

# BUSINESS VOICE

HALIFAX'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE

The people and processes that are part of planning Nova Scotia's annual budget

## BEHIND THE BUDGET

Pg 16

### CLUSTER CONCEPT

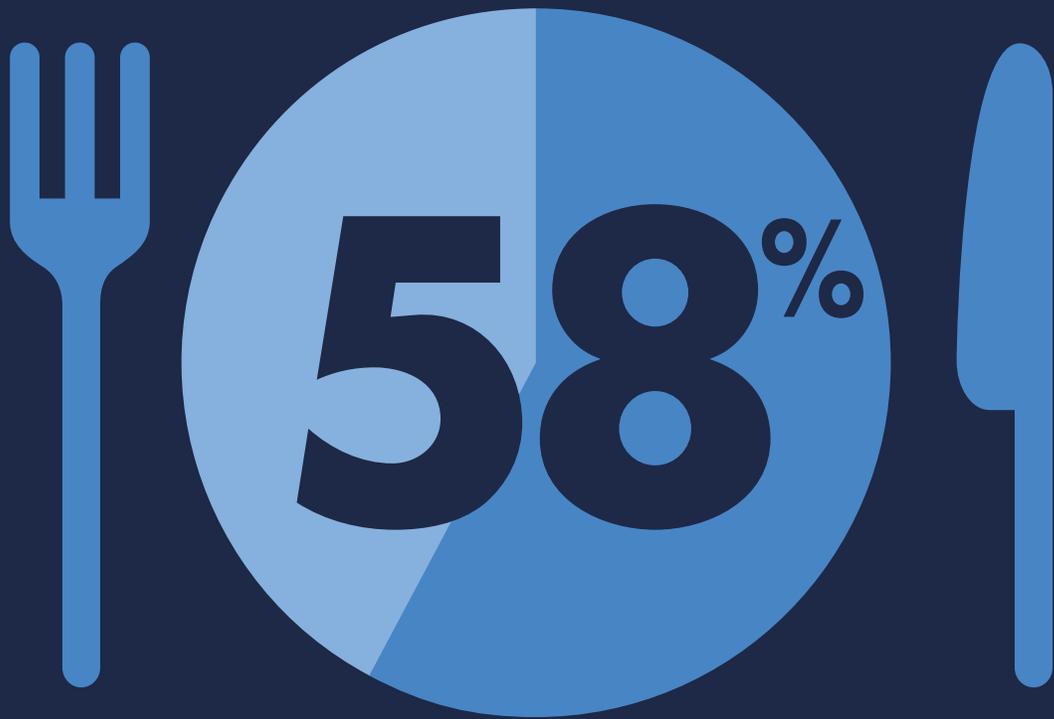
Turning part-time jobs into full  
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### BUBBLING BUSINESS

From apples, to profits  
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### WORKING WEBSITES

Is your webpage on your side?  
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# OF NOVA SCOTIANS NEED TO UPGRADE THEIR NUMERACY SKILLS

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*It's not about finding a job, it's about finding a place where you can contribute and where you can grow."*

— Sylvia Gawad, Research, Innovation and Immigration Manager, Placemaking 4G



**BEHIND THE BUDGET**

The people and processes that are part of planning Nova Scotia's annual budget

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# CHAMBER EVENTS

For a full and up-to-date list of our Chamber events, please visit [www.halifaxchamber.com/events](http://www.halifaxchamber.com/events)

## PINTS + POINTERS

DATE: Thursday, March 5  
TIME: 3:30 – 5 p.m.  
LOCATION: Garrison Brewing

## CHAMBER 101

DATE: Wednesday, March 18  
TIME: 12 – 1 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Chamber office,  
32 Akerley Blvd.

## BUSINESS AFTER HOURS:

### Blue Nose Marathon

DATE: Tuesday, March 24  
TIME: 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: TBD

## LUNCHEON:

### Leading with Integrity

SPONSORED BY:  
**Atlantic School of Theology**  
DATE: Tuesday, March 26  
TIME: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Marriott  
Harbourfront Hotel

## LUNCHEON:

### Minister Karen Casey

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**Chartered Professional Accountants  
of Nova Scotia**  
DATE: Wednesday, April 1  
TIME: 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
LOCATION: Westin Nova Scotian

## SAVE THE DATE:

## LUNCHEON:

**The Future is Green:**  
**An energy conversation**  
DATE: Thursday, April 16  
TIME: 8 – 10 a.m.  
LOCATION: TBD

## SPRING DINNER

PRESENTED BY:  
**Labatt Brewing Company**  
DATE: Tuesday, May 19  
TIME: 5 – 9 p.m.  
LOCATION: Halifax Convention Centre

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# Finding a balance

Nova Scotia's budget season is here

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**PATRICK SULLIVAN**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

Each year, the Halifax Chamber's policy team reviews the past budgets of both the municipal and provincial governments and provides pre-budget submissions that contain recommendations on the issues most affecting our members. These issues include reducing the corporate tax rate, cutting red tape, paying down our debts and increasing immigration.

Our 1,700 members make up the fabric of Halifax's business community. They inspire new businesses, they contribute to our growing GDP and they attract investment. Our pre-budget submissions allow our members the opportunity to share their ideas directly with government in solidarity with the business community.

 *As we often joke,  
it's the most wonderful time of the year!"*

We tip our hats to the Office of Regulatory Modernization for their recent work in reducing red tape. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce, CFIB, the Halifax Partnership, business improvement districts, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, the Construction Association of Nova Scotia, Restaurants Canada, representatives from the development community and staff from HRM and the province joined forces two years ago to find long-term solutions to complicated issues.

As Jordi Morgan, Vice-President of CFIB Atlantic Provinces points to in his Jan. 20, 2020 Chronicle Herald op-ed: "We're making progress. A ridiculous patio-licensing system fiasco has been resolved, solutions are underway to fix long-standing irritants around signage bylaws, a new streamlined municipal permitting and licensing system will be launched online in 2020 to shorten wait times and improve service delivery, staff are looking at regulatory proposals using the critical lens of a charter of principles and the city is now beginning

to measure the impact of its regulatory decision-making."

Cape Breton's municipalities and others in the province are looking to these successes to build plans of their own to modernize regulations. The more support we have from Nova Scotia's communities, the more we can accomplish.

It may seem repetitive, but these issues continue to be at the forefront for a reason. They keep us from achieving our goals as a growing city and economic driver for Nova Scotia. Let's keep the pressure on our governments.

We want to hear from you, our members. Is your business experiencing red tape? Struggling with tax increases? Running into permit barriers? Finding it difficult to recruit human capital? Is there a positive business story we should know about? Reach out to the Halifax Chamber and let us know what you've experienced. We can then take these issues straight to government and work to find a solution.

As we often joke, "it's the most wonderful time of the year!" ■

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**Are you a new member?**

To submit your 50-word description for *New & Noted*, please contact Mandi Bowser, Administrative Specialist, 902-468-7111 or [mandi@halifaxchamber.com](mailto:mandi@halifaxchamber.com) within the first six months of membership.

# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

How our members are growing Halifax



## RBC APPOINTMENT

Chris Ronald, **RBC** Regional President for the Atlantic provinces, is pleased to announce Kellie Sauriol as Regional Vice President of business financial services. Sauriol leads a team of 190 financial services professionals, overseeing the delivery of advice and solutions to commercial and small businesses throughout Atlantic Canada. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, Sauriol joined RBC in 1998 and over her 20-plus year career has held a variety of sales and leadership positions in personal and commercial banking, wealth management, human resources and sales support in Halifax and Toronto. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from Saint Mary's University and an MBA from the University of Toronto.



## \$1M FOR KIDS HELP PHONE

**Kids Help Phone** is thrilled to announce that the Ruth Goldbloom Ladies Golf Classic has achieved \$1 million in net proceeds since the inception of the event in 2010. The event is known to be a fun-filled day, including 18 holes of golf, a one-of-a-kind caddie auction, sponsor activities and giveaways, a spectacular

silent auction and much more. All proceeds support Kids Help Phone's professional counselling, information and referrals, as well as the volunteer-led, text-based support for young people. This year's event will be held on Thursday, Sept. 17 at Glen Arbour Golf Course.

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**BOYNECLARKE LLP WELCOMES 3 NEW PARTNERS**

**BOYNECLARKE LLP** is pleased to announce that three of our lawyers have been admitted to the partnership. We congratulate Ian D. Brown, Alanna Mayne and Peter D. Stanhope. Brown is a member of our business-law team, focusing on labour and employment law. He is a member of the bar in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and has appeared before all levels of court in Nova Scotia as well as the Labour Board, the Human Rights Commission and the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. Mayne is a Trust and Estate Practitioner assisting clients with corporate and commercial law, real estate, trust and estate planning, as well as franchise law. She has experience advising individuals, business owners and institutions on a range of business-law matters. Stanhope is a member of our business-law team and practices primarily in the areas of commercial real estate and development, business, franchise and environmental law.

**NOVA SCOTIAN DISTILLERY WINS BIG AT THE WORLD GIN AWARDS**

Late last week, **Compass Distillers**, the grain-to-glass distillery in its third year of operation, took home their biggest win to date: Three Best in Canada wins from the World Gin Awards. Compass received the Best Contemporary Award for their Gin Royal, their Gin Wild earned the Best Classic Award and their Fort George Genever took home the award for Best Genever. This win was the best showing for a Canadian distillery at this year's awards. "Compass Distillers is thrilled with these results, as they confirm our ability to make world-class gin with Nova Scotian terroir," says Compass Distiller President, Graham Collins. "Winning three categories with the best contemporary gin, best classic gin and best genever showcases how well Compass can compete with the rest of the world. These results are unprecedented for a Canadian craft distillery."

**CPHR**  
Nova Scotia

**SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY HR MAJOR NOW ACCREDITED**

Chartered Professional in Human Recourses (CPHR) Nova Scotia and Sobey Business School at **Saint Mary's University** have signed an accreditation agreement. Graduates from the year 2017 and onward who earned a bachelor of commerce with a major in human resources and industrial relations with a minimum GPA of 2.7 are now eligible to apply for a waiver for the National Knowledge Exam. With a successful waiver application, students will become a CPHR candidate and are one step closer to receiving the national CPHR designation. CEO Nick Beynon said, "It was evident during the accreditation process that SMU was offering their HR students a valuable and robust program."



### ADVANCING WOMEN IN AEROSPACE

**Women in Aerospace Canada** is thrilled to announce a partnership with Brenda Landry of Evoke Consulting to launch a national leadership-development program called Advancing Women in Aerospace. Designed to prepare women for upcoming or new leadership opportunities within their organization, this highly

interactive and informative program will develop a wide range of skills necessary in leadership. Participants will gain new insights while learning about concepts such as overcoming the imposter syndrome, projecting confidence and dealing with challenging situations. Visit [www.wia-canada.org](http://www.wia-canada.org) to learn more.



### IVAN'S AV ADDS NEW SALES EXECUTIVE

**Ivan's Audio Visual** is pleased to announce the addition of Ryan McKinnon as the newest member of the sales team as an Account Executive. McKinnon brings with him more than 20 years of experience in the commercial AV-rental industry and is the latest addition to the fast-growing Dartmouth office. "We are thrilled to have Ryan's unique perspective in the AV industry and know that our clients will benefit from his understanding of all aspects of AV installations," said General Manager, Dave Melanson. Ivan's Audio Visual, with offices in Moncton, N.B. and Dartmouth, N.S., is a 37-year-old professional audio-visual integration company.



### MONK AND TOWER INTERIORS WIN AWARD

**MONK Renovations** was honored by the Canadian Home Builder Association - Nova Scotia, with the prestigious Koltech Peak Award for the Most Outstanding Kitchen Renovation of the Year, 2019. What makes this award even more special is that we won it in partnership with fellow Chamber of Commerce member, Tower Interiors. We have worked closely with Tower for many years and appreciate the great designs they provide for us to

build. Working continually to raise the bar in the residential renovation industry, Dan Monk serves on several industry boards and committees dedicated to improvements in safety, training, licensing, ethics and business development for all renovators and their staff. The company motto is "trusted — professional," and Monk and the crews work hard every day to ensure they live up to it.

### HALIFAX STANFIELD ACHIEVES GOLD ACCESSIBILITY RATING

The **Halifax International Airport Authority (HIAA)** is pleased to announce that Halifax Stanfield airport has received the Accessibility Certified Gold rating under the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHFA) program. This makes the airport the first gold-certified facility in Nova Scotia. "This achievement is a testament to the ongoing efforts of HIAA's employees, partners and our overall airport community, who help create a superior customer experience for everyone who passes through our airport," said HIAA President and CEO, Joyce Carter. "We're all very proud of this milestone." RHFA is a national program and the first to rate meaningful access, based upon the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision and hearing.



**FROM START-UP TO TOP EMPLOYER**

**SigMast Communications Inc.** is delighted to announce that it has been selected as one of Atlantic Canada’s Top Employers for 2020. “This recognition as one of Atlantic Canada’s Top Employers is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all our staff who contribute to SigMast’s continued success. A technology company like ours does not exist without people and our people have built the culture of excellence found in our company,” says Brent Newsome, CEO. It’s a landmark for the software company which started with a handful of employees and now employs more than 50 as a subsidiary of Samsung Electronics.



**HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY TO NSAR**

**The Nova Scotia Association of REALTORS (NSAR)** is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2020. NSAR is the professional association for REALTORS® in Nova Scotia, representing over 1,500 members who subscribe to a high standard of service and a strict code of ethics.



**SOCIAL BOUTIQUE JOINS BEDFORD PLACE MALL**

**Dress for Success Halifax** is pleased to announce the newest location of The Social Boutique! “We are incredibly grateful to the Bedford Place Mall for our new home now located at 1658 Bedford Hwy., as it offers ample parking and easy customer access. We are extremely thankful for donated moving services by Kings Moving Inc. and our volunteers,

as well as Global TV, who made our transition possible with such ease and speed. It is situations like this that we experience tremendous community support for what we are doing to assist women in our community,” says Board Chair, Julie Wisen. For volunteer opportunities, please contact: Brenda at [BST@BrendaSaundersTodd.com](mailto:BST@BrendaSaundersTodd.com)



**100+ WOMEN WHO CARE REACH DONATION MILESTONE**

Colette Robicheau, the Chair of **100+ Women Who Care** Halifax has announced that donations from members have reached half a million dollars. The group of women meets quarterly to donate \$100 each to a nominated charity. It’s a fun, low-commitment — meetings are just one hour — and high-impact way to give back to our community. One hundred per cent of donations have gone to 27 local charities. Visit [100womenhfx.com](http://100womenhfx.com) to learn more.

**INTRODUCING EASTER SEALS NOVA SCOTIA**

**Easter Seals Nova Scotia** advocates for a barrier-free Nova Scotia and provides top-quality services promoting mobility, inclusion and independence for Nova Scotians living with disabilities. We bridge the gap between Nova Scotians with disabilities and the programs and services that can help them to meet their goals, aspirations and have access to full participation in their communities. Our four-pillar programs include Take PART, which allows those with disabilities to participate in recreational sports; New Leaf Enterprises, allows participants to train in a commercial food service setting, developing skills and gaining independence; Assisted Mobility, which helps with access to mobility and health-care devices; and Camp Tidnish, the only barrier-free and fully-accessible summer camp in Nova Scotia. Learn more about us at [www.easterseals.ns.ca](http://www.easterseals.ns.ca).



**PRECISION BIOLOGIC LAUNCHES NEW TEST**

In January, **Precision BioLogic** announced availability of CRYOcheck Chromogenic Factor VIII in Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand following market authorization by Health Canada and respective in-country authorities. Intended for use by clinical labs, it’s Precision BioLogic’s second hemophilia-related product to launch in less than a year. “Last February, we introduced a kit to help labs quantify FVIII inhibitors in patient samples,” explains Paul Empey, President and CEO. “With the launch of our latest product, we’ve taken a leadership role in the coagulation-diagnostics industry by bringing novel, authorized solutions to labs conducting hemophilia testing in Canada and beyond.”



**NEW YEAR BRINGS NEW SERVICE FOR TRAMPOLINE CLIENTS**

The year 2020 will kick off for **Trampoline** with the introduction of a new public relations practice. Led by long-time communicator Rob Batherson, Trampoline’s PR practice will strengthen the agency’s overall brand offering to existing and new clients. “As Trampoline has grown over the last several years, so have the needs of our clients. A successful brand today relies on complex communication needs — great creative, an effective media plan including traditional, social and digital, compelling video content and real-time analytics. A successful brand also depends on smart, strategic thinking on how organizations and individuals can be helped or harmed by how they engage with different audiences,” said Mark Gascoigne, CEO of Trampoline.

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# BEHIND THE BUDGET

Finance and Treasury Board Minister Karen Casey delivers the 2019-20 provincial budget on March 26, 2019.

Communications Nova Scotia

The people and processes that are part of planning Nova Scotia's annual budget **By Sara Ericsson**

Budgeting isn't easy for most, but budgeting on behalf of a province is exponentially more complicated than a standard budgeting process. The Nova Scotia government presents a budget each year, but there is no one start date on which people come together to begin laying it out. Instead, it's a process that involves hundreds of people across multiple levels, with countless components that add up throughout the year to ultimately filter down a vast amount of information into a distilled version for the province's Department of Finance and Treasury Board to analyse and decide from there where to allocate its resources.

Department of Finance and Treasury Board Deputy Minister Byron Rafuse says this decision confirms what the government's priorities are and how it will deliver on them — in other words, it's a big deal.

"A budget, in government terms, is a policy statement about the direction of government on what it wants to provide to citizens. It's a reflection of decisions the government has made on what its priorities are and where it wants to allocate resources," he says.

**“***A budget, in government terms, is a policy statement about the direction of government on what it wants to provide to citizens. It's a reflection of decisions the government has made on what its priorities are and where it wants to allocate resources.***”**

— **Byron Rafuse,**  
Treasury Board  
Deputy Minister

## Estimating revenue from data

Rafuse says planning for the budget each year actually starts years ahead, as decisions made and financials allocated in previous budgets impact future years. Rather than having a single point of start, Rafuse says past budgets and their related financials are all factored in before the annual paper process picks up for the operating budget in late summer and for the capital budget in early fall. The capital budget is an important part of the process, but it's the operating budget that Rafuse says is most synonymous with the annual budgetary process that comes to mind for the public.

"The operating budget is the cost of running our programs and services offered in that year [and a] recognition of the cost of government that period, whereas the capital budget plans spending on long-term projects," he says.

Rafuse says there are two main considerations when preparing the budget: the government's priorities and its commitments — more specifically an analysis of what they want to do and have said they are going to do. The ability to afford this is determined by the province's

revenue estimates, which is calculated to determine how much money it has to spend. Such revenue estimates are based on what the government extracts from economic activity in the province through taxes, as well as what it receives from federal government transfers.

And calculating the government's economic activity and resulting revenue is a process in and of itself, according to Lilani Kumaranayake, Executive Director of Fiscal Policy, Economics and Budgetary Planning at the Nova Scotia Finance and Treasury Board. She says that unlike a traditional business basing revenue off sales or other similar income its generated, the government bases its revenue on estimates calculated from a model called an economic forecast, combined with past tax data.

"We take the latest tax data we've received — 18 months to two years earlier — and then try and estimate it. We [do this] by understanding where the economy is and how it will grow — this is an economic forecast — and adding the economic forecast and past tax data to then approximate where we think the current tax estimates are," says Kumaranayake.

#### Ensuring accurate estimates

Kumaranayake says this economic forecast is the result of hundreds of equations that analyze data from sources including Statistics Canada. The results from these models predict, or forecast, what Nova Scotia's economy will be like and how it will grow. Once the forecast has been developed, it is analyzed through the department's challenge session, which consists of major private sector bank economists, think tank representatives and academic economists from Nova Scotia universities. These economic experts then review the estimates and economic forecast during the session and then confirm with the Minister whether they are reasonable.

"This step is critical in ensuring we have robust and prudent estimates for our budget," says Kumaranayake.

The economic forecast is finalized once the session has been completed and is then used to produce results for the Nova Scotian economy — on matters including future GDP growth — which are then used alongside Statistics Canada information and tax data for the tax revenue models. These models then provide revenue estimates, or tax collected for personal income tax, corporate income



Contributed

**“***The operating budget is the cost of running our programs and services offered in that year [and a] recognition of the cost of government that period, whereas the capital budget plans spending on long-term projects.”*

— Byron Rafuse,  
Treasury Board  
Deputy Minister

tax, harmonized sales tax (HST) and more. This final answer is then used as the budget revenue estimate.

Other things that Rafuse says are considered during the budget planning process are government programs, what they cost and how that number will change over time, capital budget spending for large multi-year projects, the province's overall debt and its ability to pay it off and the debt-to-GDP ratio.

"These are just some of the many factors that go into the decision making process, alongside what we can afford that year from a revenue perspective," says Rafuse.

#### The people involved

Another estimate is the number of people involved in the whole budget planning process. Kumaranayake and Rafuse estimate that it sits in the hundreds, with totals from the revenue and economic side, the Challenge Session and policy makers are simply too fluid to count.

"It involves entire senior management teams of every government department, their financial and policy groups and countless others working on data that then comes into a central group at the Finance and Treasury Board, which then submits its data to the Treasury Board, a subcommittee of cabinet and so forth," says Rafuse.

That process also includes a data review completed by the auditor general. This step is one that Kumaranayake says should give Nova Scotians even more peace of mind on the fact that their budget is being thoroughly vetted.

"The auditor general comes in and reviews the economic models, attends the challenge session and examines the overall results. This is an extremely high level of due diligence that is exercised as they verify if the results are reasonable," she says.

Rafuse says the vast number of individuals and teams involved is perhaps the best factor to illustrate how major of an undertaking the budget truly is.

"The budget is a major initiative for all departments to participate in. It's about more than just the numbers — it's a policy statement about what government intends to do," says Rafuse.

#### Determining if it works

Prioritizing a balanced budget versus running a deficit is different for each political party, according to Rafuse, as each runs on a different set of values and defines a successful budget differently.

Deciding whether a budget is successful is therefore a tricky matter, but Rafuse and Kumaranayake say a few metrics exist that can be used to measure a budget's strength, rather than success.

Kumaranayake says a key factor in a strong budget is built-in flexibility that allows for pivoting after unexpected financial situations arise, like the repairs and cleanup that followed hurricane Dorian. She says this, along with budget forecasts updating the public on how the budget successfully adapted to these changes, show the public their province is being fiscally responsible.

“We take the latest tax data we’ve received — 18 months to two years earlier — and then try and estimate it. We [do this] by understanding where the economy is and how it will grow — this is an economic forecast — and adding the economic forecast and past tax data to then approximate where we think the current tax estimates are.”

— **Lilani Kumaranayake**, Executive Director of Fiscal Policy, Economics & Budgetary Planning, Nova Scotia Finance & Treasury Board

“[These] give the public a sense of what government has had to adapt to and how it did it, like with hurricane Dorian. They are checkpoints that are provided to the public,” she says.

Rafuse says another area that can determine whether a budget performed as it should have is with the release of its actuals, which he says compare the amount spent by the province versus what the budget approved.

“This says what was allocated versus what was spent and is also subject to audit by the auditor general. It looks at the overall position the province is sitting at and is the final accountability document of what was done with taxpayers’ money,” says Rafuse.



Contributed

Beyond these metrics, things get a little less black and white. A person’s opinion on whether a budget worked for them can be different from the person sitting to their left. While annual online questionnaires in late fall provide the public an opportunity to tell the province what matters to them and what should be done differently, Rafuse says the most surefire way the public can tell a government how it felt about its budget and priorities is simple — voting.

“The most obvious way the public has its say is voting and elections results. Whether the budget was ultimately successful is for others to determine, but the ultimate way for them to have their own say is at the ballots,” says Rafuse. ■



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# Matching full-time needs with part-time resources

Introducing the concept of cluster employment to the Atlantic-Canadian job market **By Joey Fitzpatrick**

Cluster employment is still in its early stages in Atlantic Canada, but the concept has great potential. Cluster employment can generate new opportunities in for-profits, non-profits and social enterprises alike, by creating full-time positions from the part-time needs of multiple employers.

Fund development is a key function in any non-profit endeavour. Funding for non-profits typically comes from a variety of sources and so the fund development position entails writing grants, organizing events, developing donor relationships, strategic planning and community outreach.

While many non-profits do not have the resources to have a full-time fund development person on staff, two Halifax organizations were recently able to use an innovative concept to meet their respective fund development needs.

On the northern shore of Halifax harbour, Africville Museum commemorates more than 100 years of African Nova Scotian history. The community of

Africville was demolished in the 1960s to make way for industrial development. On the land where the people of Africville lived, worked and raised their families, the Africville Museum tells a story of survival in the face of injustice.

Another north end non-profit, Veith House, is a neighbourhood hub that primarily focuses on helping children and vulnerable persons in the community thrive through programming. Key programs include Veith Kids, which provides after school activities, food security support and summer camp, as well as newcomer, counselling and trustee services.

Besides their geography and non-profit status, another thing Africville Museum and Veith House have in common is the need for a fund development officer, but a budget sufficient for only a part-time position.

The Halifax recruiting firm, Placemaking 4G helped facilitate a cluster employment solution between the two organizations and the position was filled in January.

“There was a meeting between the two executive directors and there was an instant alignment,” recalls Sylvia Gawad, Research, Innovation and Immigration Manager with Placemaking 4G.

Africville Museum and Veith House were able to create a 35-hour per week position comprised of 15 hours per week at Africville Museum and 20 hours at Veith House. The opportunities for partnerships also extend beyond the fund development position, Gawad points out.

“There are collaborative programs between the two organizations,” she says. “The organizations can align their values and objectives in reaching their communities and creating programs.”

Placemaking 4G helps identify common talent needs and gaps among two to three different employers. A pilot project that matched a Saint Mary’s University co-op student with one employer in Halifax and two employers on the south shore provided proof of concept and Gawad joined Placemaking 4G as a full-time cluster employment consultant.



Placemaking 4G  
Co-founders Bradley  
Daye and Matt Thomson  
with Research, Innovation  
and Immigration  
Manager, Sylvia Gawad.

Contributed

Two more cluster employment placements are now close to being operational.

“What we’re doing now is getting some projects up and running and identifying what works and what doesn’t work,” Gawad says. “We’re reaching out to organizations, recruiting and creating clusters. We’re not charging for that.”

She has received expressions of interest from across a range of sectors, from fisheries and golf courses to IT companies. Ultimately all of this data and employment requirements will be plugged into an online platform where both employers and employees can conduct searches. An employer can identify a need or a gap and the platform will conduct a search within the relevant sector and geographic area.

In some ways the cluster employment model runs contrary to many of the current trends in recruitment, which rely increasingly on key word searches on a resume.

“We don’t call them job descriptions—we call them opportunity briefs,” Gawad says. “It’s not just about finding a job. It’s also about finding a place where you can

“If you can pool the resources of two or three different organizations you can create that full-time position and give a family a reason to move to a rural community.”

— Bradley Daye,  
Co-founder,  
Placemaking 4G

contribute and where you can grow.”

In the cluster employment model one employer will be the lead employer, responsible for administrative duties and employee benefits. Placemaking 4G will work with both organizations to help determine the time required for each employer and compensation and will also present short-listed candidates and schedule interviews for employers. Employers can then select the candidates of their choice.

“Now the push is on to get as many organizations from all different sectors involved in clusters, while we’re doing the research and development for free,” says Bradley Daye, Co-founder of Placemaking 4G. “We’re trying to drum up interest from companies across the province that have a need for part-time talent.”

Placemaking 4G was launched in 2017 by Bradley Daye, Lauren Sears and Matt Thomson. From the start, Placemaking 4G was built on the concept of “values alignment.”

“We highlight the values of an organization and put that forward. We then attract individuals who have values that

align with that organization,” explains Daye.

Placemaking 4G is registered as a social enterprise, which means 60 per cent of its profits are returned to the community. The innovative social enterprise model is offered only in Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

It was while working in rural communities in Atlantic Canada that Daye would hear the same types of concerns from small business owners.

“We’d hear: ‘I’d love to hire a marketing manager, but I only have a budget for 10 hours a week’ and another company down the road would have a need for 15 hours a week,” Daye recalls. “As a social enterprise, we tend to see an issue and then come up with a solution for that issue.”

Full-time positions created through cluster employment are also eligible for any government or student co-op wage subsidy programs that are already in place. Nova Scotia’s Graduate to Opportunity program, for example, provides a 25 per cent wage subsidy in the first year for recent graduates.

“This makes it a really cost-effective way to find talent,” Daye says. “In our pilot project we had one employer who was able to utilize five hours of a week of masters-level talent for just \$20 per week.”

The viability of Nova Scotia’s rural communities figured prominently in the report of the One Nova Scotia Coalition. Cluster employment can help mitigate the region’s looming talent shortage, caused by a combination of an aging workforce and out-migration. According to Statistics Canada, a total of 23,000 jobs in New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island went unfilled in 2016. In Nova Scotia alone the projection is we will have 200,000 fewer working age people by 2032.

“If you can pool the resources of two or three different organizations you can create that full-time position and give a family a reason to move to a rural community,” Daye points out.

Nova Scotia’s post-secondary institutions are an enormous asset to the province, with students from around the world coming here to study at our universities and community colleges. Some 15,000 international students graduate every year, but at the time of the One Nova Scotia report only four per cent of those students were staying in the province to live and work after graduation.

While that number has since risen to 12 per cent, that still represents a great deal of lost potential for the province.

“We’re going in the right direction, but there is still low retention because there is a narrative that Nova Scotia is not a place you want to settle if you want to be successful,” Gawad says. “With this cluster employment model we should be able to change that narrative.”

To be eligible for permanent residency in Canada after graduating, international students are required to find full-time employment within their field of study within three years after graduating and keep that job for a full year. By creating new full-time, professional-level positions, cluster employment can create more avenues that allow graduates to stay in the province.

Cluster employment solutions can work in both for-profit and non-profit sectors, in rural and urban settings, with startups or with established companies. Interested organizations can learn more or reach out to Placemaking 4G at [www.p4g.ca](http://www.p4g.ca), or by email at [info@p4g.ca](mailto:info@p4g.ca).

Rural communities everywhere are struggling to deal with access to talent and gaps in the labour market. On Sept. 23 to 25 this year, Halifax will host the Social Enterprise World Forum (SEWF), where delegates from around the world can learn about best practices and the challenges facing rural communities. SEWF exists to support the growth and development of social enterprises throughout the world.

“I’ve been fortunate enough to be able to attend the last two SEWF events in Scotland and Ethiopia,” Daye points out. “Access to talent is a huge issue no matter where you go — this is not just a Nova Scotia problem.”

When the cluster employment platform is up and running, the model can be easily scaled and exported to other jurisdictions, Daye points out and he is hoping to have a beta version ready to showcase at the SEWF event.

“It’s really an opportunity for Nova Scotia to be on the forefront of what could be an innovative solution for rural communities around the world.” ■

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Photos Kyle Nunn

# Business is bubbling

Chain Yard Urban Cidery on growing cidery, community at Halifax taproom **By Sara Ericsson**

Success tastes sweet at Chain Yard Urban Cidery. When the business started in 2017, they were among a small handful of cideries spread out across Nova Scotia. Its Halifax site was the first craft cidery in the city and paved the way for others to open their own doors in the following years.

The industry was one of humble beginnings, but is one that is ready to stand at the forefront of its own movement, alongside that of craft beers and other alcoholic beverages, with the creation of an association to give cideries a unified voice and show just how strong the industry is and that it is one that's here to stay.

Chain Yard Partner and Marketing Manager Susan Downey Lim has been with the cidery since it first opened and says even the most aggressive of market predictions and optimistic personal goals did not forecast the success that Chain Yard has seen.

"It's definitely busy and the demand is there, more so than even what we projected. The numbers from 2019 show our sales increasing even in that last quarter, so altogether it shows us things are going well with us for sure," she says.

*"We're trying to stay ahead of the curve and are trying to be innovative, so we're using fruits we never have before while showcasing Nova Scotian produce."*

— Susan Downey Lim,  
Partner and  
Marketing Manager,  
Chain Yard Urban  
Cidery

## GROWING ALREADY

The cidery ferments fresh apple juice into alcoholic cider. Downey Lim says the cidery works with local Annapolis Valley farmers, who press several different varieties of apples into juice, which then arrives at the cidery's Halifax location at the corner of Agricola and North streets, right on the cusp of the city's north end neighbourhood.

Chain Yard opened in May 2017 and fermentation began. A taproom was also quickly set up alongside an on-site kitchen space that has since been rented out by a separate business, Unchained Kitchen, which prepares the food served alongside Chain Yard ciders within the building. The taproom features Chain Yard ciders alongside other rotating guest ciders, three that are dedicated to craft beer.

And Downey Lim says business is effervescing nicely at the cidery, which has already expanded twice since its 2017 launch and has increased its fermentation capacity by 60 per cent. The cidery has continued crafting three main lines that it both cans for sale and uses within its taproom, alongside others that are sold at the NSLC and on tap at other

establishments. Downey Lim says its focus has remained on creating ciders that are drier, with more complexities that permeate during the fermentation process and that result in less sugar. Its approach has been recognized with awards and the cidery's Rhubee Cyser, a blend of rhubarb wine, mead and cider, was awarded double gold at the 2019 Cidercraft Awards held by the United States-based Cidercraft Magazine.

"That was huge for us — it was a really big win. That product has been really successful for us, so we definitely want to expand on that," says Downey Lim.

### NEW VENTURES

Downey Lim says the cidery is continuing to add new cider varieties to its collection by increasing focus on its specialty ciders, growing its offering of mead — a liqueur made from honey — along with continuing its successful cysers, which is the combination of mead and cider.

"This is all the rage in New England but we're the only ones doing this right now in Nova Scotia, so we're really excited about that," says Downey Lim.

The cidery is also sourcing new types of fruit like Nova Scotia-grown arctic kiwi for its Easy Breezy Arctic Kiwi cider — another product unique to Chain Yard — alongside new varieties of apples they haven't yet used. The cidery is also planning on creating a new batch made from Nova Scotia peaches — which Downey Lim says are extremely rare in the province — and will be receiving juice in a few months. Downey Lim says the juice will be blended with Chain Yard cider and will most likely result in an off-dry, sweeter product.

"We're trying to stay ahead of the curve and are trying to be innovative, so we're using fruits we never have before while showcasing Nova Scotian produce," says Downey Lim.

The NSLC reported nearly 20 per cent growth in ready-to-drink product sales, the section which includes ciders, in the last quarter of 2019. Downey Lim says this upward trend shows why all cideries in Nova Scotia are feeling growth despite ongoing challenges that persist, like trying to get licensees — restaurants and bars — to carry cider on tap alongside their existing selection of beer.

"There seems to always be several beers on tap, but only one cider. That leaves us, the cideries, all fighting for that one tap even though we offer such different



Chain Yard Urban Cidery staff members Hanna Eidson, Lucy Fisher and Jonny Solari enjoy a flight of ciders at its north end taproom.

products," says Downey Lim. "But we realize it's something that will be solved with education on how cider can be very different from product to product. That will start to come as the industry grows."

### HERE AT HOME

But it's not just the ciders that have made Chain Yard Urban Cidery a north-end staple. It's also the unique events they host like BYOBB, or Bring Your Own Baby to our Bar. Downey Lim says the idea for a kid and family-friendly event within the taproom came from travelling to breweries around the province, Ontario and elsewhere, where family groups were setting up shop within daytime hours. "BYOBB was our answer to that after we noticed all kinds of [parent] groups coming to our restaurant during the day and thought we should do something a little different. So now, one Sunday a month, we do a baby-focused brunch. It's the idea that we can be a family restaurant and still

a craft establishment — you can go enjoy a cider on Sunday afternoon in a safe space for kids while there are also kid-friendly activities happening," says Downey Lim. The event continues to be a successful one for the cidery and has helped cement it as a Halifax institution.

Other moves have also helped entrench Chain Yard's place within the cidery community, including its joining of a cideries' association alongside most of its contemporaries. The association meets monthly and has created a collective voice for the industry — something Downey Lim says will be needed more and more as the industry continues growing.

"Having that collective voice is important, especially considering we don't fit into the wine or craft beer associations. It's a big step for our industry and speaks to its overall growth and also gives us an outlet to advocate for ourselves," says Downey Lim. ■

# A changeable mindset leads to savings

How being bold while dealing with your bank can bring in big bucks



**JOHN PELLEY** PRESIDENT AND CO-FOUNDER, COLIBRI FINANCIAL SERVICES AGENTS

Let's be honest, the majority of people would prefer not to have to deal with their bank or their merchant service provider. It ranks up there with root canals, mammograms and colonoscopies. But as a colon cancer survivor, I can attest to the importance of colonoscopies and the benefits that can be derived from this procedure — just as there are important benefits from regularly dealing with your financial services providers. Sometimes all it takes is a change of mindset.

Granted, banks and merchant service providers often don't make the process easy. The jargon can be confusing, the paperwork is a nightmare and the pricing of every single possible transaction is cumbersome. How can customers be expected to fully understand the complexities of a banking relationship when a lot of bankers don't? It's difficult to find someone who has the experience and knowledge to be able to first understand and second, to be able to explain to you the full picture.

To add to the confusion, banks are pushing the customer experience to the lowest-cost delivery channels — call centres and online do-it-yourself methods — in an effort to reduce expenses and drive profits higher — where does it end? We certainly cannot minimize the increased



confusion, frustration and potential mistakes of the DIY method.

And sadly, when you do have a transaction processing issue, you'll often end up in conversations with a person at a contact centre in some undisclosed location (I recently spoke with someone in Colombia to deal with an online processing issue with my Canadian bank), who likely doesn't understand the issue, lacks the authority and, more importantly, the desire to have it corrected.

In 2019, the big five Canadian banks posted a combined net profit of \$46.5 billion — that's net profit, not gross revenue! The old saying that "time is money" certainly is true here as this combined net profit works out to \$88,379 per minute — 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. That's an increase of seven per cent from the \$82,352 per minute in 2018. And yes, the banks provide employment in Canada, although shrinking rapidly in Atlantic Canada and give back to the community, at about one per cent of their net profit in each of the past two years.

While technically not considered a monopoly, the Canadian banking world does work in lockstep. For example, in the spring of 2019, one bank announced

an increase of \$0.02 per cheque deposited and each of the other banks quickly followed. Now on the surface, two cents per cheque doesn't seem like a large amount however, when you look at this across the total number of cheques processed in Canada in 2018 (734 million) this seemingly small increase will boost combined revenue by \$14.7 million. The banks would most likely argue that they have increased capital cost to cover the imaging and electronic processing of cheques, but at the same time, they reduced counter service for businesses and got businesses to scan and deposit their own cheques.

Now, I am certainly not advocating a rise against the banks! There are all types of necessary evils in the world. I am simply suggesting that it's time for business customers to take back some control, to understand the myriad of fees and rates charged, to demand increased value from their financial institution and to realize that there are other financial services alternatives rapidly developing. You can easily get back a few seconds profit from whatever bank you deal with!

As the old proverb goes, "The art is not in making money, but in keeping it."

# Discover the difference community makes

Health is just the beginning at the new John W. Lindsay YMCA **Contributed**



In spring 2020, the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth will welcome our entire community to the new John W. Lindsay YMCA — a best-in-class health, fitness and aquatics facility at the corner of South Park and Sackville Street in downtown Halifax. As a leading charity, we feel fortunate that we're able to provide each person in our community the space and time they need to connect, engage and be themselves. In other words, everyone can belong here.

Built on the site of the former South Park YMCA and CBC building, our new 70,000-square-foot centre of community is almost complete — including three pools, a state-of-the-art gym, two levels of strength and cardio equipment, an indoor walking/running/wheeling track and four wellness studios.

This means a lot of exciting new things for Haligonians of all ages, including the businesses and organizations that call our downtown home.

Sure, we've got CycleFit, AquaFit, bootcamps, yoga, personal training and so much more, but the promise of the YMCA goes far beyond physical health and strength.

At a time when we're working more and connecting less and when

chronic disease and social isolation are real threats to any community's overall health and prosperity, organizations like the Y can help build the potential, the confidence and the connections that ensure overall wellness in spirit, mind and body. To ensure that no one

Place. Meet our friendly Y team on-site to share more about our new YMCA, membership options and pre-registration perks. Just visit the John W. Lindsay Community Hub in Spring Garden Place (5640 Spring Garden Rd., unit 203) every Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Business owners know better than anyone the power of connection and belonging to happy and productive employees.

John Lindsay, lifelong Halifax business leader and passionate YMCA supporter on the local, national and international scale, puts it best:

"This new YMCA is a key tool to address important issues affecting our community. It will be a truly inclusive space, accessible to all, regardless of economic circumstance. This centre of community will have a lasting impact on our city and will be a place where people come to belong."

And that's the promise of our new YMCA. To be a safe and welcoming place to workout and to create connections — within teams and families and between individuals of all ages, abilities, income levels, beliefs and cultures.

Visit: [www.JWL2020.ca](http://www.JWL2020.ca) for more information!



From left, YMCA staff members Brittany Alminayan, Amber Grosse and Jim Pomeroy.

is denied membership due to financial circumstances, we proudly assist one in three members so that everyone has access to the YMCA.

But you don't have to wait until this spring to discover the difference community can make.

We're excited to announce our membership hub is open in Spring Garden

# The power of positivity

How improving your attitude can improve your business



**VERITY LAMB**  
OWNER, VERITY VALE  
HYPNOTHERAPY

Have you ever noticed how there are days when you seem to function at a high level, business is great and everything seems to go according to plan?

On the flip side, have you had days when everything seems to just go wrong?

Have you ever taken the time to notice what outside influences might be going on in your own life that may coincide with those dreadful or awesome days?

Did you get enough sleep? Did you eat properly? Did you get fresh air? Did you get some exercise? Did you fall out with a family member? All of these things, along with many others can affect our performance.

There is a neurotransmitter in the brain called serotonin and when we produce a constant flow of it we feel very positive, we can make good decisions and we feel more confident. Chances are, when you're having a good day in the office the serotonin levels are high and vice versa.

So, what can we do to keep producing serotonin? As a starting point, there are three very simple things that we can do:

1. **Positive interaction:** Interact with people that make you feel good and speak to people you like, whether that be in person or on the phone. Hang out with your tribe.
2. **Positive activity:** Take time to do things that you enjoy, like going for a walk, reading a book, having a massage or playing a round of golf — make time for you.
3. **Positive thought:** Try to notice and appreciate the good things in life. It could be something big or something small — a lovely sunrise, a nice coffee or your slippers! If something negative happens, take a second and have another look at it — is there another perspective? Is there a positive, however small, that can be found in the situation? Sometimes the positive might even be that a lesson has been learnt. Treat your mind like a hotel — thoughts, like guests, can come and go. Ask the unpleasant guests to check out and invite new ones in.

The above is not only true for you but also for your employees. Ask yourself, is there anything you can do within the workplace to cultivate those three P's — positive interaction, positive activity and positive thought?

Here are a few things you may wish to consider in order to assist in boosting that serotonin and improving your wellness: Good sleep, good nutrition, exercise, learning, meditation, journaling, coaching, connect with those you like, contribute to others, creativity, gratitude, being in nature and anything else that you like to do.

Ultimately, we all want more of the awesome days and fewer of the less-so awesome ones. Sure, business has its ups and downs, but it's how we react to it that determines whether it is a disaster or whether we can find the positives in it and keep on growing. Why wouldn't you do everything within your power to make not only your work life wonderful, but your whole life wonderful?

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# 5 ways your website builds brand trust

Parker Byrd/Unsplash

How keeping your audience in mind ensures they keep you in mind



**PETER WOODWARD**  
DIGITAL MANAGER, REVOLVE

Brand trust is defined as a consumer's expectation for a brand to operate the way it promises it will. We're in an age where people are relying more and more on brand trust to make decisions about where to take their business. A good website can help tell your brand's story and build trust with your audience. Here are some tips to make sure your website helps build brand trust.

## KEEP YOUR WEBSITE TECHNOLOGY UP TO DATE

Web technology is constantly changing. Most modern website platforms will offer updates for different components of the website. Depending on the content management system you use, it may be called plugins or modules. It's important to keep these up to date for security, as well as website performance. Updating your technology will help keep your website functioning as it should.

*"We're in an age where people are relying more and more on brand trust to make decisions about where to take their business."*

## MAKE SURE YOUR SITE LOADS FAST

People don't want to wait for a website to load. A fast website shows you are keeping up with current technology and that you value your audience's time. There are a lot of online tools to check your website's speed. Also make sure your website is optimized for desktop, tablet and mobile devices. Small adjustments can make a big difference!

## DELIVER FRESH CONTENT

Fresh content shows you're alive and well. Blogs are a great way to keep your content fresh. They also give you the opportunity to deliver your expertise to people who might not know who you are. If you don't have a blog, focus on other areas of your website you can update. The homepage is often the most visited page on your website so it's a good area to put in some effort. Even if it's something small like updating photos, good imagery can go a long way to delivering your brand message. Videos are an excellent way to get a message across and tell a brand story.

## MAINTAIN BRAND CONSISTENCY

Your website content should be consistent with the rest of your brand. We've all been to websites that feel like Frankenstein's monster. When writing website content, it's important for the voice of the brand to come through. To take that a step further, the content formatting should also be consistent. If people come to a page on your website that doesn't feel the same as the rest of the site, it can send the message that you're sloppy or not detail oriented.

## KEEP YOUR AUDIENCE IN MIND

The direction of the website should always be focused on your target market rather than your own personal preferences. This is true for website functionality, as well as content. You should always do research to find out what your audience is looking for. Even if you fall within your target market, you need to be careful that your own opinions don't cloud what the data says your audience wants. Whether it's a new website build or creating a new blog post, your audience is number 1.

# From transition to transformation

The art of adapting to change **By Firas Zaytoun**

June 26, 2018 was the day.

I woke up that morning and drove to the office with all kinds of different thoughts bouncing around in my head. Is this the right thing to do? I asked myself, but I couldn't answer. The 30-minute drive came and went and before I knew it, I found myself walking past the largest Mercedes-Benz workshop in the world. The next thing I remember, I was behind my desk with just one thing in mind.

I walked to the chief's office and asked, "Boss, do you have 15 minutes?" He looked at me with wonder and a question on his face and said, "of course." I closed the door and he stood, moving from behind his desk he asked me to join him in the guest lounge, almost as if he knew something big was about to happen.

Yes, that's right — I was about to make my exit.

He asked where I was going, to which I responded: Halifax.

He looked me in the eyes and I could sense what he was thinking. With his wisdom and experience, I knew he was going to appreciate my decision.

"It is time to find your purpose in life — I wish you all the best," he said.

The whole conversation lasted only about 15 minutes, but it is 15 minutes I will never forget.

That day marked the beginning of a new life for my wife and I. After 13 years of living in the beautiful city of Abu Dhabi, it was time to move on. The decision had been made and the destination was Halifax.

Fast forward to Sept. 27, 2018, we were finally here, walking down Lower Water Street in search of a spot to have dinner.

Looking around I was in disbelief at what a change this was. Nothing was the same anymore. Different language, climate, traditions, beliefs, values — you name it.

But then came the question of what now? We had a simple, but difficult plan



*Change requires effort and the best results are experienced when we plan, be agile and just live it."*



Firas Zaytoun and wife, Sasha Chehayeb.

to execute. If I could summarize it into one phrase, I would call it: transition to transform.

Transitioning to new country meant that we would have to establish ourselves both socially and professionally. We would have to meet new people, adjust to the traditions and integrate ourselves into the culture. We would have to create a safe environment, be accepted in society and feel comfortable interacting with the local people. On the other hand, we have to create a climate in which we could be accepted and welcomed as a couple.

For me, the transition period was not easy. I continued to look back at my old life, comparing where I was to where

I am now, which left me stuck in the past for a period of time. I admit that I still compare, but I believe that I am no longer living there. The truth is, despite how much we had planned, the reality of our new situation was much different and much more difficult than anticipated. But, now that we are here, we have to deal with it.

One year has passed now and as I look back and evaluate what we have accomplished, I feel good. But looking ahead and thinking about what's next still scares me. Why? Because if the transition is that difficult, how hard will the transformation be? The one thing I can be sure of is that the good people that have helped us along the way are still there for us and they seek nothing in return. I can't thank them enough and knowing they are there to support us makes us feel safe.

It doesn't matter if you are changing countries, provinces, cities or even jobs. Change requires effort and the best results are experienced when we plan, be agile and just live it. From my experiences, I've gained the knowledge of how important it is to plan a transitional period and be flexible to adjust when necessary. Having somebody to talk you through your problems is vital to your success, even if you have to invest in a life coach or counsellor. At the end of the day, we are living in an ever-evolving world and change is the one thing we can be sure of.

Firas Zaytoun is the Owner, Talent Strategist and Life & Career Coach of Thinking Career Coaching. He can be reached at [firas@thinkingcareer.com](mailto:firas@thinkingcareer.com)





Dylan Gillis/Unsplash

# It's ~~2019~~ ... 2020!

Checking in on your business' New Year's resolutions



**KATHLEEN MacEACHERN**  
POLICY & RESEARCH  
ANALYST, HALIFAX  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

It's hard to believe we've been typing 2020 for two months now. I wonder how many others have accidentally written 2019 dozens of times — I think it will be April before I get it right. Two months into 2020 also means that some of you are working diligently to keep your New Year's resolution, while some of you might be saying, "I'll do better next year." Many will have made personal resolutions, but resolutions can also be for your business as well. There's no written rule that says resolutions need to start January first, so if you haven't already made a resolution for your business, here are a few that you can use that might just make the outlook for your business a little brighter.

## DELEGATION

Sometimes it can be difficult to let others do things that you can do yourself. But doing everything by yourself can lead to burnout, inefficient resource allocation and a lack of trust between you and your employees. Try delegating just one of your usual tasks to an employee. Not only is it one thing less for you to do, your employee is now gaining confidence and learning a new skill. If you are happy with the outcome of that one delegation of work, then try two. You might find that not only do you feel less stressed, but you have time to try that new piece of equipment you ordered that you just haven't had time to use, or read through a list of potential interns that you just didn't have the spare time to do before. If it doesn't work out, don't give up. Try delegating a different task until you find the one that works and go from there.

## INVEST IN CYBER SECURITY

I'm sure many of you have seen an email from your supervisor or co-worker that asks you to pick up "a few gift cards." The email looks legitimate and some might actually go through with the requests, but we all find out in the end that it was a scam. These scams can be costly for small businesses and the big scams like data base breaches can be also costly for big businesses. Try investing in a security plan for your business. Back up your data to a secure cloud, reset company

passwords and implement anti-virus protection on your computers. While the initial investment may involve a cost, the cost will certainly be smaller than having to pay a ransom fee to get your potentially vital and confidential information back. The Halifax Chamber has some great cyber security businesses as members, so have a look through our membership directory to start your year off safer.

## BUILD A WORKING WEBSITE

Eighty-eight per cent of consumers search for a product or service online first before heading to a store, therefore a business needs a strong website for marketing, communication, brand awareness and sales. I don't want to go into too much detail about why you should have a website because I trust you know why they are important. However, I do think it is important to stress that your website shouldn't have broken links or empty webpages. Take the time to continuously update your website and you will have increased and improved communication channels with your customers and clients.

Often, businesses think of their outlook in financial or budget terms. This year try and think of the fiscal end/beginning as an opportunity to resolve to start something new. Whether that's delegating tasks, increasing your business's security or updating or creating a website, April 2020 can be your fresh start.



# New grads building business reputation

Marine electronics company saving money with each new hire **Contributed**

A Dartmouth-based marine electronics company is building a strong and reliable reputation, thanks to the talented young technicians who serve their clients province-wide every day.

Many of them are recent graduates.

“The grads we hire are flourishing and it’s been fantastic for business,” says Ashley Collins, Human Resources Manager at Atlantic Electronics. “They are demonstrating a keen interest in marine electronics and strong leadership qualities that will help them grow in the company.”

Atlantic Electronics recently hired multiple Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) grads straight out of the electronics program including Boris Spacek, Timothy Charles and Zachary Semchuk.

“A lot of senior staff have retired from the company, so these new hires are crucial to the continuation and growth of our work,” says Collins.

“I am able to pick up knowledge and expertise from senior technicians, while using my recent education at the same time,” says Charles, who works in the Yarmouth, N.S., area. “The Graduate to Opportunity program helped me get a foot in the door and make this career a reality.”

Graduate to Opportunity (GTO) lowers the cost of hiring a recent graduate for start-ups, small businesses of fewer than 100 full-time employees, non-profits and social enterprises.

Employers receive 25 per cent of a grad’s first year salary — 35 per cent if the grad is diverse — and 12.5 per cent of a grad’s second-year salary from the province.

Collins says they have seen the benefits of the program first hand.

“There is a big learning curve in this industry,” she says. “The GTO program is great because it gives us that subsidization while we’re training our new technicians. It gives us the opportunity

to invest the money right back into our newest employees.”

Spacek originally grew up in New Brunswick and is now working full time in Digby, N.S.

“I enjoy the autonomy and responsibility given to me to do my job. The skills I picked up at NSCC allowed me to enter this industry with an extra edge. I am happy to be motivated by something I enjoy doing,” he says.

To date, more than 600 organizations, like Atlantic Electronics, have hired more than 1,000 recent graduates across Nova Scotia using GTO funding.

Graduate to Opportunity could save you money on the next person you hire. The process is quick and easy — applications are typically turned around within five business days. Learn more at [www.novascotia.ca/GTO](http://www.novascotia.ca/GTO). ■

  
**NOVA SCOTIA**

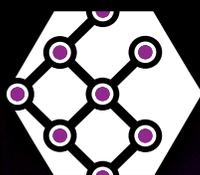
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