

GREETINGS

The fact is that any increase in economic activity in Atlantic Canada is a benefit to all, either directly or indirectly. I am one who believes that Atlantic Canada can brag about its economic success as well as Central Canada.

As a region we need to break down the inter-provincial trade barriers and work as one. We need to pick a major feeder port, which subsequently could be Halifax for obvious reasons, embrace the idea and move on. We cannot show the world our internal feuds; it would only deter international customers. A prime example on how this can happen is to look at what has happened in British Columbia. **When troubles brew, customers run.**

Breaking down the barriers also means between the New England States and Atlantic Canada. Currently the trucking industry will be paying close to half a billion dollars this year in border security and service fees to move back and forth across the Canada/US Border.

Atlantic Canada and Canada's next customers are not only in Boston. They are in India, Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East and Europe. Imagine the economic benefits on local economies if products from all over North America were channeled through Atlantic Canada and the reverse thereof. The benefits are endless.

One of the biggest benefits, from a trucking industry perspective and shared by the general population, is the backhaul capacity. Currently we consume more than we manufacture, therefore, the trucking industry has to reposition equipment generally to Central Canada to reload products for Atlantic Canada and usually empty or at a lower

cost. This comes at a cost to the inbound shipments thus making our consumables more expensive. Loads from Atlantic Canada back west would better balance the traffic. This would happen if freight increased at any Atlantic port destined inland.

With that concept we will need to focus on current infrastructure from all major cities west. We would have to have commitment from the federal level to expand and improve on our federally obligated highways such as the TCH and Marine Atlantic Inc. Businesses will not wait to see a 10-year study to take place. They want immediate action. Therefore if traffic increases on the Gulf we better be prepared to expand the infrastructure to meet the demand, and more quickly than in the past. The same should also apply to our highways. We will need to make considerable investment in highway infrastructure to protect the traveling public.

We need to focus on concepts such as harmonization between the Atlantic Region and the eastern seaboard. Although improving, it still struggles with different rules in each province or state that impede movement freely.

Newfoundland and Labrador has always been able to market its products and services to the rest of Atlantic Canada and the New England States. With increased transportation volumes through Atlantic Canada it would only mean better and more frequent services and a bigger market to market our products and services. Also with the corridor more active to India, the Middle East and Asia, look at the endless market there also.

In closing I would like to say that historically our highway infrastructure has been at the bottom of the list. As the

current government is demonstrating, infrastructure investment is crucial for economic growth, that also stands to reason for our vital link, our ferry service. Capital investment is needed immediately and ongoing.