

Mega Projects

By Mayor Mike Savage

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Ever since Ray Ivany and company issued their urgent call to action for the future of Nova Scotia, we have seen no shortage of opinion on what we should do to counter the troubling projections for the province we hold so dear.

A number of big thinkers have come together to create the One Nova Scotia Coalition to involve people from one end of the province to the other in shaping a newer more nimble and broad-based economy. The coalition is an interesting group that includes politicians, captains of industry, academics, community leaders, start-up gurus, and others.

If there's one lesson we should take away from the Ivany commission findings it's this: We do not need permission to participate. Indeed, we have a responsibility to act boldly and decisively to grow the Halifax population and economy. In doing so, we are serving the broader needs of the province.

Halifax is home to about 40 percent of Nova Scotians and more than half of the province's GDP is generated within our borders. It stands to reason that the city and the Greater Halifax Partnership are in a prime position to take on a share of the urgent action needed to safeguard the economic future of Nova Scotia.

It's time we move past the notion that Halifax's success comes at the expense of the rest of the province. Whether we are from municipal or provincial government or the private sector, from Halifax, Cape North or Cape Chignecto, we need to understand that no one is going to hand us our future. We have to earn it.

Like many others, I am excited by the prospect of Halifax, Nova Scotian and Atlantic Canadian megaprojects pegged at a massive \$115 billion. But none of them in isolation – not offshore exploration, not Muskrat Fall and the Maritime Link – is an economic panacea. Not even the massive Irving Shipbuilding project will plunk a chicken in every pot. Similarly, Halifax is not staking its future on the Nova Centre project, the redevelopment of the Cogswell interchange lands, or any other large project to come.

None of these of these things is the answer, granted taken together they offer a pretty persuasive response to the Ivany challenge. As the commission has rightly pointed out, our real success hinges on a fundamental shift in attitude, a strong belief in our individual and collective abilities and a renewed entrepreneurial zeal.

Great cities like Halifax offer fertile ground for innovation and collaboration. They are places where the seeds for the next big idea are often planted during a run-in over a coffee or a pint. Cities by their very nature are leaner than other levels of government, less encumbered by bureaucracy and outside the constraints of partisanship. We attract people, businesses and new ideas.

In Halifax, as in communities throughout Nova Scotia, the future we want is the future we make. Let's be smarter, more innovative and bold in our pursuits, more brazen in our beliefs. And while we're at it, let's be more welcoming of new immigrants and let's hire more new graduates before they seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Above all else, let's trust that we have more in common than we have in opposition. Because, we are one Nova Scotia.