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agenda

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Long term planning

At the recent AGM and conference of the Atlantic Provinces Chambers of Commerce (APCC) in Gander, N.L., two extraordinary things happened to illustrate that the actual physical merging of Atlantica is well underway. At the AGM session, a new board of directors and officers were elected. While the lineup is impressive, the thing to note was who was elected second vice-president: Jonathan Daniels, the president and CEO of the Eastern Maine Development Corporation.

What that means and this is the extraordinary bit is that during the 2007-08 term, Daniels will be president of the APCC. At the conference gala, the newly elected president, Jim Quigley of the Bank of Montreal, announced that during his term he would seek to rebrand the APCC to become the Atlantica Chamber of Commerce (ACC).

Following the AGM, meetings have been set up in Bangor, Me., to unite the executives of the APCC, the Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the Council on Atlantica, and officials from the

completion of the four-lane highway between Edmundston, N.B., and Rivière du Loup, Que.

An additional short-term consideration for the current APCC is the assertive lobbying of the four provincial premiers to operate efficiently and effectively as the Council of Atlantic Premiers. The region's prosperity mission would be much further advanced if the premiers would co-operate instead of just paying lip service. The APCC understands the nearsightedness of the local media and opposition, making it difficult for premiers to even talk about regional co-operation let alone do something about it. However, the federal government counts on our constant bickering and undercutting each other at the negotiating table. We can't get serious about our future with provincial governments that prefer conflict and competition to co-operation.

When northern New England, southeastern Quebec, upstate New York, and Atlantic Canada unite all of their assets, the potential is mind-boggling.

Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce. The goal: to discuss the BRCC becoming a member of the future ACC.

By providing an official forum for businesses to come together and start enhancing their balance sheets, the real purpose behind Atlantica becomes clear. There are hundreds of companies on both sides of the Canada U.S. border already doing business in each others' country. This number only will grow, especially once the ACC's mandate is put into place. This includes the completion of the four-lane highway between Saint John and St. Stephen, N.B.; the completion of the four-lane bridge with the speed pass at the St. Stephen/Calais border crossing; and the

APCC's new executive team and board of directors is a dynamic group of people with broad networks of contacts and influence. What's exciting is the focus and energy they're bringing to the Atlantica concept.

Combining efforts with the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, the APCC Innovation Council, and countless other groups, organizations, and individuals, the new ACC will be a force for change, growth, and opportunity.

Jim Quigley is a strong leader, not unlike his predecessor, Dianne Kelderman. I don't doubt that at next year's AGM in Saint John, N.B., there will be a new ACC with Jonathan Daniels as its incoming president. Things can only get better. Be a part of it.



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