



HALIFAX PORT DAYS

Panelists promote 'Atlantica'

Puts Atlantic Canada, part of Eastern Canada into one economic zone with

By TOM PETERS

HALIFAX – Atlantic Canadians need a lesson in mental geography to realize where they really are in the world, says the president of the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies.

Brian Lee Crowley has been promoting the 'Atlantica' concept for a number of years. It puts Atlantic Canada and parts of Eastern Canada into one economic zone with regions of New England. He says it is a region that must work together in every respect in order to prosper in the future global economy.

"More and more I think Atlantic Canada is an outdated concept. In fact, if we stay in our minds where we are in Atlantic Canada, we are going to continue on the road of genteel decline," Mr. Crowley said during an interview at Halifax Port Days.

"(We have to) get our heads around the notion that where we are is actually Atlantica and that we are inextricably bound up with this bi-national region, that the people in Maine are just as important to our economic future as the people in Ontario and the people in upstate New York see their economic future linked to us."

Mr. Crowley was the plenary speaker on the topic 'Atlantica and the Port of Halifax: How the Port of Halifax is a Key Intermodal Connection to the Atlantic Region.' He was joined by the three-member panel of Jonathan Daniels, president and chief executive officer of Eastern Maine Development Corporation; Timothy Woodcock, with the law firm of Eaton Peabody in Bangor, Maine; and Neville Gilfoy, president of Progress Corp., a pub-



Photos: Steve Farmer Photography

Speakers at the 'Atlantica and the Port of Halifax' panel session.

lishing company in Halifax.

In an address to Port Days delegates, Mr. Crowley said that to be connected to the global network, you have to be a destination or on the route to a destination. Halifax, which is seen as the deepwater port for Atlantica, is well situated to be on the route to a destination or destinations for imports and exports moving through Eastern North America.

Atlantica, Mr. Crowley says, is at the intersection of three powerful trade relationships – NAFTA, EU-NAFTA and the Suez Express.

"Almost the totality of Asian shipping to North America used to cross the Pacific to West Coast ports," he said. "But increasingly shipping des-

tinued for the East Coast and neighbouring destinations is borrowing the so-called Suez Express route. As a result, the East Coast has become the Pacific Rim."

Halifax is well suited to handle the new generation of large container vessels. The port is also geographically a good fit for Atlantica, especially those areas in the U.S. that do not feel connected to major U.S. East Coast ports.

"New England is a cultural concept. It is not an economic concept, and the fortunes of the northern part of New England are not tied to Boston," Mr. Woodcock said. "Boston is not powerful enough to power those more northerly regions, so they have to look elsewhere."

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In addition to the Port of Halifax being Atlantica's potential link to the global market, an east-to-west transportation corridor across the U.S. Northeast could also be a key ingredient to connecting the region to greater prosperity.

A US\$1 million study is being planned to evaluate the sufficiency of multimodal transportation links in the region stemming from Halifax, and that sufficiency is intended to convey the notion that the region needs to be on a comparable competitive footing with other comparable regions in North America, Mr. Woodcock said.

"I think if it (the study) is well done, it becomes the intellectual basis on which policymaking decisions can be made," he said.

One thing that has to be behind the whole Atlantica concept is the political will to make it happen, and Mr. Crowley is convinced that will come.

He said what makes the concept exciting is that if it is successful in plugging into the world trade network, the opportunities for growth are very strong. "Halifax is the only opportunity for Canada on the East Coast of North America to participate in this trade. So if we can present this sole opportunity to capture part of this trade, I think we can make some progress in Ottawa."

The Port of Saint John says it also wants a piece of the action.

Port Days opening reception at
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.