



MEDIA RELEASE

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Marine Atlantic in Budget 2010: missing the boat

The Government of Canada's investment in Marine Atlantic does not go far enough to support the \$10 billion trade corridor to Newfoundland and Labrador, said the St. John's Board of Trade.

"All of Canada benefits from Marine Atlantic," said Board Chair Derek Sullivan. "An investment of \$175 million over two years is inadequate for the long term needs of Canadians."

In the fall, federal Auditor General Sheila Fraser said that government should spend as much as \$1.6 billion on fleet renewal and onshore infrastructure.

"It is time the federal government recognized Marine Atlantic for what it is, and what it isn't," said Mr. Sullivan. "It is a trade corridor that benefits mainland companies in bringing goods to a captive, \$10 billion retail and wholesale market. It is a national economic issue. It is not a regional transportation issue. It is not a drain on Canadian resources. In fact, it contributes to Canada, not just this province. That is not understood federally."

The Board of Trade has been advocating for investments in Marine Atlantic. The Board recognizes that Marine Atlantic is an on-going national economic enabler rather than a transportation or infrastructure problem. By investing in Marine Atlantic, opportunities are created on the mainland of Canada, and the Board would welcome recognition and action that supports this reality.

"If people in Ontario and Quebec and other provinces and territories start realizing what Marine Atlantic means to their business, and start telling their federal representatives those stories, then we will always have a strong trade corridor into this market," said Mr. Sullivan. "It is a different way of looking at a problem and will require some minds to change, but we are advocating in this way so that a perpetual challenge can be addressed with a sustainable solution. Marine Atlantic matters to Canada, not just Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. It's that simple."

The Board has been active in corresponding with federal politicians, has met and conveyed this message to Members of Parliament in all national parties on a number of occasions, and has enlisted the support of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, getting unanimous approval of a resolution to advance the needs of Marine Atlantic's service on this basis. The Board of Trade reiterates its call on the federal government to quantify the impacts of Marine Atlantic on mainland businesses and use this information in their economic policy and decision-making.

The St. John's Board of Trade is a non-partisan, business advocacy organization that is the principal voice of business for over 750 members in the St. John's area. Its mission is to improve the local business climate, enhancing its members' ability to do business through advocacy and member services.

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