

BUSINESS VOICE

HALIFAX'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE

AGENTS OF CHANGE 9.0

Pioneering in a pandemic

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FINDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR ALL

Working together to find solutions

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SONA PAYMENT SOLUTIONS

Bridging the gap

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SHOP LOCAL THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

Making it special while supporting our economy

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SMALL
BUSINESS
WEEK

bdc



SPECIAL THANK YOU

to our sponsors of Small Business Week.

This was a unique year for SBW, but we came together virtually and safely in-person during Business After Hours to continue supporting and celebrating our small businesses.



See you in 2021!

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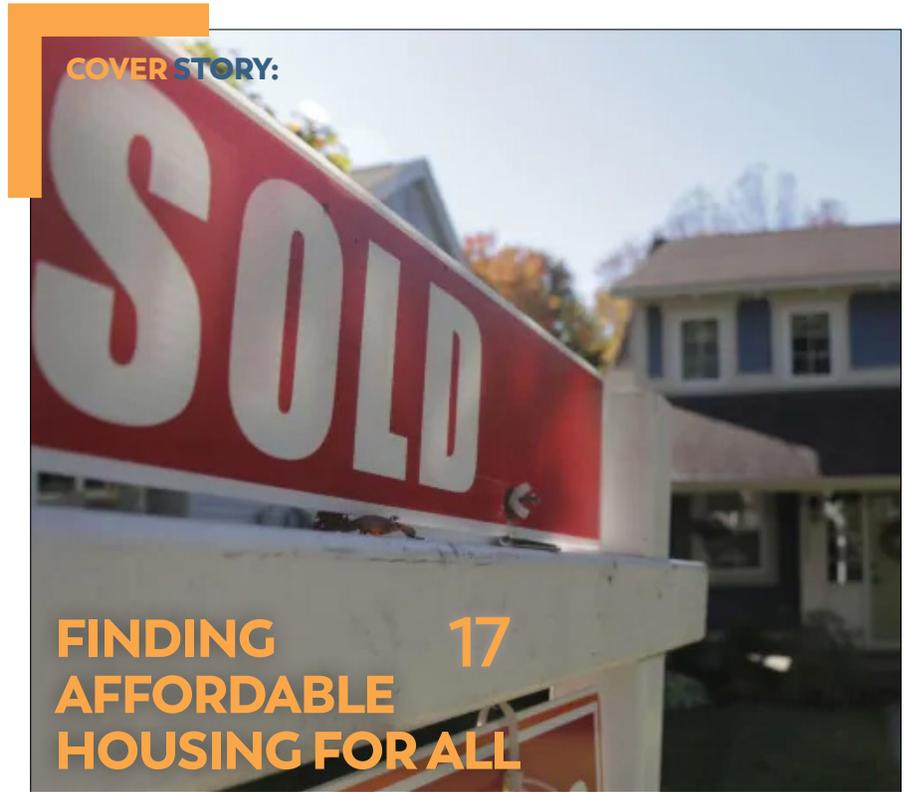
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That's what drives us; to be respected. Our number one value starts with the customer."

— Ryan O'Leary, Founder and CEO, SONA

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Please address editorial enquiries and changes to information to:
Halifax Chamber of Commerce
100-32 Akerley Boulevard
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 1N1
Tel: 902-468-7111
Fax: 902-468-7333
info@halifaxchamber.com
www.halifaxchamber.com

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Nick Hudson, Photographer
[Instagram.com/nickhudsonphoto](https://www.instagram.com/nickhudsonphoto)
[NickHudson.ca](https://www.halifaxchamber.com)

**HALIFAX
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

CHAMBER EVENTS

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

Contact chris@halifaxchamber.com for sponsorship opportunities

VIRTUAL EVENTS

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

**Selling in a Digital World
- Digital Marketing &
E-Commerce Success**

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

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- How it is Relevant to Today's
Workplace**

December 15
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

BUSINESS SUPPORT SERIES:

**An Update on Programs For
Recovery**

December 9
10:00 AM - 10:45 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

VIRTUAL EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE

BUSINESS DIGITIZATION SERIES:

**The Case for Digitizing
- How the Business and
Professional Services Industry
Can Take Advantage**

December 11
10:30 AM - 11:15 AM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

Chamber 101

December 16
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
REGISTER [HERE](#)

**ANNUAL STATE OF
THE MUNICIPALITY
TBD**

**HALIFAX BUSINESS
AWARDS
TBD**

**WONDER WOMEN
CONFERENCE**

February 19

POLICY & ADVOCACY

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

Each year, the Halifax Chamber of Commerce submits an Issue Note to the Municipal government. This document outlines the issues affecting our members and the business community. COVID-19 has had a strong impact on our membership; therefore, our 2020 Issue Note will focus significantly on what the municipal government can do to provide support to entrepreneurs, business owners, and employees during this unprecedented time.

While our 2019 - 2023 Strategic Plan pillars will still be prevalent in our discussions, we want the emphasis to be on the things we can do now, that will encourage growth, sustainability, and stimulation of the economy.

2020 MUNICIPAL ISSUE NOTE

Check out our [2020 Municipal Issue Note](#).

2020 PROVINCIAL ISSUE NOTE

Check out our [2020 Provincial Issue Note](#).

We can do it again!

Continuing to offer support to contain the spread and welcome the new year

@prezhfxchamber



PATRICK SULLIVAN
PRESIDENT & CEO

December snuck up on us yet again, and we find ourselves in a similar situation to March. This time, however, is different. And I'll let you know why - because we have crushed this before, and we can do it again!

We know how to contain this spread and flatten the curve like we already have once before. For the short time being, we need to limit our social contact. Limit our gatherings, keep our bubbles consistent and limit travel in and out of Nova Scotia. Wear a face mask anywhere we go, clean high-touch surfaces, disinfect regularly, wash our hands and maintain social distance.

We all have a part to play. Shutting down the spread we have right now in Halifax means high-traffic businesses are shutting down temporarily. That includes bars and restaurants, with small businesses and retail stores having limited capacity.

Their reduced traffic is all the more reason to support local. We have a responsibility to support our local economy and small businesses, especially during this holiday season. They were relying all year on this holiday season, as well as on the Atlantic bubble, to provide them with much-needed revenue after the lockdown in March and the restrictions that continued throughout the following months. Our local economy depends on how you decide to spend your holiday shopping this year.

Supporting local can be done easily and safely from the comfort of your own

home. Stay inside and order online. Order take out or gifts from local stores. Here's a fantastic **list of small local businesses** that could use your support, created by a member of our community. Or if you feel comfortable enough, go visit local shops for safe in-person or curb-side pickups. But, again, make sure to wear your mask, wash your hands and maintain physical distancing.

The Chamber continues to support its members, small businesses and the business community throughout this pandemic. We have assembled and kept and maintained **resources** up-to-date available on our website for support. We hold **NSBLEC** meetings regularly with members of the business community and speak to government officials to keep an open channel of communication and information.

We are still hosting free webinars, accessible to all, to keep everyone informed and supported. Even though our two in-person events for December were rescheduled for the new year, we still have lots of great **virtual events** happening over this month. Make sure to check them out and register.

We have been here before; we beat the odds and can do it again. The new year is almost here, and what it has in store for us depends on the actions we take right now. Let's finish this year strong and usher ourselves into a new one on a good note with hope and a positive outlook to what's yet to come.

We look forward to getting together with you all, safely, in 2021. And until then, from the Chamber team and I, we wish you happy holidays and a happy new year!

TAP CANADA'S TRADE ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

PROPEL YOUR BUSINESS TOWARDS GLOBAL GROWTH.

APPLY TODAY FOR WINTER 2021

NATIONAL SPONSORS:

AIR CANADA CARGO bdc EDC RBC

NEW & NOTED

We welcome our new Chamber members

ASM COURIER SERVICES LTD

Based in Dartmouth Nova Scotia, ASM specializes in quick and professional courier services in the HRM area. Founded in April of 2020 the company has already expanded it's fleet to meet the demand of our growing client base. Operating 7 days a week with full time drivers, there is no package too big or small.

Chris O'Leary

61 Mount Hope Ave
Dartmouth, NS
(902) 480-6018

chriso@asmcsLtd.com

<http://www.asmcsLtd.com>

TRANSPORTATION - Freight/Moving

BABYLON DISTRIBUTION LTD

Hassan Al-Karmanji

Halifax, NS
(902) 320-9900

info@babylonsLtd.com

<http://www.babylonLtd.com>

SHOPPING & SPECIALTY RETAIL -
Wholesale

BDB AUTOMOTIVE

Bob Blumenthal

Dartmouth, NS
(902) 830-4820

webtrader@gmail.com

BUSINESS & PROF. SERVICES - Sales

BELL MEDIA (C100, VIRGIN RADIO & CTV ATLANTIC)

Glenn Semaniuk

2900 Agricola St
Halifax, NS
(902) 453-2524

glenn.semaniuk@bellmedia.ca

<http://c100fm.com>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA -
Marketing

CATHY GAGE WELLNESS (VOXXLIFE)

VoxxLife combines modern technology with decades of research in neuromuscular science to give "The NeuroPath to

Faster Wellness", drug-free and without invasive treatments. Benefits include Balance, Pain Relief, Energy, Recovery, reduced anxiety and Neural Health. Our products use a special tactile pattern that activates neuroreceptors and keeps you functioning at your optimal.

Cathy Gage

Bedford, NS
(902) 397-0188

cathy@cathygage.com

<http://www.cathygage.com>

HEALTH CARE - Health and Wellness

CHARISMA UNLIMITED

Aria Raphael

Halifax, NS
(902) 487-7881

ariaraphael@gmail.com

<http://www.charismaunlimited.com>

BUSINESS & PROF. SERVICES -
Consulting (General)

CROSE MECHANICAL HEATING AND COOLING

Sherri Walker

Porters Lake, NS
(902) 827-2200

sher_1966_mustang@yahoo.com

<http://www.crosemechanical.ca>

INDUSTRIAL & MANUFACTURING -
Heating/Ventilation

DOCCHRISTINE

At DocChristine we provide individuals and organizations with Health Consulting, Education and Planning Services. The owner and founder, Dr. Christine Sauer, is a German-trained and Board-Certified (Germany) retired conventional Physician, Naturopath and a Certified Brain and Mental Health Coach, an Integrative Nutrition Health Coach as well as a gastrointestinal disease specialist.

Christine Sauer

Middle Sackville, NS
(902) 222-2742

info@docchristine.com

<https://docchristine.com>

HEALTH CARE - Health Care
Services, General

ERICA BAKER PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Erica Baker Psychological Services (EBPS) is a private practice in Nova Scotia with 15+ psychologists. EBPS specializes in Psychoeducational, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Neuropsychological assessments across the lifespan. We collaborate with clients, families, educators and others to recognize needs and strengths and develop plans for moving forward.

Rick Baker

Halifax, NS
(902) 445-3851

rick.baker@hey.com

<http://ericabaker.ca>

HEALTH CARE - Psychology Practice

FOCAL RESEARCH CONSULTANTS LIMITED

Focal has earned a reputation for excellence in advanced data analytics, research design and delivery of practical evidence-based information solutions. A pioneer in the use of research, data and technology for compliance and CSR, Focal is a world leader in developing algorithms and custom software. They help companies mitigate consumer risk especially in the area of gambling with Focal's new ALERT BETTOR Protection System.

Tracy Schrans

7071 Bayers Rd Suite 309
Halifax, NS
(902) 454-8856

tschrans@focalresearch.com

<http://www.focalresearch.com>

COMPUTERS, IT & TECHNOLOGY -
Research/Development

HANNAH ALDCORN - BACH. OF COMMERCE, MAJOR IN FINANCE, DAL

Hannah Aldcorn

Halifax, NS
(403) 629-2676

hannah.aldcorn@dal.ca
OTHER - Student Member

HOWATT STRATEGIC HR

Howatt HR is a human resources consulting firm that works with companies to transform the workplace experience. That way, every employee walks into work with purpose, feels empowered, energized, safe and confident to handle whatever comes their way. We believe thriving employees are the foundation of a thriving business.

Jesse Adams

Halifax, NS
(902) 452-7683

jesse@howatthr.com
<http://www.howatthr.com>

HR, EMPLOYMENT & STAFFING - Human Resources

KEILIN RAMIREZ REAL ESTATE

Keilin Ramirez is most definitely a people person with a passion to help others. Originally from Cuba and now a proud Canadian, she believes working with a competent Real Estate Agent is very

important to get the results you deserve. She is excited to use her experience and knowledge to help more clients as she grows her career.

Keilin Ramirez

Halifax, NS
(902) 412-5333

keilinrealtor@gmail.com
<https://royallepageatlantic.com/contact-us/agent-profile/keilin-ramirez/13997/>

REAL ESTATE/CONSTRUCTION - Real Estate Residential

MINUTEMAN PRESS - LOWER SACKVILLE

Minuteman Press Lower Sackville is a family business franchised by the world's largest printing and promotional services brand. At our shop, we do all types of digital printing, graphic design, large format signage and banner, clothing and apparel, and promotional items. Our company's goal is to provide fast and economical services to our clients while maintaining high quality.

Ali Shahisavandi

400 Sackville Dr Unit 4

Lower Sackville, NS
(902) 865-8045

lowersackville@minutemanpress.ca
<https://lowersackville.minutemanpress.ca>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Signage

NEWFOUNDLAND CHOCOLATE COMPANY

We are a proud Newfoundland company that has been creating hand crafted artisan chocolate for 10 years! We continue to use fresh, local, wholesome ingredients in everything that we make. Learn the fine art of hand crafted chocolates with our chocolate making classes at the Sunnyside Mall! No artificial flavors. No preservatives. Just honestly delicious chocolates.

Kathryn Hicks-Woodley

166 Duckworth St
St. John's, NL
(709) 579-0099

kathryn@newfoundlandchocolatecompany.com

<http://www.newfoundlandchocolatecompany.com/>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Promotional Products

NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNOLOGISTS

The Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists (NSCMLT) is the professional regulatory body responsible for the licensure of Medical Laboratory Technologists (MLT) within Nova Scotia. NSCMLT sets the MLTs entrance to practice requirements, compulsory life-long competency requirements and a formal process for issues and concerns with the MLT practice. NSCMLT is dedicated to patient safety by the ongoing improvement of the practice of medical laboratory technology and quality medical laboratory testing in Nova Scotia.

Janice Jones

380 Bedford Hwy Suite 202
Halifax, NS
(902) 453-9605

registrar@nscmlt.org
<http://www.nscmlt.org>

HEALTH CARE - Medical Diagnostic Services

I'M A CHAMBER MEMBER

"Since 1976, the Halifax Chamber has helped keep us connected to the local business community and well-informed about key initiatives in the area. Their webinars are and will continue to be an invaluable platform for community engagement and education on driving growth. Especially during the current challenging times, the Chamber has been a leader and an advocate for the Halifax business community. They provided us with **constant updates on COVID-19 and resources** to help businesses and our city. Our organization's COVID-19 response team definitely appreciated the **constant updates, resources, and webinars**. We plan to remain a member for a long time to come, for these and other reasons."

Cory Bell, President & CEO,
Lindsay Construction Limited

BE A MEMBER

HALIFAX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

REGUS

First established in 1989, Regus is one of the original pioneers of flexible workspace, helping businesses choose a way of working that's best for their people. With over 3,000 locations, Regus' global network of bright, inspiring workspaces allow modern businesses to work where, when and how they want, in a more agile way. Regus provides businesses with the flexibility to grow without risk or commitment.

Brian MacDonald

1959 Upper Water Street Suite 1301
Halifax, NS
(902) 448-8595

brian.macdonald@iwgplc.com

www.regus.ca

BUSINESS & PROF. SERVICES - Bus. Service Centres

SABRINA'S MASSAGE THERAPY LTD.

Sabrina has been a Registered Massage Therapist for 21 years. She has experience in treating clients with chronic pain, neck and shoulder tension, concussions and back pain. Sabrina also specializes in treating clients who have had breast cancer and subsequently are either post-mastectomy or post breast reconstruction surgery.

Sabrina Janick

17 Maplewood Dr
Halifax, NS
(902) 579-2519

sabrinajanick@fastmail.com

<http://sabinasmassagetherapy.ca>

HEALTH CARE - Massage Therapy

SANDBOX PLATFORM

Sandbox Platform builds and delivers powerful and cost effective ERP software to small businesses. Starting as a well-respected custom-development firm, we learned that every client has an individual approach to business that makes them uniquely competitive. We created a tool-set that allows us to create custom environments that best reflect that advantage.

Robert Chambers

Mahone Bay, NS
(902) 240-6858

robert.chambers@sandboxonline.com

<http://www.sandboxplatform.com>

COMPUTERS, IT & TECHNOLOGY - Computer Software

SO POSH BOUTIQUE

So Posh Boutique is a 100% female owned and black operated business located in Halifax, NS. Our products are curated for solopreneurs, female freelancers, creatives, girl CEOs and bosses. We want to empower women to look and feel amazing while building our empires.

Alaina Balfour

Bedford, NS
(902) 441-9774

management@soposhboutique.com

<http://www.soposhboutique.com>

SHOPPING & SPECIALTY RETAIL - Retail (General)

SOBEY MBA PROGRAM @ SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Shawn Tracey

923 Robie St Sobeys Building, Room 208

Halifax, NS
(902) 491-6484

shawn.tracey@smu.ca

<http://sobey.smu.ca>

OTHER - Student Member

TANYA MEDIA

Tanya Media is the premiere media content production and communications company in Atlantic Canada. Tanya Chedrawy is the Founder & CEO, and as the host and producer of Eastlink TV's Small Talk Big Ideas, she understands the power of a story. She uses her expertise to help organizations cultivate a strategic storytelling practice to establish themselves in a category of one.

Tanya Chedrawy

Dartmouth, NS
(902) 452-2270

tanya@tanyamedia.com

<http://tanyamedia.com>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Public Relations/Affairs

UNIQUE DESIGN

Zu Chen

256 Bedford Hwy
Halifax, NS
(902) 664-8886

zuchen_ytv@hotmail.com

<http://u-design.ca>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Promotional Products

VANESSA BURNS CONSULTING GROUP

Vanessa Burns Consulting Group believes in a heart-centered approach and in simplifying the complicated. Helping clients increase their abundance through grant and proposal writing, impactful storytelling, effective fundraising and sales strategies and event planning services. Consulting with a little heart to help clients deliver more good.

Vanessa Burns

Halifax, NS
(902) 818-8292

vanessaburnsconsulting@gmail.com

BUSINESS & PROF. SERVICES - Business Consulting

VIRTUALLY CONNECTED SOLUTIONS

As a virtual assistant, I work with small business owners, entrepreneurs and executives to manage their back-end administration and day-to-day operations remotely. Then, they can focus on what really matters, by freeing up their time to grow their business which results in greater profitability and a more balanced lifestyle. Here to help you connect the dots for your business, remotely!

Kate Sullivan

103-287 Lacewood Dr Unit 132
Halifax, NS
(902) 430-8349

kate@virtuallyconnectedsolutions.ca

<https://virtuallyconnectedsolutions.ca>

ADVERTISING, PR & MEDIA - Social Media

Are you a new member?

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

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

How our members are growing Halifax

REVOLUTIONIZING THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

Aethera Technologies has signed an agreement to build a radio frequency containerized lobster shell drying system for the Verschuren Centre. This system will make it possible for added value products, such as bio-polymers, proteins and mineral compounds, to be generated from lobster shells. It will also help to reduce the volume of shells going to landfill. Radio frequency power makes it possible to dry shells in bulk, at low heat, to avoid burning, so that the compounds can be extracted. Radio frequency (RF) drying is often used in the food sector for thawing/tempering and in wood products drying.

NEPTUNE THEATRE SCHOOL AND THE DISCOVERY CENTRE PARTNER ON NEW ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

After a successful summer camp partnership, **Neptune Theatre School** and the **Discovery Centre** have joined forces once again to create educational online **Professional Development Day camps**. Students can take part from the comfort of their own home, anywhere in the province or around the world. These unique Zoom camps, offered for ages seven to 12-years-old, are fun and interactive sessions full of drama and storytelling activities, combined with science and technology experiments. They hope to challenge and expose young minds to the joys of exploring theatre and the arts while simultaneously connecting to the thrills of science and technology. The instructional staff have been collaborating on ways to make this unique program fun and accessible to all. To find out more information go to: neptunetheatre.com/pdday



HALIFAX CONVENTION CENTRE AWARDED AIPC GOLD

The **Halifax Convention Centre** has achieved the highest certification awarded by AIPC (International Association of Congress Centres) Quality Standards Certification: Gold! The AIPC Quality Standards program was developed as an industry-specific certification to confirm and document accomplishments in critical areas of convention

centre performance, and it is the only certification of its kind in the industry. The program standards identify and audit convention centres in ten key areas, including customer service, quality of facilities and operations, employee relations, health, safety, security and emergency response, financial integrity, community relations, and environmental responsibility.

HALIFAX PARTNERSHIP AND STARTUP VLIFE LAUNCH BUY LOCAL PROGRAM FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Halifax Partnership announced a new partnership with **vLife by Quantum Link** to boost marketing and sales support for 80 small businesses in Halifax. The new Access Local program will provide businesses with a complimentary vLife online storefront to help them reach customers interested in buying local. It's an additional resource to help small businesses grow their customer base and mitigate the impacts of

COVID-19, while supporting economic recovery efforts in Halifax. The program launched during Small Business Week, recognizing the critical contributions entrepreneurs make to Halifax's economy and the vibrancy of our community. The Access Local program provides greater awareness of, and access to, small independent businesses that are the heart and soul of the diverse Halifax-local community offerings.

WE ARE YOUNG CELEBRATES 5 YEARS

We Are Young is celebrating five years as an organization! It has been an honour and a privilege to work with so many incredible people within our community who have helped shape the organization we are today. From the deepest part of our hearts, we thank our team, volunteers, sponsors, partners, Founding Partners (Whitestone Building and Renovations, The Berkeley Retirement Residences, The Head Shoppe) and Media Partner New Brooklyn Media. Because of you, these years have been, and will continue to be, nothing short of amazing.

DEEP WATER BERTH EXTENSION AT PORT OF HALIFAX FULLY OPERATIONAL

The South End Container Terminal extension at the **Port of Halifax** is complete and fully operational. The first vessel to call on this expanded piece of critical infrastructure, operated by PSA Halifax, is the Zim Tarragona which arrived on October 23, 2020. It's now the longest and deepest container berth in Eastern Canada with 800 metres continuous length and 16 metres depth. The recent installation of a new Super Post-Panamax (SPPX) crane, the largest in Eastern Canada, brings the total compliment of SPPX quay cranes at PSA Halifax to five. Vessels over 15,000 TEU already calling further show how the Port of Halifax is a significant player amongst East Coast deep water ports and is taking part in the growing deployment of Ultra-Class Container Vessels.

DMB CONSULTING CELEBRATING 5 YEARS!

DMB Consulting provides part-time CFO and consulting services to companies in a variety of industries in Atlantic Canada and beyond. One such client is Global Skills Hub (www.globalskills.io), a Toronto based startup that connects global tech talent to Canadian companies. ... continued on page 11.



VIRTUAL CRAFT FAIR IN DEVELOPMENT STAGE

The "Christmas Extravaganza Expo", is a popular holiday craft fair and an annual fundraiser for the "Advocates for Angels in Motion" charity. This year they are working with **NSLive.tv** to develop a virtual version of their much anticipated event. The production will combine elements of **NSLive.tv's** "Trade Show TV" service with some fundraising

elements of a "Webathon" with no cost to the charity. Going LIVE every 15-20 minutes from an onsite TV booth, each segment will present information on the charity and feature an exhibitor and their wares, providing them with an opportunity to increase sales. This is just one instance of how we are adapting our services for COVID-19.

HOME CARE BUSINESS EXPANDS TO HALIFAX

Osprey Angels Home Care Services is a Cape Breton-based business that worked throughout COVID-19 to continue supporting seniors by adapting and adjusting how they delivered private home care services in the safest possible means. Despite the challenges faced by the pandemic, they pursued their dream of expanding their business to Halifax, and in July they hired Jennifer Drummond to coordinate and manage the services offered in HRM. Jennifer is working steadily to hire experienced, compassionate home care workers, referred to as "Angels." At the same time, she's promoting Osprey Angels as a home care company that places the needs of each client as their top priority.





A.P. REID NAMED IBC AWARDS FINALIST

A.P. Reid Insurance, part of the Storm Insurance Group, has been selected, for the fourth year in a row, as a finalist in three categories in the 2020 Insurance Business Canada (IBC) Awards: National Brokerage of the Year, Digital Innovator of the Year and Employer of Choice. Celebrating 40 years of business,

A.P. Reid continues to prove itself a leader in the insurance industry. In addition to its growing team of expert brokers, A.P. Reid sets itself apart from others by investing in people, communities and digital solutions designed with the customer in mind.



... “Since our inception in 2018, David Bortolussi at DMB initially worked with GSH as a consultant but has transitioned to our part-time CFO. David has been instrumental in keeping our finances in order and steering us through the challenges caused by the pandemic. We are now in a great position to achieve significant growth in 2021! I strongly recommend DMB to any SME.” Yousuf Khatib – President and CEO, GSH” Visit www.dmbconsulting.ca

VIRTUAL COPD SUPPORT GROUP

As we continue to navigate through a global pandemic, the **Lung Association of Nova Scotia** has had to adapt some of our programs and services in order to continue helping the vulnerable population we serve. Most recently, we started offering a Virtual COPD Support Group, which is intended to be a private and secure forum for people to connect, ask questions and receive expert advice - all the while connecting with others who are living with COPD. For more information on these sessions or to sign up, please visit our website at ns.lung.ca

MHG DELIVERED GOES GREEN WITH NEW ELECTRIC DELIVERY VEHICLES

Murphy Hospitality Group (MHG) is pleased to announce that their delivery service, MHG Delivered, is now using electric vehicles. The new Hyundai IONIQ vehicles are all-electric, allowing meals and Island beer to be delivered to Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall completely emissions-free. The changeover to electric is part of a larger green initiative towards reducing their environmental footprint across the company. This includes everything from switching over to LED lighting, improving insulation and decreasing their reliance on oil heating wherever possible. MHG is also working to ensure that, by early 2021, 100% of their take-out packaging and utensils will be either recyclable or compostable.

DBDLI CEO NAMED FINALIST FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AWARD

The Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute (DBDLI) is both pleased and proud to announce that our CEO, Sylvia Parris-Drummond, has been named a Finalist for the 2020 RBC Canadian Women Entrepreneur Awards for the Social Change Award: East category. Sylvia’s ongoing dedication to improve educational experiences, opportunities and outcomes for Nova Scotian learners of African ancestry has given DBDLI recognition as one of the top Africentric educational experts by the National Canadian Black Summit. Sylvia is humbled by her nomination, and she, along with the staff at DBDLI, will continue to promote Africentricity in all aspects of education and research.

ROYER THOMPSON LAUNCHES A NEW SERVICE FOCUSED ON TALENT AND CULTURE

Royer Thompson’s LeadershipPool@ is a proven approach to enhance due diligence when assessing potential transactions with a focus on talent and culture. The service is available virtually or in-person in a concerted four-six-week process. We provide organizations with insight on the leadership team and recommendations on organizational structure and strategies to retain and develop top talent and ensure organizational alignment. The acquisition of new talent in a M&A transaction also presents opportunity to deepen the leadership pool for succession planning in the acquiring company as the competition for top global talent intensifies.

CHRISTMAS SEALS - AN ANNUAL TRADITION

Christmas Seals have been a Canadian tradition since 1908. Started by a Danish Postmaster, to help children with Tuberculosis (TB), the Christmas Seals campaign has been an annual fundraiser for the **Lung Association of Nova Scotia** for over 100 years. While originally... continued on page 13.



RAPPELLING IN SUPPORT OF NOVA SCOTIANS WITH DISABILITIES

On October 3, brave superheroes challenged themselves and changed lives by fundraising for **Easter Seals Nova Scotia**. They rappelled down the side of Halifax’s tallest office building, 1801 Hollis at Drop Zone 2020. Thank you to this year’s participants which included the **Halifax Chamber of Commerce** Champions, third-time rappellers Carpe Diem and to Harding Medical, our local

presenting sponsor! Annually, Drop Zone funds enable us to keep our barrier-free Camp Tidnish physically and financially accessible to campers, help us provide affordable wheelchairs and mobility equipment, assist us in our inclusive sport programs, and support our skills and workplace training services for Nova Scotians with disabilities.

JANE DOUCET PENS TOP EMPLOYER PROFILES

For the sixth year, Jane Doucet, principal of Halifax-based **Jane Doucet Content Communications**, has joined the national team of freelance writers producing content for Mediacorp Canada Inc.’s Top Employers company profiles. The 600-word profiles will appear in national and regional newspapers across Canada, as well as online. While this work will continue into the spring of 2021, Jane is happily welcoming new clients.





HALIFAX STARTUP PILOTS GLOBAL SOLUTION TO COVID-19 SCREENING

Halifax-based startup **Rimot.io Inc.** is testing a safer, more secure alternative to screen for COVID-19 with local innovation partners **Halifax Partnership** and **Volta**. Rimot saw an opportunity to use their platform to make workplaces safer by screening people for the virus using a touchless thermal camera and automated questionnaires. They swiftly developed a prototype and are now deploying their RimotHEALTH

Workplace Virus Threat Screening turnkey cloud-based solution across North America and Europe. To support the company in scaling this technology, Halifax Partnership and Volta are testing a new release of the RimotHEALTH technology within their workplaces. Both organizations will identify challenges and opportunities with the technology and will provide feedback to Rimot to support product improvement.

MSVU'S BUSINESS & TOURISM DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES FIRESIDE CHATS SERIES

MSVU's Business & Tourism department has launched a new Fireside Chat series of online addresses by sector leaders from across the Atlantic region and beyond. Hosted by Professor Jeff McKinnon, the series features high-profile entrepreneurs, managers, government officials, and CEOs. The series includes discussions about pandemic impacts on business in the Atlantic region and the way

forward, including implications for tourism-oriented businesses. The webinars are also a means of providing an exceptional additional learning opportunity for MSVU Business & Tourism students as part of the program's extra-curricular Learning Passport Program. The series continues in 2021, and all are welcome to tune in. Visit msvu.ca or watch previous sessions at youtube.com/MountBusiTourism.

... intended to fund sanatoria for patients with TB, funds were eventually used for TB prevention, and ultimately helped to eradicate this deadly disease in Canada. Christmas seals helped win the fight against TB, but now act as an essential fundraiser to support world-class research, programs and education. For more information about Christmas Seals or to donate, visit ns.lung.ca

HALIFAX WOMAN RECEIVES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

The Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC) announced the winner of the Shirley Case Leadership Award, Delvina Bernard. Bernard is an educator, civil and human rights activist, singer/songwriter and institutional change strategist. As principal founder of the Africentric Learning Institute of Nova Scotia, she has been at the forefront of the Canadian Africentric education movement. Bernard has been a key player in connecting communities and activists in Halifax and Nova Scotia with global ones, always identifying the universality in the struggles of racialized and marginalized communities around the world. Bernard has also been a staunch and life-long advocate for global solidarity and international development, through her community activism, professional endeavours and considerable academic contributions.

HYDROGEN CAN HELP WITH ENERGY TRANSITION

A recent study completed by OERA, with the support of **Heritage Gas**, the **Province of Nova Scotia**, Liberty Utilities and **Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency**, shows that hydrogen can play a key role in the Maritimes' future energy mix and regional leaders should act now to align policy and investment. The study finds that hydrogen is a sustainable source of energy that can help the region address climate change and achieve economic growth. Learn more at www.oera.ca/hydrogenstudy

AGENTS OF CHANGE 9.0

Pioneering in a pandemic

By Mina Atia

“They have risen to the challenge and shifted operations in support of provincial PPE efforts.”
 — **Fred Crooks**, Chief Regulatory Officer,
 Government of Nova Scotia

The Agents of Change cover story is very near and dear to the heart of Business Voice magazine.

For the past eight years, the story put a spotlight on the movers and shakers of our city and province. But this year’s edition is extra special.

The ninth edition covers those who were pivotal in supporting our communities in combating the pandemic. These businesses continue to improve their processes to be as efficient as possible and provide competitive and much-needed products such as protective personal equipment (PPE).

“They have risen to the challenge and shifted operations in support of provincial PPE efforts,” says Fred Crooks, Chief Regulatory Officer at **Government of Nova Scotia**.

Businesses across the province have provided face shields and gowns to Nova Scotia Health and the IWK, as well as hand sanitizer to meet a sizeable increase in demand across public services, including schools.

“It has been very reassuring and refreshing to see so many Nova Scotia companies step up in support of the production of PPE,” says Crooks.

During the first few months of the pandemic, there was an enormous shortage of hand sanitizers and a lot of panic in the general population. **Compass Distillers** shifted from producing distilled spirits to making hand sanitizer and ethanol-based surface sanitizer.

“As a distillery we felt it was our duty to shift production from spirits over to hand sanitizer during those crucial months,” says Renae Perry, Sales & Marketing Manager at Compass Distillers.

Being provided with an opportunity to contribute during these unprecedented times, many businesses like Compass Distillers were kept busy in the early days when the pandemic was having a more significant impact on the economy.

“Any time a business has an opportunity to quickly pivot and ramp-up a new product line and area of business, they gain valuable experience,” says Crooks.

Compass Distillers’ hand-sanitizer

production has now slowed down since big manufacturers have ramped up production dramatically. “But if there is a resurgence of demand, we will do what we must,” says Perry.

This slowdown is also due to the unsustainable nature of PPE production for a small business. “Our first batch of hand sanitizer was produced using very high proof vodka,” says Perry. “So the most expensive way possible to make hand sanitizer, which makes it very much not sustainable.”

Even after changing their production methods to make a less tasty ethanol, the costs of making “craft distilled” hand sanitizer is considerably higher compared to pharmaceutical or fuel ethanol production facilities. Compass Distillers’ production space is not optimized to creating high volumes of high-proof ethanol.

“We kept our prices as low as possible, but we had to cover costs,” says Perry.

As instrumental as it was, this shift

impacted its regular production schedule. Yet, it kept them busy with meeting a community need – which was quite fulfilling for the team at Compass Distillers. Even with this impressive and difficult shift, the distilling company remained open and operational.

The government facilitated the Health Canada permit for making hand sanitizer, which supported Compass Distillers in their PPE production.

But the support was limited and didn’t garner much involvement from the government beyond that.

“These businesses are well known to our economic development partners and they will certainly leverage the supports available as it makes sense for their business,” says Crooks.

With the recent spike of cases in the central region, the government announced a **grant program** offered to HRM restaurants, bars and gyms to support them with their temporary closure and PPE production.

“It is still somewhat unpredictable,” says Crooks. “A lot will depend on how long it takes to return to normal and what ‘normal’ looks like.”

Compass Distillers is appreciative of the support of the community that enabled it to donate over 1,500 bottles of hand sanitizers to local non-profit organizations, as well as health care workers, elderly community members and those at high risk.

“... If there is a resurgence of demand, we will do what we must.”

— **Renae Perry,**
Sales & Marketing
Manager, Compass
Distillers



Other businesses have developed emergency response solutions and innovations that are in various stages of development.

This includes several Nova Scotia companies that are developing testing and other technology solutions. With a shortage of ventilators when hospitals were hit by a high number of infected patients, there was a life-dependent need for respiratory support.

Protocase stepped up to the plate to support the fight against the spread. The custom-part, sheet-metal-enclosure, CNC-machining and 3D-printing manufacturing company helps engineers, researchers and scientists all over the world innovate and develop technology.

“The manufacturing of PPE has helped our company, in the sense that it was a wonderful exercise in collaborating between our sales, engineering and R&D teams,” says Allison MacDonald, Marketing Manager at Protocase.

Through teamwork and solid project management, the teams at Protocase were able to quickly determine the requirements for creating face shields and create a manufacturable design that could be replicated quickly.

While it didn’t switch from manufacturing those products to PPE, **Protocase** did engage their internal teams with two specific COVID-19 projects.

Its 3D-printing division created face shields for local businesses in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, who were having difficulty sourcing face shields elsewhere. These businesses included restaurants and the fisheries association amongst others.

“We also created the Nova Scotia Ventilator Consortium which, through guidance from doctors and respiratory specialists, created a fully functional portable mechanical ventilator,” says MacDonald.

This **project**’s goal was to create a ventilator that could be quickly and easily manufactured. The **consortium** also included Engenuity Inc., Advanced Glazings Ltd., Nova Scotia Power MakerSpace and Cape Breton University.

“Because of our business model, and our client base of engineering and innovation, the pandemic didn’t slow down our operations.”

— Allison
MacDonald,
Marketing Manager,
Protocase



“Because of our business model, and our client base of engineering and innovation, the pandemic didn’t slow down our operations,” says MacDonald.

PPE production at Protocase will continue as needed based on customer demand. “Our 3D-Printing division is one of our newest entities, as we launched it in mid-2019,” says MacDonald.

“Because everything we create for our customers is completely customized based on their requirements and demand, we are able to manufacture what’s needed, when it’s needed.”

Compass Distillers and Protocase are amongst several pioneering businesses and individuals who continue to offer assistance in many ways. With

PPE demands remaining high, these businesses also continue to gain tremendous knowledge on what it takes to supply the health sector.

“We are still very much in a pandemic and cases are spiking across the world,” says Crooks. “PPE will be required for the foreseeable future and we will continue to ensure adequate supply of PPE for Nova Scotia.”

“Safety and efficacy cannot be spared, and products must meet stringent regulations,” says Crooks. “In a world of constrained supply, it is comforting to see local suppliers who can deliver on time and who are not as affected by external market pressures in getting their products to us.” ■

Finding affordable housing for all

Groups are working together to find solutions amid the pandemic

By Mina Atia



PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERT GUERTIN/CBC

It was no surprise that the recently-popped Atlantic bubble, along with the already attractive lower cost of living and high quality of life in Nova Scotia, had increased migration from other provinces.

Both the locals and newcomers are buying homes remotely, sight unseen. They do it via Zoom, FaceTime or virtual viewings. It's reflective of that tired but accurate phrase: 'This is the new normal.'

"There were 6,189 sales in Nova Scotia in 2018, 5,132 sales in 2019 and 2020's year-to-date is sitting at 3,383 sales. That is a 34.1 per cent decrease from last year," says Allie White, Realtor with **Keller Williams Select Realty**.

Because of that dip, the average house lists for five to 10 per cent above asking, and 71 per cent are being sold over asking.

"Putting an offer on a house now means you could be competing with five to 20 other offers," says White. "Buyers are looking at the same houses. And if it's the one for you, I can guarantee it's the one for someone else."

“Putting an offer on a house now means you could be competing with five to 20 other offers.”

— Allie White,
Realtor, Keller Williams
Select Realty

The average house listing nowadays is 10 days on the market, compared to 34 days in 2018.

The pandemic brought new challenges to the housing market. Just as PPE and cleaning supplies were flying off the shelves, housing supplies suffered a similar fate.

"Purchase and rental housing supplies are near historic lows in Nova Scotia," says Roger Boutilier, Executive Officer of **NS Realtors**. "This is not a new situation, but it is a worsening situation."

All of these factors are creating more complications for affordable housing, which is already limited in Halifax due to population growth.

Housing is defined as affordable when people are able to pay 30 per cent or less of their gross income to afford good-condition and livable housing. This cost includes rent and utilities for tenants or mortgage payments, utilities and property taxes for owners.

"Right now, I see there's a problem with the rental market with increases in rent prices," says White.

“I have clients that have purchased income properties; they fear backlash from charging what’s the suited rent for the property and maybe selling themselves short ultimately. There are still good people out there!”

People are looking to afford cheaper rent, or even buy a house. They are looking to move away from job centres where housing isn’t as expensive.

“Everyone needs safe, accessible and affordable housing that fits their needs,” says Boutilier.

Some people are even going further, outside of the city, to smaller markets like Chester and Windsor.

This trend creates an increasing need for more connective transit, congestion of roads, traffic pressure, longer commutes and requests for higher wages. While our growing population is key to our economic strength, the outward migration of city dwellers can have negative impacts on economic growth, community stagnation and environmental pollution.

We need strategies to find affordable housing for new-home buyers, new professionals and recent graduates.

Halifax Chamber members have said that buying a home in Nova Scotia can be a roadblock to staying here after education or for employment.

“There needs to be partnerships between government, developers, not-for-profits, professional associations and more to ensure we have the healthy housing mix we need,” says Boutilier.

The city is also seeing severe declines in home sales as the economy recovers from the pandemic. There’re a low inventory of housing and an inability to keep it affordable.

“The supply is not meeting demand, and more needs to be done to increase stock through programs like the federal Rapid Housing Initiative, expanding access to grants and loans for first-time buyer, and ensuring development permits move quickly through the system,” says Boutilier.

On November 16, 2020, it was announced that the new Halifax Regional Council will start working on a detailed affordable housing plan.

The city received \$8.6 million through the federal Rapid Housing Initiative to spend on affordable housing. The plan is to build 28 units, each costing \$311,000, for women and indigenous communities as its target populations.

It was announced that proposals from Adsum House, the North End Community Health Association and the Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre are part of the funding allotted for Halifax.

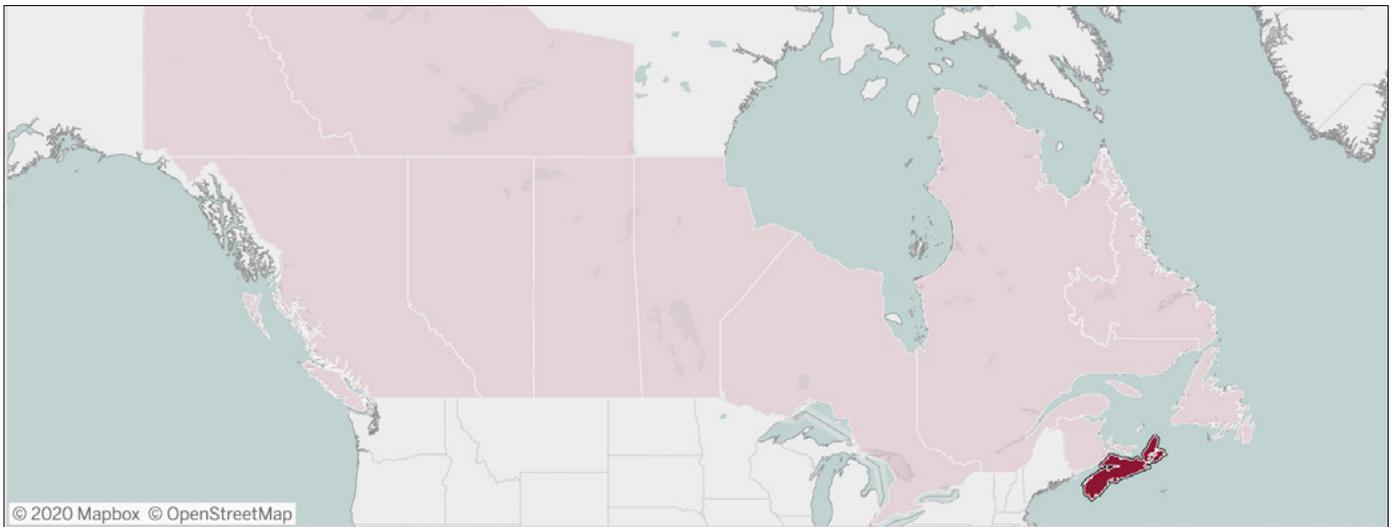
The property owned by the Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre's project at 5853 College St. will provide emergency shelter and permanent housing for its urban Indigenous clients.

Yet, on the same day, it was announced that the affordable housing project on Gottingen street was scrapped.

“I believe the government should be more proactive when it comes to



THE MI'KMAQ FRIENDSHIP CENTRE'S PROJECT AT 5853 COLLEGE ST.



Compare Areas

Select an area below:			Select an area below:		
Canada			Nova Scotia		
Canada			Nova Scotia		
October 2020	October 2019	Y/Y % Change	October 2020	October 2019	Y/Y % Change
\$607,250	\$526,901	15.2%	\$304,590	\$250,941	21.4%

* Areas displaying MLS® HPI benchmark prices; all other areas display average prices.

Source: The Canadian Real Estate Association

the rental market,” says White. “But ultimately, it’s hard to predict the future, and nobody should. There are so many variables when it comes to purchasing a home.”

With the pent-up demand from the first two months of lockdown, the housing market is looking more like a plugged funnel. “People have recognized the value of a home during the pandemic, since many were stuck at home during the lockdown,” says Boutilier.

“People were not moving as much then, and now people who may have looked at buying and selling before the pandemic, or during, are implementing those plans.”

While much of the population of Halifax is to buy or sell, they are running into shortages and affordability issues.

“Real estate works on a supply and demand model. The trend will change once the number of buyers equals the number of sellers,” says White. “Right now, we have an abundance of buyers

“*We must work together, put egos aside and plan out a strategy that does not get caught up in bureaucratic red tape.***”** — **Roger Boutilier**, Chief Executive Officer of NSAR

and not enough inventory of houses due to the rate homes are selling at.”

The future of affordable housing, as Boutilier said, depends on partnerships within the community.

With housing prices up 11.5% and with a 1% vacancy rate, it can be a challenge to find a place to live. Halifax Chamber President and CEO continues to ask the provincial government to relay greater powers to the municipality, to ensure quicker development approvals which should hopefully increase the vacancy rate and drive down prices.

“We must work together, put egos aside and plan out a strategy that does not get caught up in bureaucratic red tape,” says Boutilier.

“We need to ensure housing remains affordable, and cost/value remains one of Nova Scotia’s competitive advantages.” ■

SONA payment solutions

Bridging the gap between services, new technology with customer-focus

By Mina Atia



Businesses are hastily employing new technologies and more services in this new climate. Brick and mortar locations are transitioning to online stores. Businesses with an already established digital presence are exploring new avenues to market their products, facilitate payments, optimize delivery and satisfy their consumers.

This new found urge to do more and offer competitive services is what's keeping those businesses going.

But business development alone is not enough to keep your business afloat. Building relationships with customers and gaining their trust is still key to their long-term satisfaction. A bridge between business development and services in a technology-oriented market by building long-lasting relationships is the perfect approach.

But why? That's what Ryan O'Leary, Founder and CEO of SONA, asked

Our number one value starts with the customer.
 — Ryan O'Leary,
 Founder and CEO,
 SONA

himself and still does before new ventures – taking after his role model, author and motivational speaker, **Simon Sinek**.

“Start with ‘why’. It drills down to why you’re in business and understanding what your mission, vision and values are as a company,” says O’Leary. “And then build your business off of that, to start as your foundation, and then have everything else built around it.”

Meaning fortunate, prosperous and happy in Gaelic, SONA is a payment solutions company founded in Halifax. Its vision is to be the most respected brand in payments in North America.

“That’s what drives us; to be respected. Our number one value starts with the customer,” says O’Leary. He has SONA’s values in big black and green letters on the main wall of their office as a constant reminder. “I’m a really big values guy.”

“Our focus and what our team is looking

to do every single day is to work with merchants – small, medium or large businesses – to truly help them manage cost effectively, understand components of cost, understand technology and how technology can enhance their ability to accept payments.”

After years in retail and the payment industry, O’Leary left financially successful, autonomous, higher-up positions at giant payment-service companies behind to start SONA.

“The service industry in Canada is very tied to the Canadian banking system,” he says. “Typically, major banks will either do the merchant services and the credit card processing for their commercial business customers themselves, or they’ll have an associated partnership with another major company where they refer all of their customers.”

O’Leary saw fundamental differences in his former employer’s business practices. The companies he worked for were too fixated on the number of accounts signed on and business development - not on the

clients, often passing them on to 1-800 call centres.

“These companies get extremely large numbers of customers, where it becomes a commodity,” he says. “We [payment industry] are very similar to the telecom industry where it’s about fees, and there’s generally kind of a high level of attrition going back and forth. In a lot of cases, there’s no personalized service, no seeing a face and it’s all tele sales.”

“These companies grow to a certain size where, I think in a lot of cases, they lose that relationship face to the client,” says O’Leary. “It’s the biggest challenge in business as you grow and how do you maintain that same kind of culture as you scale. And that’s what we’re committed to doing.”

“I felt like there’s an environment lacking accountability and transparency with clients. Some of whom I might have worked with for a year and a half to bring over.”

The direction those business practices

took consumed his life and thinking. He was complaining to his wife, and now business partner, Kristen, who eventually told him to do something about it.

As he calls it, O’Leary had a Jerry Maguire moment and quit the next day!

“Then I started to question the merchant service industry. Any merchant service provider would beat any other merchant service providers rate on any given day to get them to switch from one provider to the other,” he says. “But there was no commitment to provide any cost certainty to the business over a period of time.”

Signing on with lower fees is the essence of competitiveness in the payment industry, but to O’Leary’s words, there was no guarantee fees remained low in a year or two’s time. That’s when consistency became his new driving point.

SONA provides certainty to its customer. “I believe business owners should have a right to some level of cost certainty from their merchant service provider versus





SONA is an Affinity Partner with the Chamber. Find out the fantastic **merchant services** they can offer you as a Chamber member!

having to worry about fees being inflated and changing over time,” says O’Leary.

“Our contracts prevent backend providers that we’re working with from making fee changes without our written consent, which is quite unique in the industry,” he says. “And that’s why when you go to [SONApay.ca](https://sonapay.ca), the first thing you see is guaranteed rates.”

“It’s because we actually make a commitment to our clients that when we sign them on with a particular rate or fee, we guarantee it will remain consistent as long as we do business.”

SONA allows customers to cancel their contracts and leave without penalties if they don’t like the service. Part of O’Leary’s Jerry Maguire moment was why charge customers who want to leave the relationship if they’re not satisfied. According to him, it sends the wrong message.

“Why don’t we simply do what we need to do to be able to keep their business and not charge them on their way out the door,” he says. And that’s what sets the

“Our business was started because we have a lot of passion and we want to be able to change business and the payment industry as a whole.”

— Ryan O’Leary, Founder and CEO, SONA

tone for SONA’s philosophy.

SONA’s unwavering drive to help customers helps it build its brand as the most respected in North America. O’Leary looks for passionate stakeholders with similar mindsets and goals to include them in the benefits.

“Our business was started because we have a lot of passion and we want to be able to change business and the payment industry as a whole,” he says.

SONA’s business model is based on a sub agent program created by O’Leary in 2017, a year after he started the company. Through the program, he employs sub contractors to help them build their business while employing SONA’s payment services for merchants.

By doing so, SONA is able to have multiple agents spreading the word about its payment solutions in their own separate networks. In return, the agents share 50 to 80 percent of the revenues with SONA.

“The reason why we went with that model – although very expensive and a lot of people said to me, you’re crazy and how can you run a sustainable business doing that when you’re giving that much back – is we ultimately attract entrepreneurs,” says O’Leary.

“We attract people who buy into the same goals we want to achieve. And we give them an opportunity to build their own businesses, to have their own freedom and to build their own businesses.”

For O’Leary, this is the sustainable business model that allows SONA to build numerous quality relationships with vendors and merchants, through the help of its agents across the country. “Through our reputation, we get organic inquiries based on our existing team,” he says.

“We have our growing internal team supporting our external agents in the field. But at the very core, our values are aligned,” says O’Leary. “We have people that are very passionate about helping small businesses and helping them do

well, do the right thing and build their communities.”

This unique mindset and attitude allows SONA to help its community and support merchants and small businesses thrive. They make SONA’s organic growth and reputational growth possible because the team is doing the right thing.

“Starting with one of those agents in Halifax in 2017, we now have 10 agents across Canada,” says O’Leary.

Powered by this business model and win-win philosophy, SONA is able to bridge the gap between payment services and new technologies by keeping customers top of mind. The team articulates benefits to customers through the building of trustworthy, client-focused relationships.

“We like talking to our customers about those technology advantages,” says O’Leary. “We always want to be competitive in pricing, less expensive and be more guaranteed, but we really want to shift the conversation to understanding

more about business needs and show how this technology will fix their problems.

SONA’s website is a mirror of the service package it provides to its customers. Its one-box service offers solutions through mobile phones, e-commerce, shopping carts, point of sale, payment devices etc., all condensed into one singular approach customized for specific business needs.

“Our business success is simply a by-product of our ability to do this,” says O’Leary. “We financially will grow, do better, earn more customers and a better reputation based on our ability to take the values that are on our wall and execute them in everything that we do, every interaction – whether it be in the office, with a partner like the Chamber, or with our merchants.”

“We’re committed to making sure that, as an organization, we never lose sight on what the most important thing is, which keeps us running, and it’s our customers.” ■



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Commercial realtors now using virtual tours

New technology changes the face of property selling



HEATHER MURRAY
PARTNER, CANAVIEW REAL
IMAGING
www.realimaging.ca

Home purchasers are familiar with the MLS information sheets they reference when considering an offer on a new home. The sheets include an image of the property, various room dimensions and, sometimes, a few still photographs.

But for commercial real estate transactions, the information required by a potential buyer is much more rigorous and comprehensive. Specifications, location information, layout and other relevant data are critical to closing the sale, or lease, of an office, warehouse or retail space.

In recent years, and reinforced by COVID-19 restrictions, realtors have recognized the benefits of digital imaging that give customers the ability to “experience” a property without the need to be physically present.

For distant investors or head-office decision-makers, this technology enables an accurate assessment of the space and shortens the negotiating cycle for both buyer and seller.

Brokers and agents generally concur that, sooner or later, the virtual tour will become an integral part of their commercial realty transactions.

The best of these technologies, now available in Nova Scotia, go well beyond simple FACETIME visits, creating an immersive event for the customer who controls their own virtual walkthrough.

Screen sharing via Zoom further allows the agent to facilitate the tour and answer questions every step of the way, while developing the relationship with the buyer.

Utilizing the array of new technologies, the resulting high-quality images can be easily reproduced, either as simple 2D images, panoramic 360-degree versions or immersive 3D events.

Once edited, tours can be viewed

online via mobile devices, or via a headset familiar to VR gamers. Tours can be further supplemented with laser measurement dimensions, interactive floorplans, rendered artificial furnishings and pop-up interpretive text – to further inform the self-conducted client tour.

Where appropriate, a drone-mounted camera can be used to capture sweeping aerial images, particularly beneficial for experiencing the largest and most expansive spaces. The end result of all these options is a tailor-made tour of the property.

As the technology of immersive imaging continues to unfold rapidly and choices multiply, DIY becomes a tempting, but risky, option for the owner or manager accustomed to taking their own photographs.

Better to find a trusted advisor and knowledgeable service provider who will stay on top of all the growing variables.

A virtual walkthrough is a marketing technique destined to outlast pandemic restrictions. Buyers and sellers are now looking to maximize the convenience, accuracy and cost efficiency of this truly immersive experience.

Hydrogen technology reduces carbon emissions

How can hydrogen address Nova Scotia's future energy challenges?



JORDAN MACNEIL
P.ENG, BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT MANAGER,
HERITAGE GAS LIMITED
jmacneil@heritagegas.com

What is Nova Scotia's energy challenge?

Nova Scotia's key energy challenge will be to reduce GHG emissions to support our climate change goals while still meeting our future energy needs. This challenge is more urgent now, as many governments - including the municipality of Halifax, the province of Nova Scotia, and the Canadian government - have set targets to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

To achieve this target, we must fundamentally transform how energy is produced, stored, distributed and consumed. Energy efficiency and conservation have important roles to play to reduce our total energy demand and lower energy costs.

Renewable electricity and batteries will also help to achieve the target; however, energy sectors such as high temperature industrial processes and heavy transportation are difficult to electrify.

The challenge will not be as simple as "greening" the electricity grid and

"Hydrogen can help Nova Scotia achieve its decarbonization goals."

electrifying everything. Nova Scotia will need another type of renewable energy that can be produced at large scale, stored and transported to meet our clean energy needs. Hydrogen can be that type of energy.

What is Hydrogen?

Hydrogen gas, like electricity is a flexible energy carrier that can be made from a variety of sources including renewable electricity such as wind generation or solar power. It can be distributed through a gas grid and used for transportation, home heating, industrial processes or electricity generation.

How can hydrogen help address our energy challenge?

Green hydrogen, produced via electrolysis from renewable electricity, can be produced at large scale. It can also be stored for short or long periods of time, readily transported and consumed in multiple end use applications.

Hydrogen can help Nova Scotia achieve its decarbonization goals in several ways:

- as a fuel for electricity generation to decarbonize the electric grid;
- by providing heat for buildings and for industry as a replacement for natural gas; and
- as a fuel for transportation in zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell vehicles

Hydrogen storage can address the significant intermittency problem with renewables, by producing it from renewable energy during off-peak times and storing it to help meet winter peak demand.

This longer term storage can be a great complement to lithium ion batteries that balance short-term energy supply with demand.

Why is Nova Scotia well positioned to develop a hydrogen economy?

- 1) Nova Scotia's natural gas infrastructure is relatively new and uses mostly polyethylene pipes that are compatible with hydrogen, so implementation will be easier.
- 2) Nova Scotia has excellent onshore wind resources, with the potential to build offshore wind projects.
- 3) Hydrogen can help Nova Scotia achieve energy independence and the associated economic benefits, as Nova Scotia currently relies on 1.2 billion dollars of energy imports to meet our energy needs.
- 4) Nova Scotia is big enough to attract the resources needed to develop, test and commercialize new hydrogen technologies, yet small enough that the size of hydrogen projects needed to make a significant impact are manageable.

Green hydrogen production can enable adding more renewable electricity to the electric grid and we can use hydrogen to link a cleaner electric grid with a cleaner gas grid.

This more integrated energy system is a better way to achieve net-zero emissions. It offers benefits that will make achieving this goal more feasible and at a lower total cost.

Rise of the virtual assistant industry

Giving you more time to focus on your business



KATE SULLIVAN

OWNER & CEO
VIRTUALLY CONNECTED
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kate@
virtuallyconnectedsolutions.ca

These are unprecedented times. The COVID-19 situation has seen unemployment rise, businesses close and social distancing as the new normal. Unfortunately, there is no crystal ball, and only time can tell what's next.

Despite the downturn in many industries, the Virtual Assistant (VA) industry has never been better, and business is booming. According to an article written by Business Wire pre-COVID, it is estimated that virtual assistants' market size will reach \$25.6 billion by 2025.

Recent trends suggest the rise of the VA industry is bound to keep on growing, even after COVID-19.

This is likely due in part to the shift in people working from home and businesses transitioning from brick and mortar to an online presence.

Business owners also recognize the value in efficiencies of scale and of

»» *Recent trends suggest the rise of the VA industry is bound to keep on growing, even after COVID-19."*

outsourcing to a VA.

What is a VA?

A Virtual Assistant is any type of remote assistant who provides administrative, creative or technical support services for online or brick-and-mortar business owners.

It's a relatively simple business model, which can add much value to a company's bottom line – especially during the rough times.

Flexibility

Hiring a virtual assistant as part of your business strategy means you don't have to be spot-on with your estimates of future business.

It could just be the leverage you need to keep your business afloat while you work to buoy the company.

It's no wonder many businesses are crying out for high quality VAs during the pandemic.

Top 5 reasons to hire a VA:

1. Reduce overhead costs: No employee wages, benefits, taxes, or office expenses.
2. Increased efficiency: VA can take the little things off your plate allowing you the freedom you need to focus on bigger priorities.

3. Availability: A dedicated assistant for your business when you need it.

4. Scalability: VA can be hired on a project-by-project basis and make it easy to scale up and down as needed.

5. A vested interest in your success: When your business succeeds, their business succeeds.

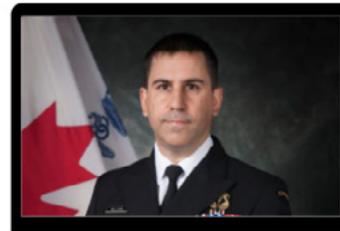
Five tasks VA can help with especially during COVID:

1. Managing social media
2. Communicating with customers about your business
3. Organizing a virtual conference, online classes, meetings, or consulting sessions
4. Creating procedures
5. Transcribing minutes of meetings and distributing materials

Hiring a VA when you need to extend your capacity has always been a good business decision. It has never made more sense than now due to the pandemic.

At Virtually Connected Solutions, our goal is to help you connect the dots for your business, remotely!

Thank you to our 2020-2021 Board of Directors:



From L-R: Gavin MacDonald, Mark Sidebottom, Richard Butts, Roger Boutilier, Brad Proctor, Faten Alshazly, Martha Casey, Michele Peveril, Andrew de Freitas, Stefanie MacDonald, Cayla Stryncl, Captain (N) A.S. Williams, CD, Chris Cowper-Smith, Caroline Wolfe Stewart, Ann Divine, Christopher Googoo, Karim George, David Rideout, Hon. Joanne Bernard and Margaret Chapman.

Recent grads helping businesses adapt during crisis

Lumi Studios helping businesses share their stories differently

CONTRIBUTED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

A small media production company based in Halifax is shifting gears during the COVID 19 crisis to support clients better.

Joyce Liu, Owner and CEO of Lumi Studios, says the company provides expertise to clients ranging from small community organizations to corporate partners like RBC and IBM. And now, they are working even harder to help businesses share their stories differently.

“Many small businesses are transforming themselves through this period and we are stepping in to develop strong social media campaigns and online tools to help them be successful. And thanks to new post-secondary grads on our team, our content is cutting edge.”

Kevin Liu, a recent Dalhousie grad, joined the company at the peak of the pandemic in March as their newest videographer. Hiring Kevin was made easier with the Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) program.

GTO offers 25 per cent of a graduate’s first year salary – 35 per cent if the grad is diverse – and 12.5 per cent of their second-year salary.

“Financially, GTO really benefits our business,” says Joyce. “It provides significant support that allows us to hire more talent. With Kevin on our team, we can now tell client stories more vibrantly, making us a more valuable partner to do business with.”

GTO is available to small businesses, start-ups and non-profit organizations. Complete applications are typically approved within three to five days.

“I am also in the process of getting my commercial drone pilot license so that we can make our content even more compelling,” says Kevin.

Joyce has been intentional about creating



CONTRIBUTED

“...thanks to new post-secondary grads on our team, our content is cutting edge.”

– Joyce Liu, Owner and CEO, Lumi Studios

a diverse and supportive workforce that allows new grads to thrive.

“Many young people spend years in university or college here and have settled down comfortably in the province, including international grads,” Liu says.

“I believe by creating the opportunity for them to live and work, it allows them to offer their creative and innovative talent in return, which builds a stronger and more vibrant workforce.”

To date, more than 600 organizations like **Lumi Studios** have hired more than 1,400 recent graduates across Nova Scotia using GTO funding.

Graduate to Opportunity could save you money on the next person you hire.

SHOP LOCAL this holiday season!

Making it special while supporting our economy



KATHLEEN MACEACHERN
POLICY ANALYST, HALIFAX
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

With the holiday season approaching, the Halifax Chamber hopes everyone, who can, will shop locally for their presents, meals, drinks and festive services.

It's no secret COVID-19 had a great impact on our business community. We are optimistic that the holiday season will bring a renewed sense of passion for our small and medium-sized businesses and their products and services.

I've heard people say this year will be an "Amazon" Christmas. While I understand that many are under financial restraints this year and buying from big retailers may help with cost savings, there is something special about purchasing a locally-made ornament for your tree or a boutique apron for your collection.

Many are also worried about shopping locally in-store. Well, I'm excited to let you know that a lot of our small businesses in Halifax are now online!

There are many significant benefits to supporting these local small businesses.

The Local Economy

Given the impact of COVID-19, some may not be truly aware of its ripple effects on our economy. For example, a small business in Halifax might employ three people. Those three people might have families that rely on that one job. This small business might also be supporting a local charity that relies

heavily on donations from businesses across our province to operate.

We often think about the "profit" a business makes, but there are a lot of local small businesses that turn those profits into community projects or sponsorships for a local sports team. If local small businesses succeed so does the community.

The Environment

Purchasing locally saves on transportation emissions, delivery costs and, often, time. Purchasing locally can also help reduce the amount of plastic and packaging that comes with something ordered from a "big box" store.

We know people are trying to be more eco-friendly. So why not pick up a handmade scarf from a local retailer instead of ordering one online. Or order it online from the local retailer, and it will still save on emissions given the shorter transportation distance and time!

Unique Gift Ideas

You can often find special, unique products and services at local businesses that are not available elsewhere. Wouldn't it be great to gift your mother something she didn't see while browsing the internet for you?

Local retailers often stock locally made as well hand-made products that can be one-of-a-kind or part of a small and limited collection.

Why not book your best friend a family photoshoot by a local photographer? Or give a gift card to a local restaurant or spa? Many of us are guilty of having too much 'stuff' at home.

Sometimes a service, that can provide an afternoon of relaxation or a laugh with close friends and a drink, can be more memorable than another electronic device or yoga mat.

Customer Service

Small-business owners and employees often know more about the products and services they sell/serve. They offer a personal touch to your shopping experience.

They make the order, speak with representatives of the products/service they sell, and generally spend more time ensuring they have what customers want.

Not only can they help you purchase something unique, but they may help you learn something new about that special gift which you can pass on to the recipient. It's a win-win!

There are endless reasons why we should shop local this holiday season. But most importantly, we need to do it to keep our local businesses sustainable and their employees employed.

Keep an eye out for the upcoming special-holiday edition of the Chamber's bulletin, to find amazing products and services from our local business community. I know there is something out there for everyone to enjoy, whether through giving or receiving!

So, don't forget to **SHOP LOCAL** this holiday season to support our local businesses and our Nova Scotian economy.

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From Deloitte's Partner, Audit & Assurance, Stephen Lund: We surveyed 1000 Canadian consumers across age groups, financial situations, and geographic regions to understand their feelings and attitudes towards holiday shopping this coming year. Our study, **Fundamental shifts in holiday shopping habits of Canadians accelerate**, goes deeper than how much consumers are planning to spend and uncovers answers to:

- What will they be spending?
- Has consumer confidence dropped?
- How has COVID-19 changed shopping habits?
- Is Amazon's strength undeniable?
- How are Canadians planning for holiday entertaining?
- Have third-party marketplace sellers been impacted?

I hope you find the study results insightful for your business. For more information, or if you have questions regarding the study, please reach out directly to me.

From the Halifax Chamber of Commerce team
and our members:

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.

