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# Exporting excellence — welcome to Halifax

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Halifax is well positioned for exporting. Indeed, the province's capital city is one of the best locations in North America from which to launch and expand an exporting enterprise, says Stephen Dempsey, president and CEO of the Greater Halifax Partnership.

"If you were looking to build an export-driven city today, you'd build Halifax," he notes. "Everything you need is here. We're no longer on the edge. We're in the centre — of everything."

We're certainly in the middle of the circle — the Great Circle Route. Halifax is a prime stopping point along the route, which offers the shortest and most effective courses for vessels en route to or from New York as well as other international destinations. Making the port even more attractive for shippers is the fact that it is the only location on the East Coast that can handle fully laden post-Panamax container vessels and its strategic location connecting both NAFTA and the EU — the two largest trading blocks in the world.

This is only the beginning. A major new cargo distribution and warehouse facility being built in Dartmouth will reinforce Nova Scotia's position as a leading gateway to North American markets and create hundreds of new jobs. Consolidated Fastfrate's state-of-the-art transload, distribution and warehouse centre will process about 70 marine containers daily.

Consolidated Fastfrate will spend about \$10 million to construct the 90,000 square-foot facility in the Burnside Industrial Park. Construction is expected to be finished later this year. A second phase, estimated at an additional cost of \$3 million that could add up to 60,000 additional square feet, is also anticipated within two years.

Halifax was chosen as the site for the new facility because of its competitive advantages as a major shipping and distribution hub for North America, says Karen Oldfield, president and CEO of the Halifax Port Authority.

"Growing the port's containerized cargo business is our primary focus. Having Consolidated Fastfrate as a key port partner certainly enhances the services available to shippers and shipping lines moving containers through Halifax," she adds.

Halifax also boasts a seamless intermodal connection from ship to the CN line into the heart of North America. This rail link, combined with some of the most affordable rail freight rates in North America, gives Halifax a considerable competitive advantage over ports on the U.S. East Coast. It makes Atlantic Canada an attractive entry point to the whole continent.

The advantages offered by the Port of Halifax and CN Rail are echoed in another major transportation sector: air travel. Halifax International Airport has more flights to more destinations than any other airport in Atlantic Canada, welcoming more than three million passengers each year. With the best full-service passenger and air cargo facilities, and the widest range of prices and frequencies, Halifax International Airport is among the busiest in the country.

Much of that activity is linked to exporting and importing, says Eleanor Humphries, HIAA president and CEO. "The airport," she notes, "handles upwards of 30,000 tonnes of cargo annually."

Assets, such as strong and thriving transportation centres, are critical to the success of exporting excellence. But they are only part of the success story. Partnerships are equally critical. Those partnerships, notes Mr. Dempsey, occur within the province, within the country and around the world.

Close to home Nova Scotia Business Inc., the Halifax Port Authority, the Airport Authority, the Greater Halifax Partnership and Trade Team Nova Scotia work closely together to identify connections with companies, opportunities and solutions to problems. The partnership pays off. In 2004-05, international exports were up 10 per cent over the previous year, in spite of a weak U.S. dollar, natural gas sales grew in value, manufacturing



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shipments rose 7.4 per cent, and capital investment increased.

"Results like this don't just happen," says NSBI president and CEO Stephen Lund. "They are the outcome of focus,

strategy, and purposeful action."

That action varies according to where along the export continuum a company is located. At one end of the continuum, notes Jim Simpson, manager, trade devel-

opment with NSBI, are start-up companies thinking about exporting. On the other end are multinational firms with branch offices in countries around the world.

At NSBI, the focus is on small and medium-sized export-ready companies. "We help companies find prospects," explains Mr. Simpson. "We set up meetings so companies can go and sell."

Taking action is also at the heart of the work being done by the Halifax Gateway Council, an organization made up of stakeholders in the transportation and logistics industry. "The Gateway Council," says Karen Oldfield, "is about seeing the bigger picture."

Its objectives are to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of transportation and goods through the Halifax Gateway and promote awareness of the Gateway and its importance to the provincial, regional and national economy.

That importance cannot be underemphasized, says Mr. Dempsey. "Halifax is a central gateway to Canada and the world. The Halifax Gateway is more important to Greater Halifax than any other gateway in the nation. It accounts for more than 28,000 jobs directly or indirectly and generates about 16 per cent of all economic activity in Greater Halifax."

As world trade grows, so will the Halifax Gateway. The Mercator Transport Group, a Seattle-based consulting firm, has identified Halifax as one of only two East Coast ports in all of North America that is capable of handling the new generation of container ships, for example.

The key is to be ready for the next wave of exporting. In part, that means having the goods and services required to support the global marketplace. It also means having the vision. Ironically, that vision may take us back in time. "We have to return to the thriving mercantile culture that created this city and this province," says Stephen Dempsey. "We need to look outside our boundaries."

"It only takes a glimpse, he adds, to see the possibilities. "If you want to be in the export market, this is the city, and the province, you want to be in."

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