

BUSINESS EDGE

PICTOU COUNTY 2018 COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Pictou County poised for 'great year'

Q&A with Pictou County Chamber of Commerce president Blair van Veld

BY HEATHER LAURA CLARKE

Blair van Veld just became Pictou County Chamber of Commerce's president at the beginning of May. He's also the CFO and Director of Twin Rivers Properties and Home Sales -- a residential rental company managing more than 1,000 units in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. He is a lifelong resident of Lyon's Brook, Pictou County.

Q: What does it mean to you to be heading up Pictou County's Chamber of Commerce?

A: I'm very excited to be in the position. We had four new individuals come aboard, too: Roxanne Heighton, who operates our local bar/restaurant Harbour House Ales & Cafe; Kyle Power, one of the lawyers at Mac, Mac & Mac; Peter Murray, a partner at Grant Thornton, and Anne McDonah, the chair of the business school at NSCC.

The Pictou County Chamber of Commerce does a lot for small businesses. We ourselves run a small business out of Pictou County -- owning properties from Bridgewater to Sydney and everywhere in between, as well as up to Summerside and Miramichi -- and the Chamber provides so many valuable resources.

Q: Can you tell us about one of the Chamber's newest resources?

A: We've opened a community workplace called ChamberHub, which is located at Bridgeview Square. People can rent office



space for short periods of time, or drop in to meet clients or work with other people.

It's great for people who typically work from their homes, because they may not be ready to rent an office full-time. This gives them an affordable way to get out of their home office and appear more professional.

Some small business owners start out renting space at ChamberHub, and they experience so much growth that they end up moving out on their own to a bigger space of their own.

Q: What can you tell us about the current state of Pictou County's business community?

A: We've had a poor last couple of decades in terms of job growth, with the partial Michelin shutdown and the layoffs at Sobeys in Stellarton. But I think things are certainly turning around.

Boston Pizza opened, and Starbucks is opening this year. There's

going to be cannabis growth operation that's supposed to hire upwards of 250 people. Web.com's operations centre in New Glasgow employs 300 people when they're at full capacity -- and they're currently at around 160, so they're back on a hiring spree.

Sobeys is hiring again, and Northern Pulp -- however controversial -- is a major employer in the area. We have multiple small businesses that employ between 20 and 100 people, and companies like Stright-MacKay and Wearwell Garments are continuing to grow.

I think there are going to be big announcements coming from the East River Business Park soon, which is a joint investment be-

tween the Town of New Glasgow and the Municipality of Pictou County. There's nothing we can formally announce yet, but there are some deals in the works, and we're hopeful things are going to move forward soon.

As an area, we're weaning ourselves off old-school manufacturing and working towards a more diversified economy. If everything goes ahead, this will be a great year of redevelopment.

Q: How is Pictou County working to attract new visitors to the area?

A: We don't get as many tourists as Cape Breton or Lunenburg County, but we do have some great tourist operations, like Pic-

ton Lodge Beach Resort -- which has log cottages, executive chalets, private beaches and lots of activities. We also have seasonal campgrounds that do very well, and several cruise ships will be coming back, which is always fun.

Q: What's the outlook in Pictou County's business community, looking ahead to the future?

A: We're past our dark days when everything was closing down. There are lots of real estate transactions going through -- both residential and commercial -- which says people are coming in and investing. We're revitalizing what's here, and things feel very positive overall.



Business bites: New Glasgow

BY HEATHER LAURA CLARKE

From major Canadian chains opening their doors to an exciting new initiative for local small business owners, it's been a busy year for New Glasgow's business community.

Here's a look at some of what happened in 2017, and what New Glasgow is looking forward to in 2018 ...

• Boston Pizza opened in Highland Square Mall:

The 6,000 sq. ft. restaurant opened in September and has been a popular spot. Franchise owners Jan and Troy Relf previ-

ously owned 10 Subway restaurants in the Halifax area and decided to move to New Glasgow and open Boston Pizza because they thought it would be a good opportunity for the small town.

"It's a Canadian company, we love that fact," Troy told The News in August. "Canadians supporting Canadians, that's what we want to do."

• Work-at-home entrepreneurs got a new alternative:

The Pictou County Chamber of Commerce opened a community workspace called ChamberHub in July. People

can rent office space for short periods of time, or drop in to meet clients or work with other people.

"We know that there are a number of entrepreneurs in Pictou County who may not have an office space from which to work or who are working from home to start a business," Jack Kyte, executive director of the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, told The News in July.

"We wanted to provide something as an option to them to have an office space to come to and to work and to meet other people."

• New businesses coming to New Glasgow's East River Business Park:

Big things are happening behind the scenes at East River Business Park, so stay tuned for announcements when everyone's signed on the dotted line.

Frank MacFarlane, a business development officer with the Town of New Glasgow, says they're currently working on a letter of intent for a potential tenant and have several other interested parties looking to develop land in the park.

"We can't say anything officially yet, but we've been gain-

ing momentum and there are a lot of irons in the fire," says MacFarlane. "It's not a short game -- it's a long game. You plant seeds and you hope they will take, and our hope is to get these parties to a point where they're signing a letter of intent, too."

There are currently more than 20 tenants in East River Business Park include Apple Auto Glass, Shoppers Drug Mart, NAPA Auto Parts, Stright-MacKay. East River Business Park is a 17-acre property located at Exit 25 on the TransCanada Highway.

• Starbucks is on the way:

Starbucks has stuck firmly to locations in HRM, Sydney, and the Halifax Stanfield International Airport since the brand came to Nova Scotia, but now Pictou County is going to get a taste of the world-famous coffee.

Greg Burrows, owner of the Subway on East River Rd. in New Glasgow, announced in March that he's opening the area's first Starbucks later this year. It will be built onto the existing Subway location, and Burrows believes it may be able to catch traffic travelling through northern Nova Scotia and give them a reason to stop in New Glasgow.

"It's another sign that local businesses are taking the plunge and investing in themselves here in Pictou County," says Pictou County Chamber of Commerce president Blair van Veld. "We hear they hope to be open by the fall, just in time for those pumpkin spice lattes!"



A fixture in the community

BY BOB ALLEN'S AUTO ATLANTIC

Bob Allen's Auto Atlantic has been a fixture in Pictou County for more than 50 years, building a reputation of quality and expertise in the auto industry.

Started by Bob Allen, who began selling vehicles outside his Plymouth home five decades ago, the business later moved to Stelarton Road where he operated out of a trailer prior to purchasing the location on Westville Road they've called home since 1981. The business now includes a state-of-the-art showroom, six service bays and a large inventory.

Bob Allen still checks in almost daily, but has passed the reins of the business on to his daughter Sheila who looks after vehicle sales and his son Shannon who looks after service at the business, making it still very much a family owned and operated business.

MacKenzie believes a huge part of what has made their company a success for half a century is the high quality of customer service.

"Customer service brings people back and repeat customers are the majority of our buyers," she said. "We also get a lot of referrals from customers."

They have a wide variety of vehicles in their inventory and work with their customers to help them find the car and financing they need.

"If we don't have it, we'll find it for you," she said.

Bob Allen's doesn't just sell cars either, they care for them. Whether it's a regular maintenance like oil changes or recharging air conditioning or body work repair, the employees at Bob Allen's can do it.



Bob Allen's Auto has been located on Westville Road in New Glasgow since 1981.



Lorraine MacEachern has been helping customers with their financing needs for more than 30 years at Bob Allen's Auto Atlantic in New Glasgow.



From left are: Charles MacDougall, sales; Ashley Brown, service writer; Shannon Allen and Sheila MacKenzie of Bob Allen's Auto Atlantic.

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Popular items that can be purchased locally



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Many consumers prefer to buy locally when shopping. Spring and summer are great times of year to shop locally, as the warmer weather facilitates strolling community shops and business districts. The following items are popular among consumers who emphasize buying local when making their purchases.

Produce

If you desire fresher fruits and

vegetables, then shopping locally is the way to go. A lot of produce is grown and imported from South and Central America, and such produce can take even longer to arrive on supermarket shelves. As a result, the flavor and freshness of fruits and vegetables shipped from afar might be compromised. The best way to get peak-season produce is to buy items that come from local providers.

Home services

If you're in the market for a

new air conditioning unit or are considering a home renovation, using a local, licensed contractor is often the smart way to go. Rather than dealing with the red tape of a larger outfit that may subcontract its work, local businesses are often more customer-service driven. What's more, if ever a problem arises, it's much easier to go into a local business and discuss concerns face-to-face instead of dealing with an unknown person answering phones at a corporate call centre.

Crafts

The home-based arts and crafts industry has undergone a rebirth thanks to sites like Pinterest and Etsy. Many of the items offered in local craft shops are handmade by local artisans and not mass-produced in overseas factories. Local artisans may be your best bet when shopping for unique arts and crafts full of detail and quality.

Food

Dining out is a different experience when you select independent restaurants over national chains. Chefs at independently owned restaurants have a greater

say over ingredients and menu choices than those at franchise establishments, and you may be introduced to foods you had never before dreamed of trying. Restaurants that team up with local food suppliers offer a double-dose of regional commerce and fresher ingredients. If you're new to the area, browse the local newspaper, community direct-mailers and coupon books to find dining establishments in your area.

There are numerous benefits to shopping locally and ideal ways to get started in your town or city. Take in a farmer's market or street fair to get started.



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More than just a market at Masstown

BY JAMES RISDON

In the produce section, 53-year-old Laurie Jennings is stocking shelves at the Masstown Market.

He owns the place.

A sprawling property off the TransCanada west of Truro, the Masstown Market now boasts The Peg events venue, the Lighthouse fish market with its Catch of the Bay seafood restaurant in a Cape Islander-style boat at the end of a dock, a PetroCanada gas station, a Tim Hortons, complimentary kennels, and the farmers' market itself.

The privately-held business does not divulge its revenues but Jennings will admit it does more than a million sales annually.

And it's still growing.

Despite that success, Jennings is still more likely to be found working on the floor on any given day than sitting behind a desk, handling paperwork.

"My dad, my grandfather - and myself - all believed you should do the same things as everyone else," he says. "You don't ask someone to do something you wouldn't do yourself."

His father, Eric, opened the Masstown Market as a farm gate operation in 1969, almost half a century ago.

Now, it's his grandson's turn.

As the business expands with construction of a 15,000-square foot building to house a creamery



and a meat shop, Laurie Jennings' oldest son, Tristan, is joining the family business.

A Southern Alberta Institute of Technology-certified butcher, he'll be running the Masstown Butcher Shop set to open in June.

"We're not going to kill animals. It's a butcher shop, not an abattoir," says Laurie Jennings. "We're going to take the meat and turn it

into all kinds of cuts you don't see very much anymore."

That butcher shop is also being touted as a place where shoppers will be able to get information about how the animals were raised and allow them to source of the meat.

"There needs to be an educational component to this so that people can know where their

food comes from," says Jennings. "We'll be able to take this beef and say that this meat comes from this farmer and this is how it was raised."

Across the stone-paved corridor down the centre of the same building as the butcher shop - with its big glass windows and Cape Cod siding -- the Masstown Creamery is going to give customers a peek at just how everything dairy is made.

"We're going to bottle milk, make cheese and butter," says Laurie Jennings. "The production area has windows so that customers can take a look. It's to tell the story about how the food is made."

The owner of the Masstown Market is keeping mum on just how much money was invested in the creamery and butcher shop operation. Certainly, there's more to these businesses than just the cost of the building. But the Municipality of Colchester's building

permit officials say the original permits filed in late 2016 pegged the value of that building alone at \$800,000.

"It's the biggest project we've ever done," says Jennings. "We'll have 20 to 30 people working there once we're set up."

With its location roughly midway between Halifax and Moncton, the Masstown market is a regular stop for tourists and motorists who stop to stretch their legs.

"There are people who come here with their friends, show them around, saying, 'Hey, you should see what they do in the bakery!'" says Jennings.

And the future? Well, it's still a secret.

But the Masstown business owner hints there is more to come.

"There's property here - and space," he says, "And a few things that are more than just notions."






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How to build a strong professional network

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Networking is often seen as a means to further one's career, but developing a group of professional contacts can also be a great way for professionals to stay abreast of the trends in their particular fields. Networking also can benefit small businesses as they look to connect with vendors that can help them grow their businesses.

A strong professional network is not built overnight, and many professionals spend years nurturing relationships with people in their networks. Individuals and business owners can take several approaches when building professional networks they will rely on for years to come.

• **Ask around.** Some individuals may hesitate to seek networking advice out of fear of appearing opportunistic. But successful professionals understand the need to network, so your colleagues will likely be glad to offer referrals if they're in a position to do so. When receiving a referral, ask if you can use the person's name, which should help you establish a connection during the introductory process.

Resist the idea that using a colleague's name when meeting a professional you hope to work with is something sinister, as the name will only help you with the introduction. Once the introduction has been made, it's up to you to do the rest.

• **Get active in your industry.** Referrals are not the only way to develop professional contacts. Being active in your industry by joining professional organizations and attending seminars and other industry events is a great way to expand your network. Volunteer to work with professional organizations when possible or offer to host information sessions or educational workshops at your business.

• **Reconnect with your college or university.** Another great way to build a professional network is to reconnect with your college or university. When meeting people affiliated with your alma mater, the ice has already been broken in a sense, as the school is essentially a built-in connection. You also won't have to worry about the awkwardness that might come when meeting a professional contact with whom

you have less in common. Alumni organizations and local chapters can introduce you to people who earned your degree at your school, and many people love to help out their fellow alumni.

• **Employ social media.** Social media is not just for kids. In fact, social media is a great way

for professionals to make and maintain professional contacts. LinkedIn, for example, makes it easy to connect with fellow professionals who are looking to do the same. Twitter can be used to promote professional events such as seminars or workshops you are working with. These platforms can be used to grow your

network quickly and easily, but be sure to vet each person you connect with to make sure you are affiliating yourself with the right people.

Building a strong professional network takes patience and hard work. But the right network can pay dividends for years to come.





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10 reasons to nurture the health of our local economy

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1. We create a more dynamic business climate: Success leads to success. The more prosperous businesses we have, the more the local climate will encourage other entrepreneurs to set up businesses and create still more jobs.

2. We gain more property tax income to invest in our infrastructure: The more thriving businesses we have, the more they will be able to expand. The more they expand, the more property and business tax they will pay, generating money that can be used for the good of our town and our citizens.

3. We improve services: A prosperous local economy is conducive to improvements in social, medical, and sports and leisure services, as well as in tourism, the arts, and entertainment.



4. We have more choice and a wider variety of products: The sales figures of a business reflect its financial health, and when business is good, expansion projects multiply. Expansion brings new products and new services to our community.

5. We benefit local community organizations: Non-profit

organizations receive many donations from local business people. Donations are essential to their survival, so it follows that the healthier the economy, the healthier our organizations.

6. We maintain the unique character of our town and region: The charm of a municipality is in its dynamism and character.

Those go hand in hand with its economic health. A municipality that can count on its population to buy locally is a municipality to be envied.

7. We create more jobs in our town and region: A thriving job market depends on the economic health of our region.

8. We have a positive impact on the environment: Local enterprises purchase a lot more local products, greatly reducing the transportation of products from outside the region.

9. We support our region in the search for investors: If our region has a dynamic economy, it is bound to attract investors. If our municipality receives revenues from business and property taxes, it can work to attract investors as well. Investors are like consumers: they are attracted to regions that are attractive.

10. We invest in our region: For all the reasons listed above, buying local is logical, beneficial, and highly efficient. Buying local creates the economic leverage that is vital to the dynamism of a region. By working together we can support our local economy.

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Local dining spots foster community

Dining out is a great way to celebrate life's milestones or simply reconnect with friends and loved ones. Research firm NPD Group found that, by the end of 2015, restaurant visits by consumers increased by 700 million compared to just five years prior.

While chain restaurants invest heavily in advertising, independently owned restaurants do not have those same resources. Multi-unit chains also have more pull with suppliers and might be able to negotiate better deals, or can spread operational costs across various locations. Too often diners are not aware of the vast array of tasty, well-priced and artisanal foods awaiting them just down the street. But dining out at local eateries can be beneficial in various ways.

• **High-quality food:** Many local establishments have complete control over their suppliers and menus. As a result, they can be picky with regard to the vendors they use and the produce, meats, dairy, and other ingredients that they select. Many small, independently owned restaurants team up with local organic farmers and distributors to supply a farm-to-table experi-

Too often diners are not aware of the vast array of tasty, well-priced and artisanal foods awaiting them just down the street. But dining out at local eateries can be beneficial in various ways.

ence that many diners now enjoy.

• **Freedom of experimentation:** Although chain restaurants may have to meet approval from administrative boards and marketing departments before they can introduce new fare, independently owned restaurants can let their diners decide which foods remain on the menu and even adapt to community trends. Local restaurants may take pride in serving cultural or regional foods.

• **Ability to customize:** Independently owned restaurants may be more amenable to adapting recipes or making substitutions to meet diners' requests. Skilled local chefs can think on the fly and modify recipes, which may not always be possible in chain establishments.



PHOTO CREDIT 123RF.COM

Diners are often delighted at the caliber of food and service at independently owned eateries.

• **Crowd control:** Local restaurants tend to be smaller and more intimate than many chain restaurants. This can translate into a calm dining experience. When crowds are small, the noise level inside the restaurant may be muted and service may be fast because there aren't as many tables to serve. Furthermore, local establishments, although concerned about making a profit, may be less worried about table turnover rate, preferring to let diners linger if it means repeat business.

• **Familiar faces:** Some diners enjoy being a "regular" at their favorite local restaurants. Local dining spots also become gathering locations for residents in the know, instead of passing-through tourists or commuters.

Much can be said about the advantages of patronizing local eateries. Men and women who want unique dining experiences can give local, independently owned establishments a try.



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Don't miss all that Downtown Truro has to offer

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Downtown Truro is not what it used to be... And it has not forgotten who it was.

When you visit downtown Truro for the first time, there is a good chance you will wonder why you haven't made a plan to come sooner.

If you are just coming back to visit when you've not been for a few years, you will be pleasantly surprised by the transformation.

Locals are saying that there is a buzz that's been building steadily over the last five or six years. People from away are puzzling over why they keep hearing so much about Truro all of a sudden.

The Downtown Truro Partnership – the organization that works to promote everything that downtown Truro has to offer – is coming up on its 40th anniversary in 2019 and there is a

lot to celebrate.

There is a thriving business district that honours its history, while celebrating the new – new businesses, new infrastructure, new opportunities – intermingling with businesses that have been in existence for, in some cases, more than 50 years.

There is a resurgence of energy being put into collaboration among businesses, organizations and community members – through brainstorming sessions, events, activities and more.

There is a beautiful landscape – a new civic square where families can be found taking part in various activities on weekends and business people can be found playing catch on their lunch breaks. Not to mention the 3,000 acres of woodland that is just steps away from the downtown core in Victoria Park.

And there is a feeling. That buzz. That sense of community and pride that has been building for the last several years and is now bursting at the seams.

With more than 300 professional, service, retail and non-profit members represented by the urban regional core, downtown Truro is no longer that place you pass by on the highway... it is a destination. It is the place you stop and stay.

It's the place where you start your day climbing the iconic Jacob's Ladder in Victoria Park, spend the afternoon with a unique downtown shopping experience, and finish the day off sitting out on a nearby patio catching up with friends.

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How to enjoy this year's staycation

CONTRIBUTED

Make your next staycation an occasion to remember with these helpful tips:

• **Invest in your home or lifestyle.** Instead of bankrolling a trip overseas, channel those funds into improvements for your home or yard to create a relaxing atmosphere you can enjoy year-round. Install that pool or landscape the backyard to make it feel like a tropical paradise. Coasting across the water of a lake or ocean is an enjoyable pastime, so repurpose your vacation funds to buy a boat or some jet skis that you can enjoy throughout the warmer months.

• **Become a tourist in your hometown.** Chances are you have never experienced the sights of your hometown the way a tourist might. Plan a few days when you can act like someone visiting your town or city for the first time. Go to the top of that tallest mountain or get a tour of that local factory. Seek out and visit monuments and

points of history in your community. Hop on one of those sight-seeing buses and learn something new about where you live. You may just be surprised at what you can discover.

• **Look for hidden gems.** Some local businesses may be willing to open up for "behind the scenes" tours if you ask. This can be a fun excursion for young children. Ask employees of a movie theater if you can see the projection room. Newspaper offices may host tours of their facilities. Even a bowling alley can be fascinating to kids if they can see ball-return mechanisms or how equipment is stored. Watching the zamboni machine clean the ice at a rink also may be an entertaining sneak peek into rink operations.

• **Splurge on a show or sporting event.** Attend an event you normally wouldn't unless you were on vacation. Take a trip to see a Broadway-inspired musical at a nearby theatre or take the family to see your local

sports team play a home game against its biggest rival. Treat yourself to concession stand snacks and a few souvenirs.

• **Dine out a few nights.** Vacations often entail eating out, especially if meals are not included in a traditional vacation package. Use your staycation as the opportunity to dine at local restaurants you have yet to visit. Indulge the kids one night and put them in charge of choosing the meals. Forget those diet plans for a day or two and savor that triple-scoop ice cream cone. If the cost of dining out has you concerned, select restaurants that offer coupons in community mailers or value packs.

• **Read the newspaper or community bulletin.** Chances are you can find a num-

ber of entertaining and low-cost activities sponsored by your town or other organizations close to home. Fireworks displays, movies under the stars, boat tours, and fairs are just a handful of the fun events that may be coming soon.

• **Turn off electronics.** Take a break from some of your devices during your staycation. By doing so, you will be less likely to fall into your daily habits and more likely to make the most of your time to rest and relax.



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Beginner's guide to real estate investments



CONTRIBUTED

Purchasing a house or property is about more than setting up a home. Although quite a number of people buy real estate to establish their future, long-term abodes, many others recognize the potentially lucrative investment that lies within a real estate purchase.

Despite the ups and downs of the economy, real estate has become a common investment

vehicle - one that has plenty of potential for making big gains for those who are willing to put in the effort. According to the experts at Entrepreneur, even in a bad economy, real estate investments will usually fare better than stocks. Real estate also continues to appreciate despite the occasional economical slow-down.

Like any other endeavor, there is a right and a wrong way to go about investing in real estate. Novices may not know where to begin their first forays into the

real estate market as investors, even if they already own their own homes. Buying a property as an investment is an entirely different animal than buying a home to establish a residence. However, with the right guidance, anyone can dabble in real estate.

Establish financial goals

Before you even begin looking at properties or put forth the effort of meeting with an agent, you must determine what you expect from the investment. The days of

buying real estate and flipping it for a fast profit may no longer be here. However, real estate can provide a steady stream of long-term income. Understand what you hope to achieve by investing. If it's to become an overnight millionaire, you may be looking at the wrong investment vehicle in real estate.

Establish a plan

New investors who do not have a plan in place will likely spend too much or have more setbacks than others who have planned accordingly. When investing in real estate, it's more about the bottom line than the property itself. According to Springboard Academy, a real estate academy for investors, look for motivated sellers and stick to a set purchase price. Try to make offers on a variety of properties that work in your financial favor. And know what you want to do with the property (i.e., renovate and sell, remove and rebuild, or rehab and rent) before you buy. Fit the house to the plan, and not vice-versa.

Start small

If this is your first time out there, stick with properties that will turnover quickly. Research

areas in and around thriving centers or close to transportation and shopping. A good starter property is a small house or a condominium that can be refurbished and then rented. Rental properties offer steady sources of income when renters are properly vetted, offers Investopedia, an investment resource.

Look at many different properties

Become an expert by learning as much as you can about what is out there. Attend open houses; look for vacant/unattractive properties; scour the classifieds in your local paper; or put the word out there that you're interested in buying a property. Only look at properties that have motivated sellers, because then you'll get closest to the price you want to pay. And don't forget to research the area and the home turnover rate for the specific area where you are looking. Don't make assumptions that a property will appreciate without doing your homework.

Real estate can be a worthy investment opportunity. With research, a plan and the right price, just about anyone can be

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The many ways buying locally grown foods pays dividends



CONTRIBUTED

The popularity of organic foods and stores that cater to customers who prefer such foods continues to grow, and that growth has contributed to a growing awareness among shoppers of where the food they eat comes from. Many consumers now recognize the impact that food production has on the environment, and that recognition has spurred interest in locally grown foods.

Locally grown foods are those that are grown within your community or a community nearby. Such foods do not need to be shipped hundreds of miles before they ultimately find their way onto your plate, and many people find that contributes to meals that are more fresh than meals made up of foods shipped from afar. But freshness is not the only benefit to purchasing locally grown foods, which pay various dividends for people and

the planet.

- Locally grown foods benefit the environment. The phrase “field to plate” is significant to consumers who prefer locally grown foods. That phrase refers to the distance food travels from the grower to the plate on your dinner table. Estimates vary depending on the source, but advocates of locally grown food suggest that it reduces the field to plate distance by an average of

2,000 kilometres. Buying locally preserves that energy that is used to transport foods from afar.

- Locally grown foods fuel your local economy. In addition to benefitting the environment, locally grown foods stimulate your local economy. Local, independent farmers have largely fallen by the wayside in the 21st century, as industrial agribusinesses have taken over the produce sections in grocery stores across the country. But local, independent farmers are making a comeback, thanks in large part to consumer demand for organic foods. Supporting such farmers who grow their foods locally means you’re putting money back into your own community, a worthwhile effort at a time when so many small communities are struggling economically.

- Buying locally grown foods contributes to biodiversity. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, more than 75 per cent of agricultural genetic diversity was lost in the 20th century. That’s thanks in large part to industrial agribusinesses that cultivate fruits and vegetables that are bred for fast maturation. But small, local farms typically grow a wider variety of fruits and vegetables in an effort to extend their growing seasons. That means

consumers of locally grown foods have access to more fruits and vegetables, and therefore more flavour.

- Buying locally maintains beautiful landscapes. Farmland has been on the decline for decades, as cement and asphalt have made millions of acres of once beautiful farmland disappear. Buying locally helps to maintain the green space your community and surrounding communities have left. That makes for great road trips and even helps to sustain local wildlife populations.

- Locally grown foods can be more nutritious. Fruits and vegetables can rapidly lose nutrients once they are harvested. That’s problematic when buying such foods from industrial agribusinesses that need substantial time to get their products from the farm to the shelves at your local grocery chain. But buying from local farmers increases the likelihood that the fruits and vegetables you purchase were just picked and therefore have yet to lose a significant amount of nutrients.

Locally grown foods are growing in popularity, and that popularity can be traced to the freshness of such foods as well as the numerous additional benefits that locally grown foods provide.



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Boat Harbour budget on the rise

BY JAMES RISDON

The bill to clean up Boat Harbour could be another \$67 million, or 50 per cent, more than the latest estimate, says the director of this Nova Scotia Lands project.

"It may be upwards of \$200 million but we can't measure that yet," said Ken Swain, program director for Boat Harbour with Nova Scotia Lands, in an interview. "We're still gathering information (needed to determine the final cost)."

The latest estimate to remove and treat underwater sludge deposited in Boat Harbour over decades of industrial use is \$133 million.

The cleanup will see the removal and treatment of up to one million cubic metres of contaminated sludge, enough to cover a football field to the height of a 100-storey building.

It's a lot of goop. By comparison, the Sydney Tar Ponds remediation project involved cleaning up roughly 70 per cent as much material.

Boat Harbour, originally a tidal estuary, was closed off decades ago and transformed into a roughly 140-hectare wastewater lagoon for a pulp mill. Tens of



millions of litres of wastewater are still dumped into its coves, ponds and settling ponds every day from the Northern Pulp mill in Pictou County.

That's going to come to an end in 2020, the cut-off date for Northern Pulp to have another wastewater treatment operation in place.

Then, the cleanup of Boat Harbour will get underway in earnest.

It's expected to take five years.

When that large-scale remediation work begins, it will use know-how tested during a pilot project this summer in a cove that's about eight per cent of the total area and has been isolated from the rest of Boat Harbour by a roughly \$2.5-million, impenetrable berm made of dirt.

The pilot project will remove sludge contaminated with zinc,

cadmium, mercury and organic matter.

"The contaminants of concern are dioxins and furans ... because they're carcinogens," said Swain.

The heavy metals are a lesser worry because they are not cancer-causing agents but the contaminated sludge also contains hydrocarbons.

The province will be putting out two tenders to handle this work.

The first, expected to be issued in May, will be for work that is to start in July. That contract, which will run for about four weeks, will be to build a staging area of about two hectares to receive the sludge and drain much of the water out of it.

Once that's built, the work of actually removing the sludge, bringing it to the staging area, and taking care of it will begin. The tender for that work is to go out in June, start in August and run through into January.

"That will allow us to experience the seasons and see how these will impact the activity," said Swain.

The Boat Harbour remediation project, owned by the province, is located adjacent to the Pictou Landing First Nation. Nova Scotia Lands is working to ensure First Nations members are involved in every stage of the project.

"We've got four Nova Scotia universities working with us and they have a lot of First Nations people working with them," said Swain. "It will also be part of the request for proposals that (bidders) have a plan as to how to engage the First Nations communities."

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When is the best time to buy a new car?

CONTRIBUTED

Between tax rebates, cash-back incentives and “family and friends” pricing, it seems like car dealerships always have some sort of promotional campaign going on. This means if you’re in the market for a new car, the hard part isn’t resisting those enticing deals — it’s figuring out which ones are worth your while. At some point during the year, most products and services do end up being sold at a discount. It’s entirely possible — and highly advantageous — to plan your purchases according to periodic sales cycles. For example, buying a new vehicle just when the model-year changes to the next one can save you big.

The end of spring and the beginning of summer are typically good times to purchase a vehicle. This is a peak period for sales and competition between brands is fierce. Also consider that many

automakers unveil new models during the first big auto shows of the year (Detroit, New York, Chicago and Geneva). A lot of those models will then quickly make their way to dealerships, which need to make room for the new arrivals.

Another tip: it’s a good idea to wait until the end of the month to make your purchase. When salespeople start to run out of time to make their monthly sales targets, they become more inclined to negotiate. So hit the dealership on the 29th of the month, not the 3rd. This advice applies to all types of motor vehicles, including motorcycles, scooters and ATVs.

Finally, models in high demand will typically be sold at the same price all year. In such cases, you’ll need to adjust your bargain-hunting strategy — by shopping around multiple dealerships, for instance.



Smart tips for buying a used car



CONTRIBUTED

Are you in the market for a pre-owned vehicle? Follow these tips to avoid getting stuck with a lemon.

Research the price

Are you looking for a particular model of used vehicle? First things first: go online to compare prices to find out what the market value is for your car of choice.

Make a budget

No matter what kind of car you’re shopping for, it’s easy to get carried away and go over your budget. Make a list of your wants and needs, and establish a budget that factors in insurance and

maintenance costs. Don’t forget to leave yourself some wiggle room for the unforeseen.

Get your hands on the car’s history

Ideally, you’ll get the chance to view the invoices for any maintenance work done on the car. Dealerships usually keep the paperwork for all vehicles they’ve done maintenance on, and some private sellers do the same.

Know who the seller is

Be sure you know exactly who you’ll be buying the vehicle from. There are ill-intentioned people everywhere, and the car sales business is no exception. The thought of making a quick buck can make people greedy. Knowing who you’re doing business with is crucial.

Have it inspected

Once you’ve taken all the necessary precautions, it’s time to have the car inspected. Bring it to an independent mechanic of your

choosing — if the seller insists on taking it to a specific garage, take your business elsewhere.

Take it for a test drive

Take the car out for a spin — don’t settle for simply starting it! Ideally, you should take 15 to 20 minutes to familiarize yourself with the feeling of the car. Try to drive it on city roads as well as on the highway. Listen for any suspicious sounds, pay attention to the suspension and keep your eyes peeled for any little details that could reveal the vehicle’s true condition.

Get it in writing

If you buy your car from a dealership, you’ll need to sign a contract. Make sure that it matches your verbal agreement on all points. If you decide to purchase from an independent seller, it’s highly recommended that you draft a written agreement, even if you aren’t required to by law. In the event of future problems, it might offer you some valuable protections.



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Licensed producers key to safe medical and recreational cannabis use

BY CYNTHIA MCMURRAY

There is so much we still don't know about cannabis. Up until the Liberal government's announcement that it would be legalizing the recreational use of the plant as of July 1, 2018 (now TBD), the subject of marijuana was essentially taboo. Even many family physicians have been reticent to the idea of using medical cannabis, despite it being legal for this purpose since 2001. But that is all about to change, whether we are ready or not, and licenced producers (LPs) are the key to making sure the industry remains safe.

"We would probably be the only industry that is in favour of more regulations. We think the barrier to entry should be high, so that only the most qualified and competent companies get into the market," says Sandy Schembri, VP, strategic initiatives for the Truro Herbal Company, a late-stage applicant to become a LP of medical cannabis under the ACMPR (Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations) established through Health Canada.

And the process to become a LP in Canada is extremely difficult, according to Schembri, who says the Truro Herbal Company began submitting the required paperwork for licencing in June 2014. "...we submitted around 2,500 pages of documents to Health Canada and have spent over \$1 million [so far] just going through the licensing process," says Schembri.

As of now, there are three authorized LPs in Nova Scotia — Aqualitas Inc., based out of the old Bowater-Mersey paper mill site near Liverpool, Breathing Green Solutions Inc. in the Went-



worth Valley and Highland Grow Inc., in Antigonish County. There are a number of applications still in the queue, including Truro Herbal Company and Robinson's Cannabis in the Antigonish Valley, so we can expect to see more Nova Scotia LPs receiving a licence in the near future.

LPs are, and will continue to be, the only legal supply chain for cannabis in the medical and soon to be recreational market. The reasoning behind this is that LPs are held to very high standards for safe manufacturing practices and testing standards to ensure it is safe and consistent for the consumer. What this means is that every dispensary currently operating in the province is 100 per cent illegal. The only legal way to purchase recreational cannabis will be through the NSLC, which will also offer online purchasing. The biggest challenge LPs will

face moving forward, is meeting the incredible demand everyone in the industry foresees, according to Schembri.

According to studies on supply, the government is anticipating a 700,000 kilo supply shortage in Canada after recreational cannabis is legalized. This is not expected to even out until 2020, which means cannabis will be in high demand for several years to come.

Schembri says, "... the 60 [plus] current licenced producers in Canada are able to produce 80,000 to 100,000 kilograms [of cannabis per year] and we estimate that the total consumption for the whole country is closer to 1 million kilograms [per year], so the shortfall is incredible."

What is really surprising, however, is that in Nova Scotia alone,

the demand is estimated to be close to 35,000 kilograms per year. When you consider that Truro

Herbal Company will initially be able to produce between 3,000 to 5,000 kilograms of dried cannabis annually, even with cannabis from other local LPs, there will still be a significant shortage. According to Statistic Canada, sales revenue of medical cannabis was \$239.4 million in 2016. While Ontario accounted for just over half of that, Nova Scotia had the second highest sales — 17.4 per cent of all sales in Canada.

When recreational cannabis does occur this summer, customers will be able to purchase a wide variety of cannabis through authorized NSLC locations. In fact, the NSLC states they will have a significant selection of products (300 or so, depending on the location), which will be sold in stores-within-a-store in existing NSLC outlets.

For more information on what the recreational side of cannabis will look like, visit the NSLC's website at mynslc.com/en/Cannabis.

■ Recreational cannabis will be sold in 12 stores throughout the province.

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- 151 Church St., Antigonish
- 274 Dufferin St. Bridgewater
- 640 Portland St. Dartmouth
- 3601 Joseph Howe Dr., Halifax
- 5485 Clyde St., Halifax (a stand-alone store)
- Downsview Plaza, 745 Sackville Dr., Lower Sackville
- 9256 Commercial St., Unit 230, New Minas
- 985 Prince St., Truro
- 104a Starrs Rd., Yarmouth
- 610 East River Rd., New Glasgow
- Nova Scotians 19 or older will also be able to purchase cannabis online from the NSLC.

Tatamagouche Brewing Company: Part of a dynamic North Shore food and drink culture

BY MARK DEWOLF

Local craft beer and food culture has grown exponentially in the last few years. Much of the success can be attributed to growing concerns of the environment and health impacts of food and drink shipped in from great distances. The spin-off of a wider audience being exposed to local food is the "aha" moment that all local, less-processed food and drink, such as locally made craft beer, simply tastes better.

It's not just an urban phenomenon. Rural Nova Scotia is lapping up the local movement with pleasure. Case in point is Tatamagouche, on Nova Scotia's North Shore. Less than five years ago, legendary local winemaker, Hans Christian Jost and daughter Christiane, opened Tatamagouche Brewing Company.

"Growing up in Malagash, Tatamagouche was where we went for groceries, the dentist, etc.," Christiane says. "It was always like we were going to the big town. When deciding on a location for the brewery it was always the area that we wanted to be. When we started our new business it was very important for us to be part of the streetscape of town. The community of Tatamagouche embodies community spirit."

The Josts originally set their sight on the old town library, but around the same time, as it turns out, the old building beside it, which according to Christiane has been everything from a tire shop, a dance hall, a restaurant and mostly recently a butcher shop, also went on the market. It was a tough decision to open the brewery in the butcher shop, but according to Christiane "it had more square footage which at the time we thought would be neces-



sary."

As it turns out, it wasn't enough. This past winter the brewery expanded, taking over the old library space. They added new fermenters — allowing them to double production — as well as an enlarged tasting room and patio space for customers to sit down and try there beers. Asked if this was the end of expansion, Christiane responded "no it hasn't been enough. We have another tank on its way and we just bought the property next to us and have expanded production there, as well."

Asked whether they would consider moving the brewery out of Tatamagouche's downtown core, Christiane says "no, we definitely want to keep a presence on Main Street." The brewery has become an integral part of tourism in the area. "We offer flights of four-ounce pours. We have different beers on tap here that can't often

get in city. We have a great team here to answer questions. There is a real energy going on."

It's all been good for Tatamagouche Brewing Company, but also for the local restaurant community and neighbouring beverage alcohol producers. According to Christiane "a lot of restaurants have told us that their sales have gone up because the brewery brings more people into the community. It's a symbiotic relationship. All the restaurants here sell our products and we send customers to them. We think we've helped make the community more of a destination. We round out the experience, as do Uncle Leo's (Lyons Brook), Caldera Distilling (River John) and Jost Vineyards (Malagash)."

The brewery completes the food and drink package in the area. Visitors making a base in Tatamagouche have a wealth of activities within driving distance.

Any foodie trip to Tatamagouche requires a pilgrimage to the Saturday Farmers' Market where a small group of enthusiast vendors sell all you need for an afternoon picnic or gourmet evening meal. When in the area, you'd also be remiss not to venture to the nearby Train Station Inn for a visit and light lunch on The Dining Car, housed in a converted CNR railcar. It's a restaurant experience that Christiane notes as "her favourite." A short distance from Tatamagouche you'll also find Sugar Moon Farm, producers of local maple syrup, and less than a 10-minute drive away in Denmark, The Pork Shop, which has even used Tatamagouche beer to make sausages. It all makes for a worthwhile venture to Nova Scotia's North Shore where you are sure to discover Tatamagouche Brewing Company and one of this province's most dynamic food and drink cultures.



Labour market: Addressing Atlantic Canada's talent needs

KEVIN STODDART

KNIGHTSBRIDGE ROBERTSON SURRETTE

The topic of Atlantic Canada's labour market is often surrounded by commentary about aging boomers and fleeing millennials, both contributing to an imminent talent supply shortage. The premise being that there simply aren't enough millennials entering through the front door to replace the retirees exiting out the back door. As a recruitment professional, I want to see our young people stay in the region as much as countless other Atlantic Canadians who lament the "move West" for opportunity mentality. To limit the conversation to retention ignores strategies that offer local organizations distinct market advantages while growing our economy.

In a global economy, organizations do not need to halt operations due to limited local resources, rather, successful organizations look to the world to find the necessary resources and determine how best to acquire them. Attracting people is a more important and more complex endeavour than sourcing inputs, such as raw materials or machinery. I believe a "global talent supply chain" exists, which offers organizations the opportunity to tap into the most qualified talent pools, regardless of geography.

Industry leaders within Canada's tech sector, which faces a shortage of programmers and other skilled IT professionals (expected to be more than 200,000 by 2020), have touted progressive immigration policies and global talent as an absolute imperative. Harley Finkelstein, Shopify's chief operating officer, recently stated: "Talent is not defined by borders and if they choose to come to Canada, the entire ecosystem will be better for it. Canada is a country where the best talent from around the world can move here and do their life's work." Other organizations, such as Enbridge and KPMG, have recognized the benefit of diversity and international talent. Named among Canada's Top Diversity Employers, their progressive practices have included deliberate steps to create welcoming workplaces for newcomers.

In Atlantic Canada, we remain in an employer's market, meaning there are generally more people than there are available jobs. According to Statistics Canada, unemployment hovers around 10



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per cent as a region (8.1 per cent in N.S., 14.2 per cent in N.L.) compared to the national average of 6.6 per cent (February 2017). This is a significant difference that has dampened the demand for talent in this region. There are still exceptions, however, such as highly specialized skills that are in scarce supply and sectors that face chronic labour shortages. In the future, demographers attest Atlantic Canadian employers won't be immune to the broader talent shortage and will in turn feel the pressure of fewer available and qualified employees.

We are privileged to live in one of the most attractive countries on Earth. In fact, U.S. media outlets recently rated Canada the second best overall country in the world. Our standard of living is amongst the very highest. Canadian employers have a leg up on most other countries when looking to attract talented individuals. In light of recent political events and anti-immigration rhetoric south of the border, liv-

ing and working in Canada has arguably never been more attractive. We have the good fortune of having an enviable brand as a country on the world stage. However, brand image alone isn't enough to attract talent. Organizations with an interest in global human resources strive to make themselves attractive to individuals who possess the skills they require.

The savviest employers have shifted their thinking and look at hiring less locally and more globally. Luckily, people are mobile. Increased immigration to our region largely depends on how interested employers are in recruiting permanent international employees. Regional employers like Ganong Bros. Ltd. in St. Stephen, N.B., have been relying on international workers to address talent shortages for many years. They have been vocal about the need for policies to help these skilled women and men come and live in the region. Truthfully, lengthy processing times and

challenges achieving permanent status are often cited as barriers to effective use of immigration in addressing talent needs. New programs, like the Atlantic Immigration Pilot launched in March 2017, aims to attract and retain immigrants to Atlantic Canada as permanent residents. With a goal to bring in 2,000 new workers and their families as a part of the Atlantic Growth Strategy, regional leaders aim to address challenges faced by employers in sectors with chronic labour shortages and those expected to face such challenges.

The much talked about Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians (also known as The Ivany Report) identified immigration as a key strategy to help grow our economy. Now more than ever, Canada can position itself as an attractive place to settle. While other countries look for ways to keep immigrants out, we can take advantage of a more global mindset by accessing talented women and men

from around the world. Forward-thinking organizations, like those cited above, have already embraced a global workforce mentality that relies on effective immigration; they are using this thinking to their advantage and serve as an example for the rest of us.

There is no doubt in my mind that a scarcity of talent is beginning to impact Atlantic Canada and will even more so in the years ahead. While the impact is likely to vary by sector and geography, employers' success in combatting talent shortages will depend on how well they can access global talent and attract people to our shores, while also exploring parallel strategies. If we continue to look only to those people in our own backyard, our region will submerge in talent shortages that will have an adverse effect on our ability to compete. We must broaden our thinking and look at new ways of accessing human resources to ensure our region's future growth and success.

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Sherry Blinkhorn says, "It goes beyond the sales commission. We truly want what is in the best interests of clients first and foremost. It's a win win situation when you genuinely care about people to start with."



Front Row: Lisa Swain REALTOR®, Judy DeCoste Assistant, Sherry Blinkhorn Broker/Owner, Angel LeFave Administrator, Kayla Green, Assistant **Back Row:** Chris Sharpe REALTOR®, Fred El-Haddad REALTOR®, Dave Jardine REALTOR®, Aaron Millen REALTOR®



*It's
Been an
Exciting
year*

for Blinkhorn Real Estate, a company that continues to remain at the top as a strong Leader in the Industry, and force to be reckoned with in Pictou County! The last year was an extremely busy one for the Team yet they were able to maintain what they are consistently known for, their signature helpfulness, and

being community supporters of various events and non profit organizations. Sherry Blinkhorn works closely with Starr Cunningham and the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia giving Blinkhorn Real Estate Provincial exposure and recognition, yet it's very important to Blinkhorn that the funds raised is used within Pictou

County. The Autism Society and New Glasgow Academy Kitchen Party are just a couple of other causes Blinkhorn sponsors as well. "I like to do my best to pay it forward as much as I can, Blinkhorn says. Honesty, integrity, professionalism and providing excellent client service are key to how the business runs."



Blinky THE BEE!

"We Continue to Lead

as number one in units and dollar volume sold in Northern Nova Scotia, based on MLS data provided by NSAR year to date as of May 1, 2018" says Blinkhorn. The overwhelming support of Pictou County has caused the business to be top of mind in the past 13 years. **Blinkhorn beams with pride** when talking about the Team saying "it's cliché to say there is no I in Team, but every single person that represents the company truly cares about people and doing what is best for the client. It's a requirement to work here, bottom line."



Starr Cunningham, CEO of Mental Health Foundation of NS with Sherry Blinkhorn Broker/Owner of Blinkhorn Real Estate Ltd.

Latest Announcement

Bursting with excitement she describes the latest huge investment that the company has made and now can now offer- Virtual Reality Tours. "It puts Pictou County on the map for yet but another reason." A first to her knowledge in all of Nova Scotia for a small company that isn't part of a National Franchise. It isn't even found in many Franchised Brokerages in all of Atlantic Canada. **She's clear in explaining that Virtual Reality tours are not the same as Virtual Tours, they are extremely incredible and different. However, they aren't designed to replace actual showings of the homes but do offer a different representation with a "dollhouse view" and actual floor plans.** Impressive is the ability to use VR glasses to walk through the homes.

The Blinkhorn office also has their own drone and those videos serve as an advantage to certain clientele as well. **"We look at each property with different features and with that sometimes requires different approaches for marketing. We don't just take pictures of properties, put them on a web site and hope they will sell. With an ever changing Industry as it relates to technology, it shouldn't be a one shoe fit all solution. Having said that, pictures and ads don't sell properties, we REALTORS® sell properties."** The company even uses electronic signing eliminating the need for scanners and printers. These gradual moves help to work towards becoming more green friendly.

Visiting 980 East River Rd, New Glasgow, you can't miss the huge TV in their window promoting their listings 24/7 as a way for people to view their listings. Their web site www.blinkhornrealestate.com hosts ALL MLS listings in Pictou County. The Blinkhorn Real Estate facebook page has over 2000 followers with their listings and Community information constantly updated. Blinky Bee continues to attend charity functions and other fun things in the Community.

In summary how Blinkhorn views their continued success, "It goes beyond the sales commission. We truly want what is in the best interests of clients first and foremost. It's a win win situation when you genuinely care about people to start with."



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