

A Lasting Investment for Nova Scotia's Economy

A thriving tourism sector depends on attracting new visitors. Attracting those customers in the absence of crucial conference and event infrastructure is nearly impossible. This is the challenge facing many regions across Canada, including Nova Scotia. Today's travelers have a multitude of options at their fingertips. To help Nova Scotia attract more visitors in this highly competitive market, we need to invest in new infrastructure that will put the province front and centre as a preferred destination. A new conference and event facility in Halifax would increase Nova Scotia's profile and exposure and will become a key economic generator for the province as a whole.

The tourism industry has long enjoyed a strong, co-operative relationship with the major events and conventions business. Conventions and major events attract thousands of people to Nova Scotia who may not otherwise visit our province.

The lack of space in the current World Trade and Convention Centre facility means that Nova Scotia is being forced to turn away business. In the last 18 months alone, we have lost close to 70 conferences – these were returning customers who have simply outgrown Halifax's existing facilities. This represents a loss of more than 86,000 room nights. The economic impact of this type of lost business is significant and is primarily due to the fact that Nova Scotia is one of the few provinces in Canada without a modern convention centre that can accommodate more than 1,000 delegates.

The conventions business draws influential groups of professionals, decision makers and experts who have money to spend. A convention delegate will spend up to \$1,000 during their stay in addition to what they would regularly spend to travel to Nova Scotia. That revenue goes directly into restaurants, attractions, shops and entertainment. It also supports taxes which in turn pay for education,

health care and other public services. In addition to all of this, conventions and major events also create the opportunity for return visits and repeat business.

Consider the impact of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race. The event itself meant an early start to the 2008 tourism season. With an estimated \$3.92 million in direct expenditures for Nova Scotia, over 55 per cent of the crews participating toured sights and attractions while in Halifax. When asked, 95 per cent indicated that a return trip to Nova Scotia was in their future.

Promoting the benefits of these events creates new opportunities for tourism operators across Nova Scotia. In essence, these events serve as gateways that bring new visitors to our province and into the smaller communities across rural Nova Scotia. The 2003 World Junior Hockey Championships brought games to Sydney, Truro, New Glasgow and Antigonish. In 2004, the World Women's Hockey Championships not only meant games in other parts of the province but pre-event training camps in areas like Yarmouth, Amherst and Bridgewater, to name but a few. The result was towns bustling with the energy and enthusiasm of the athletes and spectators that filled local restaurants and accommodations.

A new convention centre in Nova Scotia's capital city will help our province attract more conferences and major events to the province. Trade Centre Limited, Nova Scotia's crown corporation responsible for attracting events and conventions to the province, already works closely with regional development authorities to transfer expertise, support bids for new events and refer business. They have identified that the lack of a larger, modern facility is holding us back from realizing our potential with this key sector of business.

Building on strong relationships already in place in every corner of the province, the construction of a new convention centre will give Nova Scotia an even stronger business case to attract more major events, with jobs, dollars and

benefits for tourism operators, other small businesses and communities across the province.

With its strategic east coast location, strong airline connections to major North American cities and Europe, and outstanding service sector, Nova Scotia is an obvious choice for event and convention planners. Combined with our province's natural advantages of picturesque coastal vistas on the Atlantic Ocean, a welcoming and hospitable people and a rich local culture, the advantages of choosing Nova Scotia become clear.

What is being proposed for Halifax in terms of size and capacity is perfect for Nova Scotia – those opposed should not be comparing this development to much larger centres that have extraordinarily larger convention capacity which makes them much more vulnerable during economic downturns. The current facility has become an important economic driver for the province over the past 10 years, hosting in excess of 8 million attendees and generating almost \$975 million in direct expenditures, resulting in over \$40 million in provincial tax revenues.

The business case is strong and irrefutable. A new development is a good news story for Nova Scotians, we will actually be investing in a development that will immediately create jobs and economic activity throughout the entire province.

An investment in a new convention centre will be one of the most significant investments the province's tourism sector has experienced in decades and will indeed position Nova Scotia as a destination of choice for world class conferences and major events. This initiative will be a major part of Nova Scotia's future economic stability.

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