

BUSINESS VOICE

HALIFAX'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE

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CHANGE ACTIONS**

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BEYOND PRINT**

Taking off into new markets

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**THE REAL ESTATE MARKET
IN 2021**

Becoming a 'bonfire'

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NOVA SCOTIA BUSINESS
**STIMULUS
GIVEAWAY**

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AFFINITY PARTNERS

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Chamber members have access to a wide range of business insurance products and services, advice and other benefits.



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**HALIFAX
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

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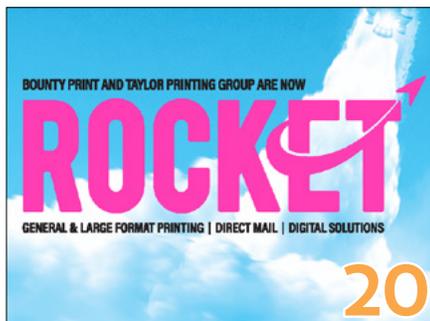
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We made a conscious decision to look at a rebrand: to drop 'printing' from our name and to become really more of an overall communications company." — **Scott Williams, CEO, Rocket**

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HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CHAMBER EVENTS

For a full and up-to-date list of Chamber events, please visit halifaxchamber.com/events

Contact chris@halifaxchamber.com for sponsorship opportunities

WEBINARS

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

The Data Behind Shopping Local

April 8
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

Practical Projects for Business Today

April 13
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

Negotiation Training

April 22
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

VIRTUAL EVENTS

Chamber 101

with **Patti Dow**,
Member Services Specialist

April 21
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

Cindy's Benefits Meeting

April 13
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

April 23
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

2021 VIRTUAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

April 29
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

POLICY & ADVOCACY

For more info on Chamber policy and advocacy work, please visit halifaxchamber.com/advocacy

Thoughtful Thursdays

Over the past eleven months, the Halifax Chamber has been working diligently to ensure our members are up-to-date and aware of the programs, services, and announcements that could impact their business. We have also spent countless hours chatting with members, producing relevant webinar material, and advocating the government for increased supports and common-sense policies. While there is still much work to be done as we begin recovery, we thought this might be a great time to introduce a new series to the Chamber's LinkedIn page: **Thoughtful Thursdays**.

Our advocacy work is often quite specific, focusing on issues like taxes, transit, and red tape. But now we are providing another platform for more open discussions on trending issues, current events, and business ideas. Check back on Thursdays for a new piece once a month and leave us a comment or send us a message. We would love to get a conversation going in hopes of inspiring a more thoughtful Thursday.

This month's piece is on entrepreneurship. [Read here](#) and let us know your thoughts in the comments!

Navigating diversity and inclusion

Driving change and moving forward together



ANN DIVINE
FOUNDER & CEO,
ASHANTI LEADERSHIP
& PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

April is designated as Diversity Month and we, at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, want to acknowledge the importance of this diversity and inclusion and what this means for our Board, staff, members and all our stakeholders. Diversity plays a central role in driving economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians.

I'm Ann Divine, incoming chair of the Halifax Chamber Board of Directors HR & Governance Committee, which offers oversight of the corporate governance issues to ensure the appropriate processes, structures and information necessary to contribute to the success of the organization.

We acknowledge that 2020 was a tumultuous year for all of us—having experienced the COVID-19 and the brutal murder of George Floyd in May 2020. These two pandemics gave us the opportunity to take an introspective look at our organization and the diverse communities we serve.

As a country, province and city, we know that “Canada’s great diversity is both competitive and a difference-maker for businesses.”* And at the heart, our future success is our ability to draw on diverse perspectives, innovativeness, creativity and thought which are contributors to

our economic success. However, we are also aware that diversity and inclusion are hard won. Business leaders and companies alike must work harder with clear intentions to increase diversity of our membership at the Chamber to better represent our business and diverse communities we serve.

We have had to take stock and look at our own policies and practices to make changes. We know as an organization, we are just at the beginning of this journey and seeing real progress will be slow. This requires everyone to be patient. Be prepared to listen, learn, share and act with intentions. Every member is responsible to make their contribution if we are going to be successful.

Over the past year, we have seen examples of collaborative effort and inclusiveness from diverse businesses, government, community and not-for-profit organizations as we sought creative ways to remain in business and thrive. Such actions took courageous leadership and passion on the part of everyone bringing their authentic voices and diverse perspectives to the table. This was a unique opportunity where we worked in a manner which we have never done before.

Even though there were significant challenges during the heart of the crisis, we can also celebrate the small successes. This was evident by the new businesses and new members who joined us, including those who remained members with the Chamber. We are delighted to share that, for the first time in our Chamber’s history, we have an even

more diverse Board of Directors. They are willing to lend their time, skills and knowledge to our organization. This will serve to strengthen the Chamber and lend further credibility to the diversity and inclusions which we are taking forward in our organization.

The work of the Chamber is not in the hands of a few; we want to capitalize on growing diversity of our city and province. We also want to make every effort to win over the confidence and trust of those communities who have been marginalized and left behind for such a long time. It is our intention to collaborate with organizations of difference. To achieve this, businesses will need to be more open and transparent. We must cultivate and grow a much more visibly diverse membership that is reflective of our city.

We want to build a vibrant and robust business community where young business owners—who are versed in the knowledge of technological change, agility, adaptability and resiliency—can join us and share their expertise as we move forward together.

Our goal is to be intentional and to take action that will drive inclusive conversations, challenge discrimination and remove systemic barriers, which have long been a hinderance to progress for some. We want our organization to offer a safe space where all members can feel included. This will enable them to unlock their true potential and drive economic growth, prosperity and sustainability.

**Quote from Deloitte Canada 175, 2019*



NEW & NOTED

We welcome our new Chamber members

ABC & C AUTO INC

Brittany Dufour

Halifax, NS
(902) 479-1334

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TRANSPORTATION - Automotive
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BIG WAVES

Big Waves supports organizations and changemakers to address individual inner obstacles, confront interpersonal challenges, and build skills and imagination to think and act systemically toward their vision for the future. Leadership development, conflict transformation, organizational change, systems thinking and doing. To create a more socially, economically and environmentally just world, we must think big and follow through with big actions.

Brook Thorndycraft

Halifax, NS
(647) 218-8303

brook@bigwaves.ca
bigwaves.ca

EDUCATION & PROF.
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BNV Media Inc. is a podcast production and multimedia company that offers brands, companies and individuals full service audio/video production for podcasts and other digital media. BNV Media's studio is located in the heart of downtown Halifax with a beautiful view of Halifax Harbour.

Marc Boudreau

5121 Sackville St Suite 601
Halifax, NS
(902) 497-4099

marc@bnvmedia.ca
bnvmedia.ca

COMMUNICATIONS - Podcasting

CALDERA DISTILLING INC

Jarret Stuart

65 River John Rd
River John, NS

(902) 706-8413

jarretstuart@me.com
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- Beverage Sales

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Halifax, NS
(782) 414-1097

dparsenault7@gmail.com

REAL ESTATE/CONSTRUCTION -
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Chris Keefe

6052 Quinpool Rd
Halifax, NS
(902) 444-7666

chris.keefe@edwardjones.com
edwardjones.ca

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(902) 497-1245

nancy@esgpartners.ca
esgpartners.ca

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Dartmouth, NS
(902) 488-5586

shelley_todd1976@hotmail.com

SHOPPING & SPECIALTY RETAIL -
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Anne Marie MacDonald

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Halifax, NS
(902) 493-3058

annie@halifaxchc.ca
halifaxchc.ca

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HALIFAX WEB SERVICES LTD

We are a web development company based in the heart and soul of Kijipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki (Halifax, Nova Scotia). Our creative and vibrant team of web developers and consultants are highly-skilled, and we are ready to support businesses with all their digital transformation needs. We love to work with ambitious startups and growing businesses, and we're committed to providing affordable web services in our community.

Ralph Mabvudza

Halifax, NS
(902) 579-3835

ralph@webhfx.ca
webhfx.ca

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Mitch Donnelly

1559 Barrington St 200
Halifax, NS
(866) 824-5452

mitch.donnelly@introhive.com

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required to empower people to achieve extraordinary results.

Ange MacCabe

Hammonds Plains, NS
(902) 223-5512

info@intuityperformance.com

intuityperformance.com

BUSINESS & PROF. SERVICES -
Business Consulting

JUDITH KAYS - INDIVIDUAL MEMBER

Bedford, NS
(902) 225-9668

judithkays@eastlink.ca

COMMUNICATIONS -
Communications (General)

KOPANO PHOTOGRAPHY

With a strong focus on building community and helping audiences "be there" with 3D technologies, John Chiasson understands the importance of striking a balance between using the new to showcase the traditional. John is excited to contribute to the Chamber community

and build up the wonderful reputation of Halifax with his work.

John Chiasson

Dartmouth, NS
(902) 818-0819

john@kopano.ca

kopano.ca

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FINANCE & INSURANCE - Income
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Dartmouth, NS
(902) 448-9062

sadeghm@mdad.ca

mdad.ca

COMPUTERS, IT & TECHNOLOGY -
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Sandra English

1472 Cathedral Lane Suite 103
Halifax, NS
(902) 407-4040

senglish@massageaddict.ca

massageaddict.ca/springgarden

HEALTH CARE - Health and
Wellness

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8...

Are you a new member? To submit your 50-word description for New & Noted, please contact Mandi Bowser, Administrative Assistant at Mandi@halifaxchamber.com or 902-468-7111 within the first six months of membership.

TAP CANADA'S TRADE ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Emma Bent

Dartmouth, NS
(902) 817-7662

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rtmsecurity.ca

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jasonjiyuanxu@gmail.com
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THE NORTH GROVE**Anne-Marie McElrone**

6 Primrose St Unit 115
Dartmouth, NS
(902) 464-8234

amcelrone@thenorthgrove.ca
thenorthgrove.ca

PROSPECT - Health Care and Social Assistance

UBUNTU MEDIA**Israel Ekanem**

Halifax, NS
(902) 305-8172
israeliekanem@gmail.com
ubuntumedia.com
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zuchen_ytv@hotmail.com
u-design.ca

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Promotional Products

UPTOWN SALON AND SPA INC.**Jenny Zinck**

5521 Young St
Halifax, NS
(902) 454-6996

Zinckjenny@gmail.com
Uptownchic.ca

PERSONAL CARE & SERVICES - Spa

WORK GLOBAL CANADA INC.

Serving Canadian Employers since 2012, Work Global Canada Inc. provides full turn-key labour market solutions to Canadian employers and international candidates. We are opening our new office location in NS and are excited to be part of a growing community of businesses supporting the Nova Scotia Government in its initiatives to assist economic growth in the region.

Wanda Young

69 Elizabeth Ave
St. John's, NL
(709) 700-1983

wanda@workglobalcanada.com
workglobalcanada.com

HR, EMPLOYMENT & STAFFING - Recruitment Services

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

How our members are growing Halifax



OUTSHINE JOINS GOOGLE'S GROWTH PROGRAM

Digital marketing and analytics agency **Outshine** was hand-selected by Google to join the International Growth Program—an exclusive, invite-only program for a small number of Google partner companies in North America. Given the growth of Halifax's burgeoning tech community, even amid the pandemic, and the ability of teams to work remotely, it's a demonstration of our province's success on the global stage. Joining this program

means that Outshine is working closely with Google's team on behalf of clients when expanding their business overseas. The company also has access to specific international training, market insights and support from Google's team of specialists.

DIGGING INTO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AT MSVU

Mount Saint Vincent University Business & Tourism students dug into the world of social enterprise while lending their expertise and creativity to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colchester. Dubbed Social Enterprise for a Day, this annual workshop unique to MSVU gives students an opportunity to learn while problem-solving for local non-profits. A key part of the event was an

expert panel featuring community and business leaders: Nick Sharpe, Executive Director, **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colchester**; Lori Barker, CEO, **Ronald McDonald House Charities Atlantic**; Mary Gordon, Founder/President, Roots of Empathy; Connie McInnes, CEO, R Studios; and Kate Pepler, Owner, The Tare Shop.

ALPHA XPERIENCE ATLANTIC HOSTED ONLINE TOURNAMENT

Now here, Alpha Experience Atlantic (A|X|A) hosted its first-ever **online tournament**, featuring Rocket League on March 23 + March 25. Shaped by the 14-year success of **Sports & Entertainment Atlantic** as Atlantic Canada's largest sport and event management enterprise, A|X|A is the region's newest Esport venture looking to provide Gamers of all genres with a new home grown Esport competition hub.

DIGITAL ADOPTION REMOVES BARRIERS

Debbie Adams understands barriers to entrepreneurship. As a visually impaired entrepreneur, breaking down those barriers are part of her strategic plan. The Digital Adoption Program has allowed her to level the playing field and increase her export potential in the digital space. Having an in-home recording studio allows her to bring her course Money Mindset: Charging Large With Confidence to the world.



FOX HARB'R NAMED BEST RESORT IN ATLANTIC

US News & World Report just named **Fox Harb'r Resort** the best resort in Atlantic Canada, and the 12th best in Canada. U.S. News ranks the best resorts by considering reputation among professional travel experts, guest reviews and hotel class ratings. Since opening in 2000 by Founder Ron Joyce, **the resort** has a long-standing tradition of setting new benchmarks for excellence in the Canadian resort industry and is committed to continuing this tradition in this new normal.



DISTILLERY TAKES HOME ANOTHER BIG WIN

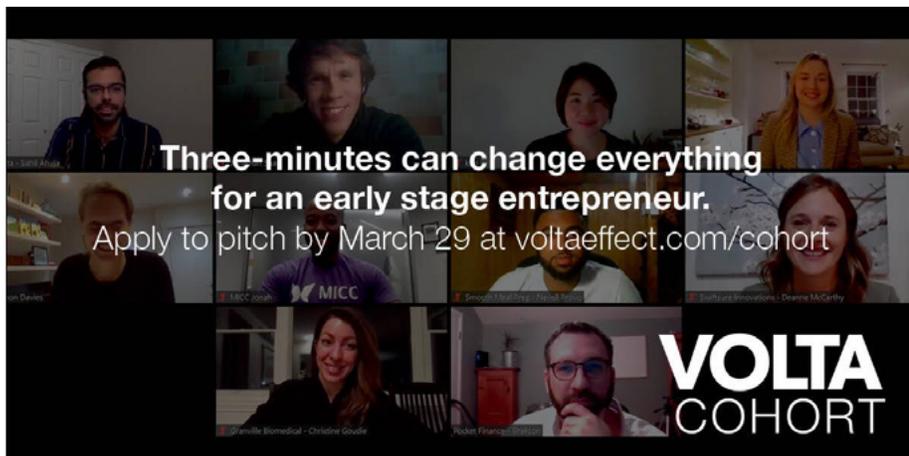
Compass Distillers is no stranger to winning with sixty-four awards already to their name in just over three years of operation. The grain-to-glass distillery took home another big win for Nova Scotia – Best in Class Contemporary Gin for the distillery’s crown jewel, Gin Royal, at the Canadian Artisan Spirits Competition. Compass Distillers also received two Silver medals and five Bronze medals at this year’s competition. The Best In Class Contemporary Gin win for Gin Royal is especially meaningful for the Halifax distillery, who partnered with the Nova Scotia Beekeeper’s Association for this unique gin. One dollar from every bottle sold is donated to the Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association.

FINDING A BETTER WAY DURING COVID

During COVID, we have found our sales numbers reducing due to clients' concerns of outsiders in their homes and with so many family members at home, they were able to care for their own loved ones at home. As a small business, we had to adjust fast to keep our staff employed. **Nurse Next Door** had the resources to help out during a

crisis and so focused on vulnerable areas of the health sector that were in great need. We started reaching out to facilities and hospitals to see how we could assist. Through this process of lending a hand, we have established great relationships with other health care organizations to help with staffing levels.





VOLTA LAUNCHES EIGHTH COHORT PROGRAM INTAKE/PITCH COMPETITION

Volta, Canada’s East Coast Innovation Hub, launched applications for the eighth intake of its Cohort Program. Early-stage Atlantic Canadian technology startups get to pitch for a shot in the program, which provides them with mentorship, resources, \$25,000 in investment, and more. Every six months, Volta hosts the pitch event as an intake to the program, to help early stage, high caliber founders to attract and secure venture capital

sooner. Fifteen finalists will present their business ideas at the Pitch Event on Wednesday, May 19, and up to five companies will be invited to join the one-year program, which includes the \$25,000 investment. The investments are provided through a microfund co-founded by Volta, Innovacorp, BDC Capital, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), which began back in 2017.

BACK BRACE NOT LIKE A ‘STRAIGHT JACKET’ LAUNCHES

Spring Loaded Technology released Lumbrella, designed to give more motion while wearing a brace for back pain. According to CEO Cowper-Smith, Lumbrella provides spinal decompression while allowing patients to move more freely. Costing about \$1,800 to own, the brace is covered by most insurance policies. Medical articles state that working from home is causing bad posture due to prolonged sitting, which causes more back pain. The release of Lumbrella by **Spring Loaded** comes at a very opportune time.

NSAR WELCOMES NEW BOARD

The **Nova Scotia Association of REALTORS** appointed its new Board of Directors. Donna Malone of Exit Realty Interlake in Bridgewater takes over as President from Chris Peters of Royal LePage Atlantic Dartmouth. Serving as President-Elect is Tammy Hines of Keller-Williams in New Minas and Vice President is Matt Dauphinee from Domas Realty in Halifax. The Executive will join a team of eight Regional Directors from around the province to serve its **membership** of 1,600 REALTORS in Nova Scotia.

Here for you during COVID-19
 Whenever you need to talk, we’re open.

Call 1-800-668-6868
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Kids Help Phone

KIDS HELP PHONE'S RECORD DEMAND IN 2020

For over 31 years, **Kids Help Phone** has been Canada’s only 24/7, national e-mental health support service for young people. Kids Help Phone offers professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support in both English and French. In 2020, Kids Help Phone experienced unprecedented increases in volume as a result of COVID-19. Over 4.5 million young

people reached out to Kids Help Phone in 2020 – an exponential increase compared to 1.9 million in 2019. With the help of local emergency services, **Kids Help Phone** conducted over 4,000 active rescues across Canada in 2020.



**Are you launching a new business or product?
 Celebrating a new partnership?**

The Halifax Chamber invites you to share your Members in the News story in Business Voice. Upload your content here: halifaxchamber.com/business-voice
 *Note: we do not publish event promotions.

PAYSTONE AND UNITY VALUES PARTNER TO BRING BUSINESSES A NEW TOOL

Unity Values has integrated with Paystone. This innovation in the loyalty space allows businesses to work hand in hand with their customers to create community impact. Businesses now have the ability to make corporate giving a more integrated part of their day-to-day business. The heart of the program is that now businesses can build relationships with each customer by allowing them to choose which charity they would like their loyalty program to support. Contact Stephen.Skinner@UnityValues.com or Omar Okadray@paystone.com for more info.



WORKSPACE BEDFORD ADDS MEDIA ROOM

Workspace Bedford is setting itself apart in the business community as a remote work destination, with upgraded, onsite tech and the launch of its Media Room. The first of its kind in a co-working space in Atlantic Canada, the Media Room is equipped with everything required for audio and video content creation from a mixer, to professional lights and backdrop, Yeti microphones and cameras. An onsite staff is also available to assist with post-production services, including video editing and creation.



EXPANDING NEW LEAF BAKING PROGRAM

After many successful years of our annual Christmas Baking program, New Leaf Enterprises tried out Valentine's Baking and SOLD OUT! For \$15, each Valentine Box included six large and three mini sugar cookies wrapped in a beautiful gift box and a Happy Valentine's Day card. We thank CTV Atlantic and all those who ordered for their help in making this

project an absolute success! New Leaf is a social enterprise that provides supported employment, skill development and workplace training opportunities to Nova Scotians with cognitive and/or physical disabilities. Baking programs and sales from New Leaf Cafe (22 Fielding Avenue) and home decor support this pillar program of **Easter Seals Nova Scotia**.

HAWORTH
2021 Best In Class Dealer

OFFICE INTERIORS RECEIVES AWARD

Office Interiors received Haworth leadership's award of 2021 Best In Class status. This distinction is based on exceptional performance in market development, sales, customer satisfaction, operational excellence and enterprise development. In 2021, Haworth named 23 dealerships as Best In Class.

This distinction is reserved for dealers who operate at the highest performance levels and are successful in maintaining rigorous standards over time, against high-performing peer dealers. Haworth Inc. currently has 650 partners in its dealership network worldwide.

MEANINGFUL CHANGES

Reflecting on Diversity Month

By Mina Atia



The globalization of society has allowed us to challenge our way of thinking and learn new ways of approaching centuries-old issues. Our world stage has drastically shifted from siloed countries to a global community. It's allowed us to have meaningful conversations to unite, listen, and hold each other accountable.

The concept of leading with open and honest conversation rings true in most, if not all, possible situations. It's a strong and respectful way of interacting with everyone with whom we cross paths. There is a lot of division in the world these days. Open but difficult conversations are not being held—where people are listening to one another.

We are at a point in time and in history where there's never been a greater potential for division. Yet, there is an

equally greater potential for unity.

“Looking over the past number of years, anti-black racism and many other related issues show us that we have a lot more to do, we have to be more open, we have to be uncomfortable, and we have to have those difficult conversations,” says The Honourable Tony Ince, Minister of **African Nova Scotian Affairs**, Communications Nova Scotia, and Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives.

“And when we talk about diversity and inclusion, that is separate from equity and anti-racism,” he says.

The Black Lives Matter is one of many important initiatives the Halifax Wanderers are actively prioritizing—others include LGBTQ+, Indigenous and feminist topics.

“We held a number of Zoom calls last year, following the untimely death of George Floyd, which has led me to getting the position and feeling the need to use our Wanderers platform, not just for sport but also for a lot of these important social justice issues that have been happening,” says Marvin Okello, Ticketing & Member Services Manager, and Diversity & Inclusion Officer for the **Halifax Wanderers**.

“We're very diverse ourselves as a committee; together we work with the different communities, like the Black Lives Matter movement in the black community, to make sure that we're providing them equitable opportunities and not just content and social media but solidarity and awareness,” says Okello.

The committee is currently planning on establishing long-term foundations

“Just like pulling the band aid off if you're a bit hesitant, dig into seeking out those individuals who can help you truly see and understand the intersectionality within diversity.” — **Tony Ince**, Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs, Communications Nova Scotia, and Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

through partnerships with various communities in Nova Scotia and outside of the province. A committee member with a matching background will act as a representative for the corresponding community to better engage and facilitate those partnerships.

“Before I went into the public service commission, I always believed that diversity is something we need to address on many levels. And when I say diversity I mean true diversity,” says Minister Ince.

“That means those with challenges that we may not be able to see like LGBTQ+ issues; diversity means we look at everything in its entirety.”

Diversity is at the forefront of our current global climate and yet it continues to be a challenge for many organizations. The current challenge is that diversity initiatives continue to be accomplished in

the same way, in one specific sort of lane for the last few decades.

“Only now we can see how true diversity is benefiting us economically, socially, on so many other levels,” says Minister Ince.

April is Diversity Month. It's a time to celebrate differences and similarities. It's also a time to reflect on practices, initiatives and programs to celebrate successes in diversity and inclusion as well as plan to mitigate the gaps. It's time to hold open and difficult conversations with those who are willing to listen.

“I think as a first step, it's great to either form a committee or a position that owns that role and the actionable items that a business can do to ensure, internally, they are very diverse and celebrating all their different ethnicities and genders within the organization,” says Okello.

Moreover, Okello recommends businesses to be inclusive and including of their staff in these types of conversations by allowing them to provide any feedback on what they would like to see the business involved in.

“Just like pulling the band aid off if you're a bit hesitant, dig into seeking out those individuals who can help you truly see and understand the intersectionality within diversity,” says Minister Ince.

Practicing empathetic and active listening can transform negative energy towards effective, positive and meaningful change.

“I think Nova Scotia is a good place to use as an example,” says Okello. “Because as a community, we've been really tackling a lot of these societal issues, like the HRP repurposing their budget of \$600,000 towards actual programs for diversity.”

Being the loudest voice in the room can feel like the only option, but it's not necessarily the best way to bring people together. It takes constant effort, trials, time and energy for people to process issues about diversity and take a stand.

"It's important that we're up to date, educated on it and not seeking other people to educate us," says Okello. "And then after that, it's important that when we see injustice happening, we use our voice as simply as during a meeting when a female co-worker keeps getting interrupted and say 'hey, I'd like to hear what she has to say.'"

When people are willing to see the person in front of them and listen to them, having meaningful conversations can lead to positive change. Okello says it's on each of us to learn, grow and challenge ourselves.

"As individuals, I think it's really important that we just talk the talk and walk the walk," he says. "What I mean by that is we educate ourselves on an ongoing basis to make sure we're aware of what's happening in our communities like what happened with the Indigenous fishermen situation last year. It's not just BLM; it's not just feminists; it's not just pride, but all of the things that are happening in our community on a daily, weekly, monthly basis."

Everyone has their own set of experiences, made up of individual factors specific to each person. Nobody else is aware of those factors. And each person makes up a system—intricate and delicate and difficult to change.

"I'm not one to try to tell individuals what they should do. I can only speak from my experiences, in society, workplaces, and those places where we're interacting with one another," says Minister Ince.

"I can only say that some of my best memories and best learning moments have been from individuals who help educate me, teach me and bring information about their differences. We could sit together and have the dialogue, and have a conversation about those differences. That to me was more rewarding than a number of things that I can put in my life."

In addition to holding Zoom calls to engage community partnerships, the

Wanderers host a podcast to start conversations on diversity and inclusion in a safe space. "But outside of that, there won't be too much specifically catered to Diversity Month, because we believe on doing that 12 months a year," says Okello.

Asked for suggestions and advice to help other organizations follow in similar footsteps, Okello recommended to "participate in a network like the Black Business Initiative's Boost program."

In partnership with Volta, the Black Business Initiative launched a four-month program called Boost. Funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and led by industry experts, Boost supports the growth and development of Black and Indigenous entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada. The program runs workshops and skills-development sessions to build the entrepreneurs' business idea and achieve their professional goals.

"We know we couldn't be where we are today without the support of all of those great members of our community," says Okello. "As a community-focused club, we're always going to be giving back to the community that has given us so much."

The Halifax Chamber, along with the support of its Board of Directors and other business leaders, has been actively working on diversity and inclusion in the business community. The Chamber is creating an internal position dedicated to community engagement and outreach. The position will focus solely on diversity and inclusion by ensuring our underrepresented groups are reflected and engaged in the Halifax business community.

"We have to be aware and conscious of all our unconscious biases because we all have them. And if we put that in the forefront, I think we can overcome our differences," says Minister Ince. "I had some challenges growing up. And until I've faced those challenges, those unconscious biases that I had changed me and made me the kind of person that I am today."

"It's kind of like the Michael Jackson song: Man in the Mirror," says Minister Ince. "Take a look at yourself."

Business Voice reached out to interview the Indigenous community but was unable to get a hold of community representatives to weigh in on the story.

HalifACT leads climate change actions

Driving emission reduction together

By Mina Atia



VIEW FROM VIOLA DESMOND FERRY
PHOTO CREDIT: HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

With Earth Day (April 22) around the corner, the climate crisis is staring us down. It is an urgent, complex and global issue that seems to bounce between the front and back burner of leadership attention. The low-carbon future we need requires an overwhelming amount of changes to our current society and systems.

The climate action movement in Halifax not only needs a plan but a strong commitment on all levels. In response to the climate emergency announcement by the Regional Council on January 29, 2019, HalifACT sprang into action.

HalifACT is one of the most ambitious climate plans in Canada. It was developed with engagement across stakeholders and communities, through a lens of equity and inclusion. The Municipality took on a leadership role by creating the department.

“The plan positions the municipality as a leader in climate action,” says Taylor Owen, Climate Change Specialist, Halifax Regional Municipality. “By

achieving our net-zero targets, we will be doing our part to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050; a goal which is supported in the 2015 Paris Agreement.”

The targets and actions of the plan require shared implementation across many organizations in the community. The plan helps communities adapt to environmental changes and climate hazards by raising awareness and being prepared. It also creates a better future for generations by saving them money, cutting on emissions, preventing loss and strengthening their communities. This collaborative process requires efforts from both municipal government and communities.

“The plan was created using scenario modelling of our future greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts, and it provides Halifax with a plan to be resilient and net-zero by 2050,” says Owen. “These goals are achievable, but it requires us to act swiftly together towards this shared goal.” Implemented in Spring 2018, the

plan has engaged people to discuss realistic and measurable emission reduction approaches and a target of 75 per cent below 2016 levels by 2030. This transformational plan aligns the municipality’s efforts to shift to a low-carbon economy by 2050.

“The plan is informing and guiding the development of our Regional Planning process and land-use by-law updates, and internal and external stakeholders have continued to come together to co-create climate solutions,” says Owen.

The municipality is actively working towards tackling climate change and preparing to increase the resilience of the city’s communities, infrastructure and environment against possible impacts through initiatives including: community-based **vulnerability mapping**; volunteer-led **Joint Emergency Management Teams**; **Community Mobilization Teams** being piloted through the Public Safety Office; and **floodplain studies**. “This includes electrifying the municipality’s fleet and public transit

systems, retrofitting buildings, improving waste diversion, reducing energy in our water utility, and building to a net-zero standard,” says Owen.

“A net-zero climate resilient municipality will see a shift to electric vehicles, supported communities and infrastructure that are able to rebound better and faster from climate hazards like hurricanes, a shift to a green economy, and buildings, both built and retrofitted, that consider climate resiliency and our transition to a low carbon economy.”

Premier Iain Rankin announced a **\$19-million investment in rebates** to encourage Nova Scotians to buy electric vehicles and make their homes more energy efficient. Not even COVID-19 interruptions or budgetary restrictions can slow the acceleration of the energy efficiency progress.

“We are also working to create the opportunity for partnerships and discussions on how the larger business community can be involved in HalifACT through open forums, such as the Mayor’s recent Economic Roundtable on the Green Economy with the Halifax

Partnership,” says Owen.

Businesses can support the plan by implementing several climate actions. For example, they can transition their transport fleet to electric vehicles, take advantage of energy efficiency programs through **Efficiency Nova Scotia**, explore solar electricity and start thinking about future climate risks to their business operations.

“We are willing to partner and explore collaboration to advance the actions in HalifACT as it relates to local Halifax businesses,” says Owen.

On an individual level, everyone has a role to play. Both big and small actions include:

- Signing up for climate change related newsletters, webinars and e-courses to help integrate climate solutions into daily life;
- Diving deep into the Climate Atlas of Canada;
- Getting children involved in climate conversations;
- Speaking to a financial advisor about clean energy investments;
- Switching to renewables;
- Reducing food waste;

“We are willing to partner and explore collaboration to advance the actions in HalifACT as it relates to local Halifax businesses.”

— Taylor Owen,
Climate Change
Specialist, Halifax
Regional Municipality



HALIFACT ENGAGEMENT SESSION
PHOTO CREDIT: HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY HALIFACT TEAM



- Buying an electric vehicle;
- Increasing the resilience of the community to climate hazards; and
- Supporting climate-related financial disclosure.

“The municipality serves in the best interest of the public, and residents can play a role in climate action at the municipal level,” says Owen. “Voicing climate concerns with municipal Councillors is a powerful tool for change. We’ve made a [list of climate actions](#) that anyone can do.”

HalifACT is a platinum sponsor of the [2021 Smart Energy Event](#), taking place virtually from April 20 to 22, 2021. The event explores innovative energy sources to provide smart energy options for consumers. Speakers, experts and innovators in technologies that are transforming the energy landscape will be at the 17th annual conference to network and exchange ideas.

“We are currently focused on building public awareness and engagement,” says Owen. “Last fall, we hosted a TEDxHalifax Global Countdown watch party on climate action and Halifax’s response.” This hour-long [video](#) of the episode showcases both local and global

“*The municipality serves in the best interest of the public, and residents can play a role in climate action at the municipal level.*” — Taylor Owen, Climate Change Specialist, Halifax Regional Municipality

talent from people around the world.

“We are also engaging with students and young professionals to develop solutions to local climate challenges through a HalifACT Climate Action Hackathon, in partnership with Dalhousie’s Shiftkey Labs and the Halifax Innovation Outpost.”

With over \$2 million in savings estimated annually, the implementation of this plan’s third-year project is paramount. This reduction in corporate building emission by 15 per cent from the 2018 levels is equivalent to planting 235,000 tree or taking 1,112 vehicles off the road.

Moreover, 26 [solar energy systems](#)—ranging from solar hot water, hot air to electric—have been installed on municipality buildings. [LED retrofit](#) is in progress for more than 40 thousand streetlights.

“As you can see from HalifACT, there is no one solution to address the climate crisis in the municipality,” says Owen. “Instead, there are many actions that when accomplished together, will help us achieve our goal.” ■

Rocket launches beyond print

Taking off into communications and digital marketing

By Mina Atia

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Specializing in full-service commercial printing, Rocket is more than just a print house. By acquiring Bounty Print in Halifax—with over 40 years in business experience—Fredericton’s Taylor Printing Group recognized that together they offer many other lesser-known services to their clients.

“We started out 16 years ago here in Fredericton as the first print start up in our industry and in Atlantic Canada in over 25 years,” says Scott Williams, CEO of Rocket. “A lot of it was controlled from Central Canada, so we wanted a company that was locally running and supported the region, and that’s what started Taylor Printing Group.”

Having been pigeonholed as strictly print shops, the companies realized they needed a rebrand to tell their new story.

“When we acquired Bounty Print in Halifax, we really evolved and embraced digital by seeing tremendous power in

bringing both the digital and the tactile environment together,” he says. “They’re an extremely powerful marketing tool.”

“So, we made a conscious decision to look at a rebrand: to drop ‘printing’ from our name and to become really more of an overall communications company.”

Working with a Halifax agency, one of Rocket’s clients, the company’s new branding developed from its working culture. The agency understood where the amalgamation originated from, and it visualized how the new company wants to proceed into the future based on the merger of the two companies.

“Early on I wasn’t totally enamoured with the new name,” says Williams. “Now, I can’t imagine not having it. The name has been received very well; it’s still a professional brand but at the same time it’s a lot of fun too.”

Rocket boasts the ‘in good company’ feeling through its vast team of

professionals located in both Halifax and Fredericton. They value relationships and believe that brainstorming and collaboration with like-minded organizations benefit everyone.

“We really work in a collaborative environment with our clients to determine what their objectives and their desired outcomes are,” he says. “Then, from there, we try to build a campaign that will help them achieve results.”

“We take our clients’ ideas and turn them into reality,” says Williams about Rocket’s philosophy. “When it comes to their marketing and communications needs, we take a holistic approach.”

The now-merged teams at **Rocket** are qualified and well versed in driving businesses forward. Leading with experience and innovation, they’re capable of delivering a multitude of integrated services such as large format commercial installations, up-to-standard finishing and fulfilment, direct mail for

client delivery, and more importantly, multichannel marketing.

“Our team is one of the beauties of working at Rocket, and they’re even more important to us than our clients!” says Williams.

“I already knew that before the pandemic started, and somehow they managed to step up even more over the last 12 months in both locations. There’s just a real can-do attitude from the front lines, sales and administration right through to when we ship a job at the back door.”

Rocket’s new marketing and communications enterprise is a pivot to embrace digital and create a powerful multichannel marketing approach to online audiences. Using a new software for cross-media integration, Rocket provides adaptable data for one-to-one marketing. It offers solutions to help businesses create and manage campaigns effectively.

“We can make necessary adjustments, react quickly and even be proactive about

“*Our team is one of the beauties of working at Rocket, and they’re even more important to us than our clients!*”
 — Scott Williams,
 CEO, Rocket

what we’re doing,” he says. “I think we’ve done a pretty good job with that already as we make positive change and help our clients where they need it.”

“And going forward as a company, we’re going to be able to adjust and look at technology to help us with what’s going on globally.”

Dedicated to sustainability, Rocket is certified through organizations such as Bullfrog, Two Sides and Rainforest Alliance (FSC® certification) to maintain the company’s accountability to its environmental commitment.

The commitment is to preserve the environment and act responsibly when using the resources available, all of which is reflected in [this video](#) by Bullfrog.

“We continue to build on our team, and we are looking to the future and planning for what it’s going to look like on the other side,” says Williams. “I’m excited for our future, and I’m excited about the industry that we’re in.” ■



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The real estate market in 2021

Canada's red hot housing market becoming a 'bonfire'



Halipad

REAL ESTATE INC



CHRIS PERKINS
BROKER AND OWNER,
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In the first quarter of 2020, the average sale price of a single-family home in the Halifax Regional Municipality was \$344,644. In 2021, at time of writing, that number has skyrocketed to more than \$475,000. This represents a 39.5 per cent increase. The most significant jump occurred from December to January where the average monthly sale price increased from \$426,705 to \$468,548.

Low inventory is not a new problem. It was a challenge in March 2020 but, since then, the number of homes for sale has fallen by a further 72.8 per cent. Meanwhile, sales have increased by 18.1 per cent year to date.

Buyer desperation

With numbers this bleak, you find a real estate market characterized by bidding wars, bully offers and an overall feeling

of buyer desperation. Sellers hold the cards and are delaying when they review offers, often several days after the initial list date.

The goal is to get as many buyers through the door as possible to create the maximum amount of interest. At which point, sellers often review ten or more offers and select the one with the best terms and highest price. This is happening all across Canada, not just in the HRM.

Low interest rates and low vacancy

A recent Reuters article commented on Canada's red hot housing market becoming a 'bonfire'. A call by some to implement cooling measures fell on deaf ears. Policymakers feel that due to COVID-19, the economy is too fragile to increase interest rates. As the cost to borrow remains low, so do vacancy rates in the rental sector. The result is an increasing cost to rent which, in turn, pushes more people towards homeownership.

Bully offers

A bully offer is perhaps a buyer's best tactic to obtaining a home in the current market. By waiting until the offer date selected by the seller, a buyer opens themselves to tremendous competition. The purpose of a bully offer is to give the seller an offer so compelling that they must think long and hard about it. A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. Offering something to the seller with minimal conditions and substantial financial clout gives you the best opportunity to get selected.

Tactics for those looking to upsize

For those who already own a home, this market is not as daunting. We recently had a client who sold their two-bedroom condo and obtained \$45,000 more than they were expecting. They had a lot more equity than they imagined and used a portion of it to pay off some short-term debt like a line of credit or a car loan. This meant they were then able to get approved for a higher mortgage than they thought possible. Their mortgage payment is now higher, but their overall monthly debt payments have decreased. You will have to find another home, but if you negotiate a longer close on your sale and restructure some of your short-term debt, it will give you the best opportunity to upgrade.

What's next?

More than 9,000 people moved to Nova Scotia in 2020. Unless we see a huge influx of inventory, we do not see the market changing anytime soon. New construction is not occurring anywhere near fast enough to satisfy demand. We have clients who bid on a new build two weeks ago and their close date is November. That is pretty much as quick as you'll see at the moment. A home being built today won't be ready until late in 2021 if not early 2022. So those looking for accommodation in the meantime are going to have to do so in the resale market, where there's not much choice either. After vaccinations roll out and Nova Scotia eventually opens its borders, the big question is: Will people leave, or will we see an even greater number flock to our fantastic little province? We're certainly not going anywhere.

The Zoom effect

Feeling confident



DEBORAH HART

MN, NP, CEO & FOUNDER,
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With so many meetings and events now going virtual we are seeing ourselves from a new perspective. What once had us around boardroom tables or in event arenas looking at our colleagues, clients, or educators from across the room, now has us engaging with each other across a screen via Zoom or other conferencing platforms.

This also has us looking back at ourselves on screen, the view that is usually reserved for those in front of us.

This new perspective has us questioning how we look. It leaves us wondering, are we giving off the vibe we intend? Are we appearing approachable and confident or are we looking tired and angry? Are we exuding the vitality we feel on the inside or do we think we're looking older than we really are?

It used to be that we would walk by the mirror in the morning getting the first impressions of ourselves for the day. What we find is that some nights even though we slept well, we see ourselves in the mirror and realize we look tired;

"People are tired of staring at a version of themselves, on these virtual platforms, that they don't recognize, they want to get a better glow, to look less tired, less angry and more like their approachable self."

our shoulders drop and that's how we end up going about our day, shoulders down, slumped and tired. This negative feedback loop, when we look tired, angry, sad or saggy wears us down and can take a toll on our confidence.

On the other end of the spectrum, we wake up feeling tired and drag ourselves into gear, catch a glimpse in the mirror and see wow, not looking too bad, not looking tired, skin may even have a glow; our shoulders go back, posture improves, chin comes up and that's how we go about our day, confident.

Now more than ever, we are spending extended periods of time on Zoom or virtual platforms; now, not only do we just catch a glimpse of our ourselves in the mirror but we are looking back at ourselves on a virtual platform, sometimes for hours at a time.

This visualization of ourselves can increase the focus on our appearance which often takes a toll on our relationship with our body and this lack of confidence and vitality can bleed into other areas of our lives.

The real problem is everyone ages differently and over-the-counter, mass

produced 'remedies' often don't work because they don't take into account your unique aging processes or health histories. What people really need is to work with a licensed and experienced healthcare provider who can help them choose the right treatment for their health and goals and work with them to naturally restore their vitality and beauty.

People are tired of staring at a version of themselves, on these virtual platforms, that they don't recognize, they want to get a better glow, to look less tired, less angry and more like their approachable self.

Done correctly, in the right hands, the right treatment will leave you looking refreshed, rejuvenated, like you've not even visited a clinic. What we've found is that it's therapeutic to know we're taking care of ourselves. You're not vain, you're aware!

Being aware, we can use these same platforms to give ourselves positive feedback; we can look less tired, less angry, less sad and less saggy and when we do, we present ourselves to the world with unshakable confidence, naturally looking and feeling good.

Success during a crisis

Exploring four leadership insights from Nova Scotia businesses



At a Grant Thornton roundtable earlier this month, finalists of the 2021 Halifax Business Awards gathered to discuss the impacts of the pandemic, the challenges they encountered and how they moved forward with resilience.

Difficult times often reveal strength of character, and Nova Scotians are no exception. During the global pandemic, communities across the province displayed resilience as people came together to support local businesses and each other. Halifax saw its population grow—and add more jobs than it lost. As a result, the province is well-positioned to recover post pandemic.

That's not to say it's been an easy ride for the region's local businesses. The varied group of attendees at the roundtable—which included representatives from different non-profits and industries: from retail and professional services to technology, pharmaceutical and specialty trades—each brought a unique perspective. However, they all agreed that a positive post-COVID future starts with a unified business community—one that exchanges ideas and works together to move the Canadian economy forward.

Members of the group shared their experiences and through this discussion, four consistent leadership approaches emerged that helped them not only adapt but succeed.

Remain agile

In times of turmoil, businesses need the ability to act quickly if they hope

to succeed, which is why it's critical to revisit policies and processes to facilitate agility. Encouraging an agile mindset is important. One organization, for instance, made agility part of its performance reviews.

Businesses had to get creative to keep sales flowing, particularly during lockdowns, when customers couldn't shop in person. Leaders recognized that, first and foremost, customers wanted to feel safe. So offering contactless pickup, reducing lineups by serving customers in different areas of the store and even launching outdoor pop-up service kiosks ensured they can still serve customers, while meeting their changing needs.

Communicate openly and honestly

When everything shifted online, establishing trust among clients and staff became even more important. Open and honest communication became paramount. Many leaders chose to transparently communicate everything, from operational challenges to increasing costs, and it's important to voice those changes early. This approach allowed them to continue sales and effectively set their team and customer expectations.

Collaborate with your community

It can be easy to feel like you're all alone when battling tough economic times. But, in these instances, external resources can be invaluable to help. This can involve partnering with industry associations, which can help you stay on top of new training requirements, public health guidelines or job safety requirements.

For non-profits, it can mean collaborating with members of the community as

well as healthcare professionals and government.

Invest in technology, early

Reconceptualizing the organization in a digital world was top of mind for these leaders. The accelerated shift to e-commerce for one business for instance, expanded sales by over 50 per cent. For some, it was shifting to the work from home environment and ensuring the team had what they needed to continue to serve customers.

The path forward

It's clear from these business leaders that Nova Scotians are not only adaptable and agile when it comes to supporting the local economy. They can also compete on the global stage. Most importantly, involving the community in the path forward is a strategy any region of any size can leverage and benefit from. And at Grant Thornton, we're excited to see the province continue to make a positive mark on the world. If you're looking to discuss ways your business can become more resilient, reach out to us.

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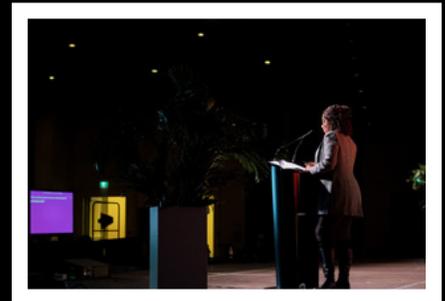


VIRTUAL WONDER WOMEN CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 19, 2021

The 5th Halifax Chamber Wonder Women conference provided a new engaging virtual experience for the 400+ attendees. The lineup of speakers from all different industries and backgrounds challenged the audience to live their authentic lives, support each other, and called out the inequalities highlighted by the pandemic. Thank you to everyone for a memorable day. "The moment anyone stands in their power, others can't help but notice."

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Planning now for what's next

The ability to launch a rapid response and make informed decisions



WENDY LUTHER
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In 2019, no one anticipated or was prepared for a pandemic. And yet here we are, just over a year later. So, what could your business have done to prepare for this crisis?

With the hands-on experience of the COVID-19 pandemic so far, how is your organization or business protecting itself against the next wave, the next virus variant, the next disaster or the next unexpected opportunity that could disrupt your operations?

I wish I could tell you there is one easy magic bullet to safeguard against risks and disasters. There isn't.

Industries and businesses have been affected in different and distinct ways by this pandemic. Restaurants, retailers, hotels and entertainment businesses have been slammed with lockdowns, while online food delivery platforms, video conferencing tools and gardening centres have boomed.

Many businesses are somewhere in

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between, surviving, pivoting and scratching their heads over what to do next.

Even businesses experiencing growth because of the pandemic have been confronted with the serious problems of meeting supply with demand.

In a disaster, companies - large and small - don't have the luxury of time. The ability to launch a rapid response and make informed decisions comes from planning ahead. If there is a fundamental takeaway to be learned from COVID, it is this.

Over the past year, Halifax Partnership's SmartBusiness team has supported over 830 Halifax businesses in dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 and reopening and operating safely.

We're also helping businesses prepare now for what's next. This is why Halifax Partnership has developed the Business Recovery and Continuity Toolkit, in partnership with our Investor KPMG, to help small and medium size businesses plan for continuity in a crisis, whether

it's a pandemic, a natural disaster or an economic downturn.

This starts by taking a look at your business as it stands now and identifying risks, such as over reliance on a single supplier or client and mitigation strategies. With this information in hand, you can develop emergency response and management plans to increase the likelihood your business can continue operating, survive and perhaps even thrive.

This free toolkit is designed as a do-it-yourself resource and is available on the Partnership's [website](#). It includes webinars with business experts and leaders, guides, templates and risk-assessment resources. It covers key topics such as operations, human resources, technology, sales and marketing. It also provides tests and measurements to monitor plan effectiveness and employee engagement.

So, don't wait for the next crisis. Now's the time to future-proof your business.

Nova Scotia Provincial Budget

Missing the support promised for economic recovery



KENT ROBERTS VICE PRESIDENT, POLICY, HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

With economic development in mind, and as advocates for Nova Scotia businesses—having seen firsthand the impact the pandemic has had on all businesses but particularly the hospitality and tourism industry—the Halifax Chamber of Commerce watched anxiously and hopefully as Finance Minister Kousoullis delivered the 2021/22 provincial budget last Thursday, March 25.

We knew the provinces finances had been hit hard in 2020 as revenues were down and the cost of COVID response pushed expenses 571 million dollars over budget. That trend was likely to continue in 2021/22 and it did. But how much of the pandemic cost was linked to supporting our local economy? While the province allocated \$100M to support Nova Scotia businesses in 2020, that money came from the 2019/2020 budget year. In fact, total NS provincial supports for businesses and citizens in 2020 was only four per cent of the total support dollars provided by the Federal and Provincial

governments and none of that money was aimed at economic recovery.

The PR lead up to the budget suggested the province was in good shape financially even while projecting a deficit, with four good years of balanced budgets behind us, a great credit rating and our debt being refinanced at record low rates.

So, what would 2021/22 budget hold for businesses in Nova Scotia? As just about the safest place to live and work in the world, we certainly hoped we would see a budget that incentivized a quick recovery for all businesses, but particularly helped our hospitality and tourism sector recover from a dismal 2020 and get us back on track to the \$2.5 billion tourism delivered in 2019.

It started well, with “no new taxes and fees”, theoretically keeping more money in the pockets of consumers to support local businesses. The Government also set a new target to reduce government’s regulatory burden on business by \$10 million in 2021, while increasing resources in the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness. They also committed a further \$1 million to continue to support businesses in rapidly adopting digital tools and innovations. The province also committed \$1.5 million for the first year of a new five-year Aquaculture Expansion Strategy and \$1.3 million to support the Nova Scotia Quality Wine Strategy.

Yet in a budget with \$1 Billion in new “infrastructure and innovation” spending and \$859 million in increased departmental expenses, of which \$771 million is allocated to Health and Wellness, Community Services and Education and Early Childhood Development, this budget provides virtually no new money or supports for the businesses most impacted by the pandemic. In fact, the budget allocation for the only department tasked with economic development (IEG) and the Crowns that enable that work declined by \$23 million.

While the Finance Minister and his senior staff used phrases like “Invest in Recovery”, “An economy where Business can Grow”, and the premier says “Small business is the backbone of the economy” they are going to have to do a lot more for small businesses that continue to struggle to survive. For businesses that were forced to close or were impacted by lockdowns and ongoing restrictions, having a budget that invests another \$771+ million on non-economic measures is not putting the focus on economic recovery that is needed or promised.

What will it take for government to step up and provide the support they are promising? The Halifax Chamber of Commerce will continue to advocate on behalf of our members and the business community, to ensure their voice is heard and understood. We are in your corner!

The best made plans

Developing Halifax's first plan for sustainable tourism growth

CONTRIBUTED CONTENT

Michele McKenzie, a business consultant and the principal owner of McKenzie Business Strategies, described it as “the worst time to launch a plan, and the best time to have one.”

As one of the consultants commissioned by Discover Halifax in 2019 to lead the development of the plan, along with Group ATN and Twenty31, McKenzie had long envisioned a plan like this for the region. She has established herself as a tourism expert serving as Deputy Minister for Tourism Nova Scotia, and former President and CEO of the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC), now known as Destination Canada.

“For a long time, the need for such an overarching approach to tourism has felt like a missing piece to me,” said McKenzie. It was important to get it right, even if it meant waiting a little longer.

After taking the time to consider

the impact of COVID-19 against the overarching goals in the ITMP, the plan was finally presented to Council on February 23, 2021. It was unanimously accepted by Halifax Council with the overall vision to help Halifax become widely recognized as the favourite city in Canada.

“We’re really proud of Halifax’s Integrated Tourism Master Plan, and the work that went into this,” said Jefferson. “We believe part of the reason why the plan held up so well, even when tested by a pandemic, is because we established the right guiding principles early on and never wavered from these.”

From a business perspective, the master plan’s guiding principles are relatable and transferrable. It provides a solid foundation that unites more than 30 partners in shared values that maps a clear picture of where the destination is going.

They say timing is everything. And, in March 2020, as Discover Halifax was preparing to release the region’s first tourism master plan, the timing could not have been any better, and it could not have been any worse.

Of course, March 15, 2020, was when Nova Scotia’s least-wanted guest, COVID-19, arrived in the province. Like many other destinations around the world, the provincial economy came to a grinding halt with the tourism industry being among the hardest hit sectors. Instead of releasing a master plan for sustainable and managed tourism growth, Discover Halifax, the non-profit sales and marketing organization for the region had to hit pause.

“It seems surreal to think back to that time period, for a number of reasons,” said Ross Jefferson, Discover Halifax’s President and CEO. “We had taken a community-first approach to develop the plan and we were excited to share it with our partners, stakeholders and the community. Instead, we had to focus on the immediate response to the pandemic and the recovery effort for the region.”



Community-first: The plan was developed using a community-first approach. It reflects the values and diversity of the region and recognize the social and environmental impacts of tourism on our communities.

Inclusive Growth: Like a strong-business strategy, the ITMP takes a competitive lens to decision making, and pursues inclusive growth for all 210+ communities in the region.

Consider impacts to the rest of Nova Scotia: In a typical year, Halifax welcomes 5.3 million overnight stays which represents 54 per cent of the provincial tourism. The plan recognizes that decisions made for Halifax as a tourism destination can impact the rest of the Province and the Atlantic region and provide due consideration of these impacts.

Leverage collaboration: The tourism industry includes many different sectors. Developing a master plan had to be done with consideration to the broader tourism ecosystem, including at the local, regional, and national level.

For key partners, like the Halifax Partnership, the guiding principles provided a clear and shared path forward. It meant that the tourism master plan clearly linked to its own work and ambitious goals like helping the municipality grow the region's GDP to \$30 billion by 2031, a goal established in Halifax's Economic Growth Plan.

"Halifax's Integrated Tourism Master Plan provides a foundation for jobs and inclusive, sustainable growth, which is vital as we recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 and plan for the longer-term," says Wendy Luther, President & CEO, Halifax Partnership. "Collaborating with partners like Discover Halifax to grow our city has never been more important, and we're looking forward to working closely together to achieve Halifax's economic goals in the months and years ahead."

To learn more about Halifax's five-year ITMP, visit discoverhalifaxdmo.com.

Key findings from Halifax's ITMP:

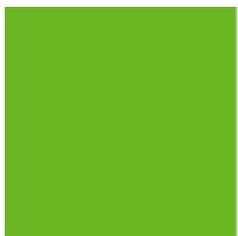
- Discover Halifax hosted 32 engagement sessions to develop the ITMP. More than 300 people participated in these sessions, and there were over 250 survey responses.

- Based on the research and consultation there are six key findings that could help Halifax maximize future benefits from tourism, including:

1. Leisure travel demand is expected to recover post-pandemic. Tourism is expected to re-establish itself as one of the fastest growing industries in the world.
2. Halifax has the potential to be widely recognized as the favourite city in Canada.
3. Halifax should maximize its full potential for year-round visitation.
4. If we make Halifax an even better destination for visitors, residents will also benefit.
5. Halifax's greatest assets are its people, and the unique combination of rural and urban experiences.
6. Discover Halifax stakeholders are eager to partner and collaborate under clear leadership.

THANK YOU.

Our members continue to lead the way. They share insights, knowledge and expertise to support businesses. We continue hosting webinars with field experts to keep you informed and provide an outlet where your questions could be answered. Thank you to the following organizations for actively participating and reaching out to keep the business community up to date and prepared.



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