



FROM PROVINCE HOUSE TO HOME

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Kings West

Looking at some of the current statistics, it's hard to believe Nova Scotia was once a powerhouse economy. Today our per capita Gross Domestic Product is the second lowest in Canada and our labour productivity is 22% less than that of the rest of the country. Added to those grim facts is a provincial debt of over \$12 billion dollars carrying an annual interest of nearly \$1 billion dollars. It's a stark contrast to a couple hundred years ago when tall ships ruled the waves and fish and timber brought wealth to a budding economy. Nova Scotia was a founding province of confederation. It was the first colony in the British Empire to achieve responsible government. Yet here we sit in 2009 a have-not province that our own prime minister said fosters a 'culture of defeat'.

Well, I'm sorry Mr. Harper but the Nova Scotians I know are anything but defeatists. With 10 degree granting institutions and 13 community colleges, we have one of the most highly educated workforces in the country. We have a strong history of innovation and success. We built the Bluenose. We produced Canada's first newspaper. In about a week we will celebrate 100 years of flight. We're the home of Tim Horton's for goodness sakes! These are but a few examples of our success. Our people are brave and resilient and, unfortunately, leaving home because the opportunities that should be here are not being developed.

This is a beautiful province filled with an abundance of human and natural resources. Fish, coal and timber once brought us great success. Other resources can do that again, we just need to use them in new and different ways. We have the highest tides in the world- the power required to move that amount of water is substantial. The wind coming off those tides is another untapped resource. Anyone standing on the banks of the Bay of Fundy can tell you, without reservation, just how much power those breezes hold. Through today's technology that power is harvestable.

Still, success stories in our province are not as common as they should be. We are not reaching our potential in terms of productivity, in terms of innovation and in terms of income. We have major roadblocks to reaching the success we know is possible.

Nova Scotia was once a leader in using rail to transport goods and people but as the viability of rail has decreased we have not replaced trains with a modern road system. Unfortunately, the best highway in Nova Scotia is far too often the one leaving the province. Is that acceptable? I think not.

The creation of research parks to incubate the ideas and innovation that our universities and community colleges are advancing must be realized. We must advance green energy at a much more aggressive pace as counties place barriers to products not made by renewable energy. These two developments alone will change out-migration patterns of our brightest and best young people - this is critical to our future. Roadblocks to our success aren't small but they aren't insurmountable either. What it takes is a commitment; a commitment to this province and to its people. A commitment to getting out of the way of local innovators and letting them develop new paths for Nova Scotia. The Golden age of Nova Scotia isn't over. It's just beginning. We just need a government that's willing to help us get there.

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