

**Business Voice Column**  
**By Mayor Mike Savage**  
**October 1, 2015**

While the calendar may wait until January, the new year in Halifax truly begins in September with the return of kids to school and our universities filling up with new students resolved to achieve great things.

On September 12 we held our second annual reception for international students. I had the privilege of joining with our city's university and Nova Scotia Community College presidents to welcome first-year international students at Pier 21, Canada's National Museum of Immigration.

I can't imagine how many "selfies" circulated the Internet – demonstrating that these young people were being made to feel welcome in their adopted Halifax. They connected with each other and with the presidents of their schools and representatives of their city. They laughed, they danced – and, little surprise, they ate just about everything in sight.

It was unquestionably a feel-good event, but it is also much more. These students, and all of our post-secondary students, represent a talent opportunity any city would be eager to have.

As important as it is to throw a welcoming reception in September, it is far more significant to demonstrate throughout the year that our young talent is welcome to make a career and a life here in Halifax. That responsibility extends well beyond City Hall into our workplaces and our communities.

It can be as simple as inviting a Halifax newcomer to dinner or as significant as dedicating positions within your workplace to hiring and fostering young talent.

Increasingly, our growth is attributable to people who are finding our city and choosing to stay here. Indeed, since 2000, international immigration has accounted for 50 percent of Halifax's population growth. And, across the province immigrant retention rates are now at 70 per cent.

The Province's move to create two new immigration streams to attract entrepreneurs and international students who wish to remain here after graduation is commendable. Along with raising the cap on the nominee program to 1,350 applicants, this initiative demonstrates real progress for Nova Scotia at a time when we need people more than ever before.

As we look to attract more people with the investment capital, the higher education and the entrepreneurial zeal to make an immediate contribution to our economy, I hope as a city and as

a province we are also mindful of the humanitarian and practical need to welcome people from other circumstances.

The Syrian refugee crisis, along with the mass human migration of people from other countries into Europe in recent months, has made all of us stop and think about what it really means to welcome the world. It's why I am co-chairing a group of Mayors from across Canada on a unified response to the Syrian crisis through our Task Force on Syrian Refugee Resettlement.

The scale of this human crisis demands no less of us, and cities are well-positioned to complement federal and provincial responses to Syria.

Surely as a city and a province in need of a population influx, we can take the long view that whether our newcomers arrive as investors or land here with little more than a determination to build a better life for themselves and their families, we have a place for them.

That's what cities are, places where people come together to build, create, innovate and – through their actions - drive economic and social prosperity.

It's time to double down on our efforts to attract and keep new people from new countries to our shores and to work harder to make Halifax the city of choice for well-educated, talented young workers.