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Hub cities key to our future

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Hub cities are economic engines that benefit entire provinces. In the case of Halifax, this hub city benefits an entire region. Research shows that by increasing investment in and supporting the hub, other communities benefit with increased economic prosperity.

In Atlantic Canada, that prosperity spreads to all four provinces, according to The Conference Board of Canada. A report prepared by the Board, Canada's Hub Cities: A Driving Force of the National Economy, identified eight cities that function as hub cities for their province and a ninth city, Halifax, that functions as a hub city for the Atlantic Provinces.

The Conference Board recommends strategically focusing on municipal investments in hub cities instead of spreading funds across the country on a per-capita basis.

"Supporting hub cities creates a win-win for all communities and regions across Canada," says Mario Lefebvre, director, Metropolitan Outlook Service with The Conference Board. "When the economically leading city in a province prospers, so does the rest of the province as a whole. Economic growth in a provincial or regional hub has a coat-tail effect driving an even faster rate of growth in small communities within that province."

Halifax Regional Municipality is undeniably the economic hub of Atlantic Canada. The region accounts for 47 per cent of provincial gross domestic product, and about 20 per cent of Atlantic Canada's GDP.

"HRM has become a growth engine for the entire region," notes Mayor Peter Kelly. "Strong business and transportation services in HRM, such as the Halifax International Airport and the Port of Halifax, benefit communities throughout the region."

"However," he adds, "we cannot be



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Sold signs adorn newly-built homes in Halifax's north end.

complacent and expect this growth to continue, we have to carefully nurture the conditions for growth. The decisions and investments we make today and the priorities we set now will affect us over the next two decades."

Guiding those decisions is the region's new economic strategy, Strategies for Success, which will serve as a roadmap for growth and development in HRM until 2010.

"This strategy has been prepared as an essential component in defining our future and ensuring that future is within our grasp," says Dan English, HRM's chief administrative officer. "Quite simply, we want to be the envy of the world."

Building on the dynamic and prosperous hub that is HRM will move our community a long way towards achieving that goal. Greater Halifax is the prime economic driver, or hub, both for Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region. In fact, the community has the largest economy east of Quebec and north of Boston.

According to The Conference Board of Canada, Greater Halifax acts as a hub city for the entire Atlantic region.

"Our unemployment rate has been consistently at or below the national average for at least the last 10 years, and our retail sales are stronger than ever. One only has to look around at the number of construction cranes in the city to understand that investment drives economic prosperity," says Stephen Dempsey, president and CEO, Greater Halifax Partnership.

Collaboration, he adds, is critical to driving that prosperity. The Partnership has been proud to work closely, for example, with Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI) and other partners to draw companies to the area and help existing firms expand operations. Such joint efforts recently resulted in the arrival of three international finance companies opening offices in Halifax.

"Halifax is increasingly being recognized as a world-class destination for international business," says Stephen Lund, president and CEO of NSBI. "A strong and vibrant economic engine here will contribute not only to a more prosperous province, but a more robust Atlantic region. Based on the concept of Halifax as a strong regional centre, we also believe in a strategy that supports a series of strong, hub centres across the province," Lund adds.

Positive attitudes toward work help define Nova Scotians, says Jim Meek, editor of The Inside Out Report, Atlantic Canada's in-depth journal of public opinion.

"We know from our own research that Nova Scotians are deeply committed to the success of the organizations for which they work," says Meek. "We also know from external research that this attitude toward work is a comparative advantage for Nova Scotia. If you want to find a loyal and dedicated workforce in Canada, this is a great place to do business. The pride in our work is strongly linked to our attachment to the province."

And we know that by taking care of our capital city — the hub city — all of our communities will prosper.



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A condominium complex currently under construction in Halifax's south end. Research shows that by increasing investment in and supporting the hub, other communities benefit with increased economic prosperity.

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Bluteau DeVenney and Company Inc.
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Halifax Chamber of Commerce
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