

# Diversify economy to prepare for climate change, Blacks Harbour council told

**ENVIRONMENT:** dependence on marine economy a key weakness as oceans warm

Barb Rayner

BLACKS HARBOUR

Economic diversification may need to be explored in the Blacks Harbour area in order to safeguard the community's economic wellbeing against the changing ocean conditions.

This is one of the recommendations from the Community Vulnerability Assessment of Climate Change and Variability Impacts in Charlotte County compiled by Eastern Charlotte Waterways (ECW) and the St. Croix Estuary Project.

Donald Killorn, executive director of ECW, presented the material compiled on Blacks Harbour at Wednesday night's village council meeting.

While there are no sea level rise concerns here as there are in Saint Andrews, he said there are going to be some challenges. The economic base of the community is founded, almost entirely, on the fishing industry and, as such, ocean acidification and warming was of great concern to the working group members into the future.

Issues related to shell formation and migration of harvested species due to warming ocean temperatures were discussed and how the greater fisheries might be impacted if any one species is threatened.

The harvesting and manufacturing/processing of marine species has been long established as the main source of economic income in the community so economic diversification was discussed because of the potential impact of a changing ocean environment.

"The nature of the ocean is going to change and a community built on the ocean is going to have to find a way to change with it. The problem is we don't know what the ocean is going to look like in 25 years."

Killorn noted that there is no body of water on the planet that is warming faster than the Bay of Fundy and the environmental change is greater than you will find anywhere else in the world.

"It is a real issue and it is not going away so whatever we can do between the private and public sector to brace for some of these changes will be of benefit to the community."

Killorn said the working group was also interested in access to safe drinking water and felt there was a need to better understand the aquifer which provides drinking water to Pennfield, Beaver Harbour and Blacks Harbour as well as to determine if the aquifer is at risk due to climate change and the associated impacts.

Although the impacts from recent storm events have been relatively minor in Blacks Harbour compared with some other communities in Charlotte County, emergency measures were discussed by the working group.

The December ice storm had a significant impact in the area and comments have since been made publicly by residents and local government about the lack of preparedness and emergency response.

"This was something we saw throughout (Charlotte County). How is the Regional Service Commission going to address EMO planning and are there things people can do to limit the effects on St. George and St. Stephen? Here, we don't have to be too concerned about destructive flooding."

Donald Killorn

*"The nature of the ocean is going to change and a community built on the ocean is going to have to find a way to change with it."*

The Blacks Harbour working group indicated that EMO planning needed to be improved as there is no designated emergency plan or shelter for the area. There was discussion that the school could be used as an emergency shelter if a generator could be purchased.

Now that this report has been completed, Killorn said the next step will be to come up with a plan addressing the continuing changes to the marine environment in Blacks Harbour.

He noted that he has a couple of pet projects he would like to see in the village - a community garden and a skate park - and he said ECW will assist wherever it can.

Asked to elaborate more on the rising ocean temperatures in the Bay of Fundy, Killorn said it was "a little bit terrifying".

"If I was a lobster fisherman in Beaver Harbour or Blacks Harbour I would be very, very concerned about these enormous yields. I would think the next thing would be, there would be no lobster. I am not an expert but I have learned enough to be concerned."