

**NOTES FOR CATHY BENNETT
PRESIDENT, ST. JOHN'S BOARD OF TRADE
Atlantic Provinces Transportation Forum
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The concept of an Atlantic Gateway – as well as “Atlantica” – is getting an increasing level of attention locally.

Now, the Government of Canada seems ready to invest in it too, having given active support to the Pacific Gateway in Vancouver/Prince Rupert, and included in Budget 2007 money for more development of gateways and corridors in other parts of the country.

There is mixed response, in the business community and in various other circles, ranging from outright opposition to the Gateway initiative to optimism over the potential benefits to this province to utter uncertainty. However, our observation is that, by far, the reaction is one of skepticism and concern and a lot of uncertainty. This stems partly from the idea that whatever is Halifax's gain must be Newfoundland and Labrador's loss (whether that's a real threat or a perceived one).

Most would agree that being outcompeted by Halifax and other Atlantic Canadian ports and centres for business – Asian-based container traffic or whatever -- is nobody's fault but our own. However, the other element of concern in the case of the Gateway is the fact that this is federal government driven. So, in that case, the fears may be justified that federal **policy and funding with respect to trade and transportation infrastructure, regulation, etc. will be skewed heavily toward meeting the interests of one hub as a primary Atlantic Gateway at the expense of others in the region.**

On the other hand, Halifax is clearly being positioned and touted as a Gateway hub and “super port” that will capitalize on increased marine **container traffic** – whether you label it the Atlantic Gateway initiative or not. Given the Port of Halifax's geographic location, existing infrastructure, capacity, and linkages to mainland road and rail networks, it is difficult for St. John's to compete on this front. It's even more of a challenge – for St. John's, Halifax, and other Atlantic Canadian ports – when you consider the competition along the eastern seaboard of the U.S. – ports like in Norfolk, Virginia; Savannah, Georgia; and New York, etc.

Transportation Network St. John's and NL

***Strengths**

- capacity (when others are over)
- location with respect to EU
- etc.

*Weaknesses:

- infrastructure and capacity deficits
- Newfoundland is an island and distant from heartland markets in N. America.
- limited multimodal connection
- etc.

The question becomes, **what potential benefits and opportunities exist for Newfoundland and Labrador** when it comes to a marine-based transportation Gateway located in the region?

- What about future capacity in Halifax, Saint John, and other eastern seaboard ports, and what does it mean for St. John's? Is there spillover potential for us if activity increases in these other ports? How can we increase our share of international marine container traffic?
- Might there be expanded **short-sea shipping** opportunities for the port of St. John's, etc.?
- What about Argentia's strengths, and other NL ports? Placentia Bay's strategic location, potential for oil and ore refinery.
- Can NL ports like Argentia and St. John's play a role in customs/security clearance? In transshipment activity to/from other east coast N. America ports.
- What about our strategic position with respect to eastward trade and shipping (e.g. Europe), as well as benefits from the boom in traffic from Asia.
- Where does the Gulf ferry service fit in to the Atlantic Gateway?
- What about the future potential for a fixed link and the development of the Labrador/Quebec North Shore route?

Stakeholders in NL, primarily business and government, need to get engaged in the Gateway.

As a province, we should take the Gateway debate as a clear cue that Newfoundland and Labrador – the provincial government as the lead – needs a comprehensive, forward-looking Transportation Strategy and vision, with an eye to our overall economic competitiveness and development goals.