

APTF 2007 –Summary Comments

In his opening remarks Dave Vardy noted that this forum was about “exploring opportunities” and that we should not expect “definitive answers”. In this context, it is a curious and somewhat contradictory twist of fate that I was asked to provide a summary of conclusions.

Many of us came to the forum with (a) various and perhaps loosely defined notions of an “Atlantic Gateway”, (b) a few preconceived ideas on where it might be located, whether one or multiple sites, and (c) concerns and hopes for its implications for Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Amidst this uncertainty, it was clear that most participants were unanimous on the point that change in shipping is in the making, a process is underway that has considerable momentum and there is an urgent need to better understand what is happening and make determinations how this province can be part of and profit from the evolving changes in sea shipping.

David Chaundy provided an instructive Atlantic Canada volumes and flows context and I feel at least two of his points warrant repetition. The first is that there is considerable potential for air cargo growth in this region. If we look beyond the region and take account of our geographic position, we might also note our proximity to the eastern Arctic which is highly dependent on air cargo during the lengthy circumpolar winter. His second point relates to the opportunity for backhaul and the room for growth in exporting from NL to Asian markets.

Throughout the day we regularly heard the need expressed for the review of regulations and the modernization of Cabotage regulations and change in Canadian shipping policies indeed, Richard Hodgson advocated increased debate on shipping policy.

There was considerable reference to short sea shipping opportunities for NL; in fact, it would be less than a stretch to contend that short sea shipping emerged as the sleeper theme of the day. This point is not insignificant especially in view of the potential for short sea shipping from NL up the St. Lawrence, within this province, to other parts of Atlantic Canada, the eastern seaboard of the U.S. and the eastern Arctic and the emerging potential of the North West Passage.

Peter Woodward reinforced the short sea shipping opportunities and advantages on the basis of cost .He stressed the cost advantage of sea shipping and expressed the view that we are moving too much by road; and' with trucking costs on the rise, it is time to *get more moving by water*. Mr. Woodward and Bill Stirling noted the emerging opportunities for shipping to Canada's North and being prepared to tap opportunities to utilize the North West Passage as a means of reaching developing markets in Canada's northwest.

Minister Hickey's keynote address confirmed Government's monitoring of the Atlantic Canada Gateway discussion and development, and perhaps highlighted the need for a continuing focused analysis of opportunities and benefits. The Minister's presentation gives reason to highlight David Chaundy's point that "...focus and a sense of urgency is required if this (the Atlantic Gateway) is to move forward".

Glen Etchegary's presentation quietly referenced the Oceanex theme "*We move what matters*". *Moving what matters* is vitally important in all aspects of our lives and provides an exit point for this "summary of conclusions". We would do well to determine what it is about this Atlantic Gateway and attendant opportunities that truly *matters*, and after giving that due consideration, turn to *moving* that which *matter most*. I hope that this Atlantic Provinces Transportation Forum has moved you in this manner.

Ron Sparkes
08 June 2007