



**MAXIMIZING RESOURCES TO BECOMING EXPORT READY IN ATLANTIC CANADA**

**Taste of Nova Scotia**

*for the*

**Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry**

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Moncton NB**



## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES OF TASTE OF NOVA SCOTIA**

Taste of Nova Scotia is a non-profit association of 184 food and beverage producers, processors and restaurant members who ensure quality standards and dedication to Nova Scotia is the centrepiece of their business models. The key mandate of the Association is to assist in the growth of our members' businesses. This mandate is achieved by focusing on sourcing and participating in marketing initiatives largely outside of Nova Scotia as well as product development in Nova Scotia to attract visitors. All initiatives are in joint partnership with our members. Other key strategic initiatives include:

- Lead in having Nova Scotia recognized globally as a culinary destination
- Reinforce and strengthen the Taste of Nova Scotia brand, locally, nationally and internationally.
- Ensure quality standards program for producers, processors and restaurants is assessed and monitored on a ongoing basis
- Encouraging and facilitating the opportunities for members to purchase and support other member businesses

Taste of Nova Scotia works with over 70 Nova Scotia food producers who pay a \$500- \$2,000+ membership fee to be a part of the association. Producers from Clearwater to Valley Flax Flour (a Nova Scotia owned company producing gluten free flour products) to Benjamin Bridge Wineries who see a membership in Taste of Nova Scotia as one of the cornerstones of their business development program. In 2016 alone the association saw a 20% rise in membership during a challenging economic time for Atlantic Canada businesses. Additionally members cannot apply for membership, they must qualify for membership based on their above industry quality standards and adherence to purchase and supporting Nova Scotia products and businesses. Taste of Nova Scotia is not a buy local awareness program – it is an economic development program for the Nova Scotia food, agri-food and seafood sector.

Taste of Nova Scotia generates its operating funds through membership fees, sales of gift baskets, provincial and federal government support, 3<sup>rd</sup> party event management fees and project proponent fees. Basically the association generates all of its own administration funding requirements and uses government support to fund marketing activities to build the businesses of the 184 members. Our members contribute \$25 million in tax revenues to the Nova Scotia economy.

The Taste of Nova Scotia model is unique in Canada and very few agencies around the world compare to Taste of Nova Scotia. This information is referenced through numerous conversations with senior trade commissioners throughout Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The Taste model is built on Taste of Nova Scotia being a hub facilitating and creating economic opportunities for Nova Scotia companies by working daily with industry, industry associations, government stakeholders, business partners. It has been proven for 27 years this partnership model is an efficient, effective economic vehicle to successfully grow the business of Nova Scotia companies in food, seafood and agri-food sector. In the last decade Taste has only lost 2 members to their businesses no longer being viable.

(2 minutes 30 seconds)



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On the second day of these hearings the committee by now has heard from many different groups and a myriad of statistics. Going forward this presentation will focus on a top level review of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to assist the committee in its study on international market access priorities for the Canadian agricultural and agri-food sector. This SWOT review has been developed in conjunction with Taste members through solicitation of feedback from industry participants in over 15 international business building initiatives in addition to one on one meetings with Taste membership.

### **SWOT review of the current international market access programs**

#### *Strengths*

- Opportunity to provide feedback through event follow up questionnaires
- Provincial and Federal recognition international market access is important for Canadian businesses to grow and develop
- Federal economic development agencies are working in partnership with provinces to support provincial export objectives

#### *Weaknesses*

- A multitude of publicly funded international market access programs available make it overwhelming for exporters to determine which program suits them best
- Buy local programs creating a false sense of security but the perception of international market access programs seem to be designed for large companies only
- Product development and implementation processes are laborious for SME's who just want "to sell product".

#### *Opportunities*

- 1 central database of both Federal and Provincial programs to support international market access for SME's. This database updated daily for relevance.
- The creation of key industry initiatives in international market access programs including:
  - o Definition on the roles each public partner will undertake to assist the international market access for Canadian companies
  - o Collaboration with public partners and industry associations for more action oriented initiatives
  - o Ensure there is a "pay to play" model which is fair and equitable for all companies - companies need skin in the game to appreciate the opportunities
- View interprovincial trade as an "export" opportunity for each province.



- Less education and more training for industry on how to create international market access opportunities

### *Threats*

- Food, Agri-food and Seafood aren't "sexy" enough for public spending; Atlantic Canada seafood is a worldwide best in class and should not be discounted for other emerging yet to be proven industries;
- Larger Canadian companies lobby for less public support as they are able to afford international market access initiatives on their own; these large Canadian companies see public support as an inhabitation to free market competition.
- Investment capital is difficult to attain for smaller entities but easier for large companies to secure. This will stymie the development of innovation in small business.

### *Summary*

Through the two days of witnesses for the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry it is without a doubt many recommendations, ideas, issues and opportunities have been raised. Most of these would be similar across Canada. Going forward there is one key message it is hoped that was conveyed. The industry in the Agriculture and Forestry sector are passionate and dedicated to the building of exports. Most companies understand moving product outside their provincial border is the key to sustainability. This industry looks to public partners who are focused, knowledgeable and understand their role in international market access. When focused there is maximum output value from each initiative including less resources spent dissecting public programs and a clearer path to a international market access strategies.

Thank-you for the opportunity to express the top line views of Taste of Nova Scotia in regards to one of the most important export industries in Canada.

(6.5 minutes)