

**Public Policy Forum Testimonial Dinner
April 22, 2004, Toronto
Address by Allan C. Shaw, C.M.**

Good evening.

Such an introduction reminds me that any of my accomplishments have been the result of great collaborations – my family, wife, Leslie, and our daughters, Gabrielle and Sarah. The terrific team we've built at The Shaw Group. All the talented people with whom I work on volunteer and corporate boards.

Thank you. It is indeed a great honour to be chosen by the Public Policy Forum to join the distinguished ranks who have received this award—my colleagues tonight and all those from previous years.

I have chosen a topic close to my heart—Atlantic Canada.

I wonder if the founding fathers of our country had looked more critically at its geography and had done a proper business plan, whether they would have been so set on the idea of confederation. William Lyon Mackenzie nailed the situation when he said: “If some countries have too much history, we have too much geography.”

I worry that the Atlantic region is becoming increasingly irrelevant in Canada.

And I want to talk for a couple of minutes about the Atlantic Canada I suspect many of you don't know. The Atlantic Canada that I seldom hear reflected in the media by politicians or bureaucrats.

The region I know as a businessman is not the quaint paradise of lobster pots, whales and fiddlers you see on our tourism ads. Yes, that is a part of who we

are—and we're very appreciative of the visitors these old-time traditions and values attract. But there is another Atlantic Canada that is just as vibrant.

Fact: We educate a lot of Canada's young people. Between 25 and 40% of the enrollment in our universities comes from outside the region. I'm sure parents in Ontario don't send their children to us for the beautiful beaches. And our fees are certainly not the incentive.

For the answer, check out Macleans' annual survey. St. Francis Xavier, Mount Allison, Acadia—nearly always the top three in the rankings. Small universities with top quality education. A number of you are probably among their long lists of notable alumni.

Fact. *Scientist* magazine recently ranked Dalhousie University as number one in the world outside the U.S. as a place to conduct a research career.

I wonder if any of you have heard of The Brain Repair Centre. It's the creation of a talented and determined Bolivian-born neurosurgeon. Dr. Ivar Mendez pioneers revolutionary techniques for treating devastating neurological diseases such as Parkinson's. He turned down lucrative offers to locate in several major centres in the States because he liked the attitude and the spirit he found in Atlantic Canada.

And he's succeeding. The Brain Repair Centre's neuroimaging research lab is already an international leader. Their neurotransplantation program is the only one in Canada and one of only four worldwide.

The rest of Canada hears about our small communities becoming unsustainable. But do you hear about a company like Ocean Nutrition Canada which is probably the world's leading researcher and manufacturer of marine products like omega-3

oils. Their main plant is in Mulgrave—a rural village that used to have a sustainable fishery.

Some of you may be familiar with the Manning Innovation Awards? It's an annual competition to identify great ideas that have been successfully commercialized. Last year, in a highly competitive field of over 80 entries from across the country, all four winners came from Atlantic Canada. The grand prize went to Nancy Mathis —a brilliant young Fredericton chemical engineer and entrepreneur and a UPEI and UNB grad.

Let's see...what else have we contributed to the nation? Some great musicians certainly. Sarah MacLaughlan...Natalie and Ashley... Sloan...The Rankins...just a few whose names might be familiar.

Michael Moore's Oscar-winning movie *Bowling for Columbine* was made because the Donovan brothers at Salter Street films believed it was an important story and took a big risk.

The gang at *This Hour has 22 Minutes* always make us laugh as they skewer us with our national absurdities.

And would it be rubbing salt in the wounds to point out that Nova Scotia has recently swept the rest of Canada out of the curling rink?

But to be serious again—consider the sector we're all here tonight to celebrate. Canada's public policy institutions are not always known for their longevity. Many today also bear a decidedly partisanship imprint. Then there's APEC.

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. It has remained effective because it has always worked diligently and collaboratively to stay non-partisan. It conducts relevant research and presents a

balanced and representative regional voice to government. Fifty years of forging consensus among a group of provinces—on shoestring resources—an achievement that deserves acknowledgement, don't you think?

The bottom line is that the challenges of our region are often very similar to those in other parts of Canada. We're working hard to overcome the problems ourselves. For the most part, our provincial governments are realistic about what can be supported and which aspects of our heritage have a hope of surviving.

But our governments will need both the authority and equal access to national resources to meet the challenge of change. We still encounter significant challenges in securing the investment in research and development we need. Financial capital and research infrastructure need to catch up with the reality.

What would I like you to take home tonight? Just the idea that Atlantic Canada is worth the effort to look beyond the stereotype. Small is not necessarily backward. Small is not automatically weak. But small does have to work harder to be noticed—and to be considered relevant.

Atlantic Canada has played an important role in our country's history—quaint traditions, controversy, political squabbles and all. Regions matter. Canada is a sum of its parts. Stronger regions will build a stronger country. Unleashing the potential of Atlantic Canada will build a stronger national economy. We can and will add value to Canada's future. Organizations such as the Public Policy Forum will play an important role in helping us to realize all that untapped potential.

Thank you.