

Building the world's most cosmopolitan small city – together

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The IWK Health Centre epitomizes what is right with health care in our province: expertise, empathy, and excellence. These pillars are achieved only through the hard work and dedication of skilled employees. Yet there is a shortage of skilled health care workers. Smart organizations look beyond their own borders for experienced workers.

"There is no question that issues of recruitment and retention are significant. Immigrants help us fulfill our mandate," says Brian MacDougall, IWK vice president, operations and support services.

It is not enough, of course, simply to recognize that immigrants are needed. There must be a plan in place to attract – and keep – newcomers to our province. The Greater Halifax Partnership has just unveiled such a strategy for Atlantic Canada's largest community.

In partnership with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and other community stakeholders, the Greater Halifax Partnership commissioned Halifax Global to prepare a community approach that would open doors, open borders and open opportunities. The Halifax Region Immigration Strategy identifies three key components on the road to success.

First comes building on the elements of federal legislation and the province's own immigration approach. Next is concentrating more fully on integrating into the community those immigrants already living in Greater Halifax so they remain here with opportunities for future growth. Finally, we need to work with our Francophone and international communities to identify and attract immigrants to Halifax who will be able to integrate quickly and effectively into the community.

"Over time, this strategic approach has the potential to transform Halifax into the world's most cosmopolitan small city," says Greater Halifax Partnership president and CEO Stephen Dempsey.

The need for transformation is great. The number of high school graduates in Nova Scotia is projected to drop by more



Courtesy of Halifax International Airport Authority

The Halifax Region Immigration Strategy identifies the need for planning now for future growth.

than 20 per cent within the next 10 years, which will have a dramatic effect on university enrollment and, ultimately, the local labour force. At present, only seven percent of Halifax's population is foreign born. That means a lack of cultural diversity and vibrancy for the city; it also means increasing constraints on our ability to attract young people to the region.

Aliant is a company that understands the importance of attracting and keeping talented people. "Retaining our youth and attracting new Canadians will translate into new, fresh ideas for our communities. Aliant is currently working with or-

ganizations such as the Metro Immigrant Settlement Association to explore how we can improve our ability to attract the immigrant and international student populations," says David Rathbun, Aliant senior vice-president, corporate, and chief human resources officer.

"By taking steps now to improve the attraction, integration and retention of international immigrants in Halifax, we will be building the foundation for continued economic growth and a very bright future for our region," says Mr. Dempsey.

One important part of that foundation is the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, to

further assist immigrants who wish to work and live here. The program provides opportunities for immigrants and their families. Its goal is to help the province meet industrial, economic and labour market needs, resulting in a more diverse workforce and economy.

There are, not surprisingly, barriers to immigration. As part of its SmartBusiness consultations with local companies, the Greater Halifax Partnership has identified language skills, cultural differences, and professional qualification recognition as the top concerns.

"Understanding the barriers enable us

to overcome them. It's important that there be a good fit between the immigrant workers and the company, just as with any other employee hiring," says Mohja Alia, an employment counsellor with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association.

"A willing and accepting employer is key in integrating immigrant workers into the workforce."

Working with SmartBusiness and directly with potential employees helps to reduce these barriers and make them manageable. That was the case with Inventive Marine Products Ltd. The 14-year-old Halifax company recently hired its first immigrant worker.

"We're delighted to welcome Ernesto Yeroyero to our team. He is a hard worker and always willing to help out in other areas, as well as driving for us," says president Douglas Judge.

"Language is a challenge," he adds, "but we can meet the challenge. Actually, Ernesto's mother language is Spanish. We have clients in Mexico, Chile, Cuba and other countries and Ernesto can help us communicate with them as well. We're looking into English as a second language programs at MISA. In winter, our business slows down a little and there is time for training."

The Halifax Region Immigration Strategy identifies the need for planning now for future growth and development. There is a sense of urgency. SmartBusiness data shows that some occupations are already feeling the shortage of skilled labour including salespersons/business development; computer programmers/IT specialists; medical lab technicians; physicians; engineers and tradespeople.

Looking beyond our borders to enhance business is not new for many firms, such as the CGI Group Inc., a global leader in information technology.

"Employees are the backbone of any successful company, and it is important to build a team with the skills and expertise – and energy – to achieve your vision," says Cecil Smith, senior vice president, Atlantic Region.

"We're willing to invest in our employees, and we're willing to invest in newcomers to Atlantic Canada," he adds.

Such investment pays off – for everyone.

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Leading the Smart Growth of Greater Halifax

... Investing in the success of our business community

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Aliant Inc.
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Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
ATV/CTV
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Cenex Inc.
CGI Group Inc.
The Chronicle Herald
Clearwater Fine Foods Inc.
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Credit Union Atlantic
Dalhousie University
Deloitte
Delta Hotels Barrington & Halifax
DownEast Communications
Ergoworks Atlantic
Extreme Group
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Gerald Walsh Associates Inc.
Global Television
The Globe and Mail
Grant Thornton LLP
Halifax International Airport Authority
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Halifax Regional Municipality
Helly Hansen Canada Ltd.
IBM Canada Ltd.
IKON Office Solutions
International Trade Canada
Internet Solutions
IWK Health Centre
Ledgell, The Corporate Learning Centre Inc.
Linx Strategies
Manulife Financial
Metro Guide Publishing
Metro Radio Group
Mount Saint Vincent University

MT&L Public Affairs Limited
Nova Scotia Community College
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NRC Institute for Marine Biosciences
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Office Interiors
Pattison Outdoor Advertising
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Province of Nova Scotia
Purdy's Wharf / GWL Realty Advisors
RBC Financial Group

Royal LePage Commercial Eastern Inc.
Saint Mary's University
Scotiabank
Shell Canada Ltd.
ShiftCentral
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Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales
Syntact Consulting
Tiger Lily Coaching Services Inc.
Trade Centre Limited
Viacom Outdoor
The Westin Nova Scotian
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Arrow Advantage
Ashburn Golf Club
Atlantic Digital Reproductions Inc.
Atlantic Film Festival
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Black Business Initiative
Boyne Clarke
Bluteau DeVenney & Company
Burgess Transfer & Storage Limited
Business Development Bank of Canada
CBCL Limited

CIBC
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Eastern Vault & Security
Ernst & Young LLP
Export Development Canada
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Four Points by Sheraton Halifax
Grand & Toy
Haisley Millar Consulting Group Inc.
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Sandler Sales Institute
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SolutionInc Limited
Symphony Nova Scotia
TD Bank Financial Group
Terrain Group Inc.
Time & Space Media Limited
Waterfront Development Corporation Limited
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