts are not exactly proceeding at warp speed. It's quite possible that vaccine efforts will take most of the year.)

One suggestion: Instead of using the town's website (annapolisroyal.com) with its link to 'visitors' (with other links for accommodations, dining, etc.), launch a specific tourism website. I'd suggest "**visitannapolisroyal.com**". The use of 'visit' is fairly common for tourist sites. Of course, a link from town's website would be needed. I'm impressed by the website set up for exploreannapolisroyal.com, and perhaps some efforts to integrate this site with the town's would be useful and save duplication of effort. Photos, which are the driver for tourism promotion, are used well, and the listing of every kind of activity seems thorough, though I assume it will need updating. Note that it never hurts to keep stockpiling great photos, so AR might sponsor a photo competition and gain access to more photos. And if AR can move to 4-season tourism, it's worthwhile to get photo entries from all 4 seasons!

I also think that the use of 'suggested itineraries' on a tourism website is useful in alerting visitors that there's LOTS to do here. Don't just stroll down St. George, enjoy the water view, and hop back in your car. Much of NS is afflicted with such 'drive-by tourism', but AR doesn't need to be. We have the infrastructure in terms of attractions, accommodations, dining, etc., to keep people happily exploring for 2-5+ days, depending on their interests.

I wish we had better ways to connect with internet booking services for accommodations. Expedia, booking.com, TripAdvisor, etc., are huge drivers for tourism. BTW, while TripAdvisor and Booking sort out the AR accommodations, Expedia blends them into the general area (Digby and BR especially, and in fact there are only a few B&Bs in a fairly long list that are AR accommodations.)

But compared to these 3 (plus AirBnb, VRBO, etc.) the NS-based sites I see on web (including official NS gov't tourism site) don't likely get much traffic.

So what's out there for NS? Here's what I've seen on these sites. I hope it's not exhaustive because it sure isn't much!

- A) **theculturetrip.com** has a '10 most beautiful towns in NS, Canada' which includes AR and Digby. The AR blurb focuses on our history, and calls AR "a must visit", while the Digby blurb mentions transit to NB and plugs the scallops for dining.
- B) **Trip Advisor** has a page on AR if you search for it, but it's nothing special. A couple of accommodations are mentioned, and a few restaurants, plus HG and Fort Anne. From what I know, these are pretty much 'reader-built' sites, so it would be useful if we worked at supplementing it, especially with info on King's Theatre, other activities (not just graveyard tour, but events like Paint the Town), and much more on AR as centre for artists and home to so many lovely B&Bs and fine shops and restaurants. The availability of a spa, as one example, is now a draw for some people. Nearby golf might draw others. Birdwatching and other 'nature' activities, plus of course our history and architecture, may be the biggest draws.
- C) **Explore the Annapolis Valley** link to **novascotia.com** : 3 day itinerary 1) Wolfville, plugging Grand Pre (link), Tangled Garden (link), Wine Country (link) including Wolfville Magic Winery Bus (link), and restaurants/pubs (link). Ends with plug for Hall's Harbour, mainly to put in link to Hall's Harbour Lobster Pound & Restaurant. 2) **Annapolis Royal /Port Royal/Fort Anne** (no mention of lodging or meals, BUT mentions Candlelight Graveyard Tour with link (not a plug, though – just a mention) 3) Digby, where they plug both dining (no mention of individual restaurants – they plug 'scallops'), and accommodations and Digby Pines Golf Resort & Spa (link) Plug for Digby Ferry 4) Keji and National Historic Site – plug petroglyphs, hiking, canoeing, campsites (link) and one company (Whynot Adventure Outfitters link)
- D) **Novascotia.com** has a '**step back in history**' 7 day itinerary which includes AR. It progresses from Halifax, Lunenburg, Liverpool, Shelburne, Birchtown, Keji, then AR, Wolfville, Pictou, Iona, Baddeck and ending in Louisbourg. (BTW, IMO you'd end these 7 days pretty exhausted). Some blurbs recommend restaurants, sightseeing outfits, etc. The AR blurb plugs the Candlelight Tour, and says to check out the inns and B&Bs or motels, but otherwise just mentions Fort Anne and Port Royal.

E) **Inns of novascotia.ca** has some specials (“Romance package” in Wolfville at Tattingstone Inn) “Explore Parrsboro at Gillespie House Inn; Sip into the Season (apparently run in winter) as a guided tour (transport provided) with wine-tasting / beer tour based from Wolfville with Tattingstone Inn as lodging. Likewise the “Charcuterie & Wine” is also at Tattingstone; has link for “**Whale and Seabird Adventure**” package that includes **HILLSDALE HOUSE**, with \$255 (plus tax) for 2 people that includes one night; bottle of wine from unnamed NS vineyard; 2 tickets for Ocean Explorations’ Zodiac’ Whale adventure; 2nd night at Hillsdale only \$99 (definitely a bargain, eh? I checked a midweek price in late May for one night and it was \$244 plus tax) . Hillsdale has a link on their website for ‘packages and specials’ but nothing is listed – just ‘contact us’.

F) **Individual accommodation “specials”:** 1) Tattingstone Inn (Wolfville) has package deals for wine&beer tasting, ‘romance’, ‘charcuterie’. 2) Gillespie House Inn in Parrsboro offers one night lodging plus theatre or concert tickets plus dinner at BlackRock Bistro during July / August. It actually looks too cheap at “from \$135 per person,” but room rates mid-week in late May are only in the \$120-130 range for double occupancy. 3) **Whale watching package: lodging at Harbourview Inn/Smith’s Cove:** one-night package \$277 & 2 nights \$378; optional package on Zodiac inflatable is \$448 for 2 nights. . Based on late May mid-week rates, the Harbourview Inn regular rates are also pretty cheap at \$144-\$169 plus tax.

I frankly am intrigued with the ‘**discovercharlottetown.com**’ website, which offers a variety of packages, including winter promotions, though no activities. Some accommodations offer dining gift cards, complimentary wine/beer. I am pretty sure that their fall promotions (I think I looked at the site in November) included activity options. I personally think this is a model that AR could follow, though I don’t know if partnership with BOT would be workable.

My recommendation:

Assess interest among AR businesses (lodgings, restaurants, shops, activities) in promoting AR as a destination that includes accommodations, dining, shopping, and activities. My preference would be to follow the Charlottetown model, including discounts or cash savings for those who shop, dine, or book services in AR. We would need to devise a system for tracking response. I have no idea if marketing grants might be available to help underwrite the cost. We might want to talk to the people in Charlottetown to learn whether they have tested their approach (versus simply adopting it) and whether it is working well for the participating hotels and restaurants. Whether now or in the future, we might consider partnering with other localities, especially Digby. I also think AR needs to ‘brand’ itself on every communication. “**Cradle of Our Nation**” is memorable - and not a moniker easily swiped by competing towns!

Aside of perhaps some interest:

One of my daughter's neighbours in Halifax runs her own guided tour company, which of course basically disappeared this past year. We had a quick chat, and I wish I'd had a notepad, because I found some of her comments quite startling. She said, for ex., that she actually had an itinerary that included AR, but other tour companies in NS strictly focused on Halifax, Lunenburg, Peggy's Cove, and maybe one or two other locations that I don't remember. And this was not just policy, but due to financial ties. (I don't want to try to reconstruct other details unless I speak to her again – with a notebook and pen in hand!) At any rate, it's rather strong evidence that AR (and other tourism destinations in the Valley) might need to promote themselves. Obviously the internet is our friend, but without a dedicated tourism site and website links that bring in a lot of traffic, AR will not likely be able to boost online traffic to the level needed.

And this, BTW, could be another (small) route to increasing tourism: **Reach out to tour operators to encourage them to visit AR, especially for overnight stays that include dining and other activities (Candlelight tour, shopping discounts, etc.), and offering special rates to their clients, for example.** It might not hurt to 'comp' some tour operators for an overnight to develop some interest and knowledge about AR and its attractions.

Submitted 10 January 2021 for 12 January MEDC meeting:

Connie Arnold

From: [Holly Sanford](#)
To: [Ken Knox](#)
Cc: [m.tompkins@fairway.ca](#); [Amery Boyer](#); [Sandi Millett-Campbell](#); [teresa@carlislehouse.ca](#); [arnoldconnie@yahoo.ca](#); [lrobinson@foundershousedining.com](#); [Michael Tompkins](#); [info@sharoncoach.com](#)
Subject: Special MEDC Meeting
Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 4:53:56 PM
Attachments: [PastedGraphic-1.png](#)
[PastedGraphic-2.png](#)

Hi Everyone,

“Small Town - Big Heart”

Love the idea of bringing back “stay another day”. Buying ads on social media, Town website, Town Crier and the Explorer Guide are the best ways to reach locals and tourists. We have promotional videos that are well done and can be used. Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce is a great partner with the Town and has done a lot of advertising for the Town for a very small fee.

We had a successful parade of lights during a pandemic and it would be great if we could put a small amount into the Christmas fund for this year.

Encouraging people to move here. Especially younger families. That too can be as easy as reaching out to our realtors to ensure they have all the correct information. For example great internet to work from home. Cost free except time. I would love to look into a much bigger approach in the future.

Way finding signs downtown need to be looked at. However, with the current state of emergency I feel it's not necessary this year. We could make it a priority for next year.

Marina would be great to revisit. Perhaps to gain more attention/excitement to our waterway would be to encourage more activities on the water. Potentially having a business down by the boardwalk like kayak & canoe rentals and day trips on a boat. Of course this would not be run by the Town. Private business owner is what I was thinking. The more we encourage the use of the waterfront the more excited people will be to expand to a Marina. (Sorry no cost analysts for this one). To be honest it wouldn't initially cost the Town anything except promoting it. Website, social media & Town crier.

Working with VIC, Board of Trade, Attractions, and all business owners including AIRO are smart and effective ways to increase our marketing reach. If the Town could budget \$4000.00 to marketing and promoting then perhaps the above parties could also contribute. This would give “Town” a great boost for the upcoming season and including the shoulder season. It's important that we are all on the same page. We are too small not to be!

Our target this year is an easy one. The Maritime provinces would really be our only focus. People coming down from HRM are so ready to get away. Once the “bubble” burst I honestly believe we are going to see a much bigger surge of visitors then last year. So lets showcase Annapolis Royal!

\$3000.00 Advertising & Christmas

\$1000.00 AVCC

Thanks,

Holly