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Thanks Fred.

It's a pleasure to be here for what is in fact my first official speaking engagement as President and CEO of the Greater Halifax Partnership.

And I am very happy that it is in front of such an important audience.

The Partnership is the catalyst for economic growth and confidence in Greater Halifax, the economic hub of Atlantic Canada.

We're a true public-private partnership, bringing together all three levels of government and over 130 private-sector investors.

Many of whom are here today.

I've noted, too, that there are some potential investors among – rest assured I will be calling!

----- *first 90 days/about me* -----

Working at the Partnership really is a dream opportunity for someone like me.

It's an organization I have always held in high regard.

Why? Because the Partnership has a team of talented people, many of whom I have worked with before and now, I have the chance to work with them every day.

It's a team that I can now say firsthand is single-minded in its duty to promote growth in our city.

And as anyone who knows me will tell you I have always been passionate about this our city.

So I have realized that for the better part of the last 15 years, in an informal way,

I have been selling the region and working to position it positively in the eyes of others.

It has always come naturally to me.

From my involvement in community organizations to being a regional representative with national organizations, I have taken every opportunity to sing the praises of Halifax.

Now it's my day job.

My first 90 days have been a whirlwind...

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In my first week, the Board affirmed the mission of our organization: keep and grow business, attract new investment and strengthen our community to create confidence, economic growth and prosperity.

I have been meeting with representatives from business, the Chamber, government and all of the groups and organizations that play a role in growing our city and region.

These meetings have validated in my mind the role the Partnership plays, how we best collaborate and make the right connections to accelerate economic growth.

And I can tell you there is tremendous passion for our region with everyone I meet.

It's a deep and strong commitment to doing what is best, now and for the future.

There's an underlying, sometimes understated, confidence, too.

And this is important as we progress because, like any diverse and growing region, there are complexities and challenges that need to be understood and addressed collaboratively if we are to succeed.

----- *Themes* -----

For me, there are three priorities that will lead us to successful growth.

One is promoting and marketing Halifax as the Economic Hub of Atlantic Canada.

The second is active collaboration – nurturing existing relationships and striking up new strategic partnerships that will help grow our economy.

And the third is alignment – between government and the private sector and between the three levels of government.

These ideas are central to our future growth.

And critical to the successful implementation of these ideas is the presence of active leadership.

----- *hub/downtown* -----

As Fred pointed out, it is indisputable that Halifax is the economic hub of Nova Scotia and our entire region. So what are some of the things we need to focus on that will fuel this economic engine?

Let's start with our downtown core. As our urban showroom is it really all that it should be?

A strong, vibrant downtown tells our citizens and visitors that Halifax is a city where exciting things are happening.

A city you want to be part of.

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Investing in our downtown shows our young people, our business community, our homeowners and our visitors that we believe in our city's future.

We must actively advocate for reinvestment in our downtown. Our entire city's success, from Chebucto Road to Chezzetcook, is connected to the economic strength of our downtown core.

Tax dollars from growth and investment in the urban centre will be spent services and infrastructure across all of Greater Halifax.

Even if you never set foot on Barrington Street, money spent there and its economic growth will help you.

Because the taxes generated by downtown business pay for parks, for pools, for snowplowing and sewer service...all across the city.

The growth of our downtown is vital to our city's success. We must identify ways to accelerate growth and investment in our urban core.

And just as the success of downtown drives the success of our city...Halifax's growth will help the rest of the Atlantic region.

Fred has talked about the "hub cities" concept, as defined by the Conference Board of Canada.

Because of our mix of economic sectors, our transportation and financial services, our universities and highly educated workforce, our stable mix of public and private employers who often times are working together, like how DND is intertwined with the defense and aerospace sector, we are the economic heart for our entire region.

That doesn't mean we grow at the expense of other cities in Atlantic Canada.

In fact, prosperity for Halifax means better times for Sydney, for Moncton, for St. John's and Charlottetown, and all the areas in between.

Because growth radiates outward like ripples on a pond from a pebble's splash: it starts in the centre with a strong downtown. A strong downtown makes for a stronger urban area. A stronger urban area makes for a stronger suburban area ...and so on and so on...

Our growth radiates across all of Atlantic Canada.

For Halifax, economic growth is not an option – it's an obligation.

----- *collaboration* -----

How do we do it? I believe we'll find the answer through collaboration.

That's a word people throw around a lot. It can be a buzzword. But it has real meaning here. Think about what we could do as a community, and as a region, if we all worked as hard at creating value for others as we do for ourselves.

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Collaboration, if focused and strategic, has a multiplier effect.

If we thought about the communities in our region as collaborators, rather than competitors, there's no limit to how far we could go.

We do not grow strong by fighting amongst ourselves. We grow strong by cheering each other's successes, by taking inspiration from them, by knowing that each new employer, each big concert or event brought to our region draws attention, investment and growth to us all.

Growth in Moncton is good for Halifax. Growth in Halifax is good for Summerside. And so on.

So we all have a lot to gain from Halifax's growth. But growth requires investment.

It means our landscape will change.

We need that to happen.

We've taken a big step in that direction for our urban core with HRM by Design.

It will allow large development projects to move forward in our "showroom".

HRM's Regional Plan maps out how we want our entire city to move into the future.

There are exciting development plans like the Twisted Sisters building and International Place downtown.

But we need to move past the planning to execution. To construction. To growth.

I've talked to a lot of developers. They're keen to get started. But they're waiting for a signal. They're waiting to see if two marquee projects, a new world trade and convention centre and a central library, are approved and funded.

I believe both of these projects are key to a rejuvenation of a new wave of much needed development.

And I want to say here that it is natural to want to be cautious in tough economic times.

Fear of the unknown or breaking with the past is understandable.

But these fears have to be overcome.

We must be bold and embrace the future with all of its challenges and uncertainties.

We have the tools and the regulatory regime to ensure that new developments will enhance and brighten our city. It is time to press ahead.

We need to trust our collective ability as a community to build a more dynamic and vibrant capital city. One that will create opportunities for our young people; our children and our generations to come.

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----- *alignment* -----

And as we grow, we must focus on economic development that leads to benefits for all.

As a community, we must focus our energies on the things that will have the greatest impact. Obviously, that means we must agree on what those interests are.

This is not achievable without all three levels of government and the private sector aligning their efforts and their interests.

We must get together, identify our priorities and find the resources to meet them.

Luckily, we're not starting from scratch.

We have our Halifax Region Economic Strategy. We're currently in the last year of this strategy, which is now being discussed with all three levels of government.

It will be reviewed and renewed this year, and I believe this will lead to unprecedented cooperation, alignment, and success.

We'll need to choose the sectors that will lead our future growth.

These sectors must be aligned with similar efforts by the Province and the Federal government.

Sectors like insurance, finance, information and communications technology, aerospace, the environment, oceans, and an often overlooked area - The Department of National Defence.

It would be wonderful if we could grow them all, but we can't do it all at once. We need to focus.

Another area where we need focus is our status as the main entry point of the Atlantic Gateway. There are obvious benefits here. We already have Stanfield International Airport.

We have the only post-Panamax cranes in Atlantic Canada, at the Port of Halifax.

We have a logistics park dedicated to transload, where companies like Armour and Consolidated FastFrate have already located.

Alignment of interests, effort and funding is - again - the key.

The Partnership manages the Halifax Gateway Council. But the province, and many other communities, has their own gateway priorities and positions.

There are a lot of voices here, and not all of them are being heard clearly in Ottawa.

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I firmly believe it makes sense to invest Gateway money and effort in Halifax, where the majority of the assets are located.

Investment in Halifax will pay dividends for the region, as I mentioned earlier.

We need to get together. We need to align our interests. We must agree on the best approach and then speak with one voice.

----- *leadership/close* -----

But all of these things -making the most of our Hub City and Gateway assets, better aligning our economic development efforts, collaboration, revitalizing our downtown core – all require one common component – leadership.

Leadership from the Greater Halifax Partnership; leadership from our municipal, federal and provincial governments.

Leadership from citizens, the business community and other economic development organizations like NSBI, Destination Halifax and others.

Leadership from you here in this room today.

How many of you have been in to see us at the Partnership?

To give us your thoughts on growing our city.

If you haven't – drop in. Call me. Send me an email. Tweet.

Our city – like the future – belongs to all of us.

So let's build the kind of city – and the kind of future – we want ... together.