

CINDY WILSON/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Maine Governor John Baldacci, left, and Premier Shawn Graham shake hands Wednesday during the announcement of a Northeast Energy Corridor announcement in Saint John.

THE ENERGY OF GOALS SHARED



MARTY KLINKENBERG

IN SAINT JOHN

Friends who hope one day soon to climb Mount Katahdin together, Shawn Graham and John Baldacci sat Wednesday at the front of a conference room in Saint John after reaching a different peak.

With the flags of two countries behind them and the crowd before them at the Delta Hotel so large that it spilled into the hallway, the premier of New Brunswick and governor of Maine said they hope to fuel their reeling economies by developing an energy corridor through the Maritimes and New England.

The project would create thousands of jobs and attract billions of dollars in investments and is being embraced on both sides of the border, with the exception of a familiar few naysayers with environmental concerns.

"Maine and New Brunswick share a long border and a long history and we have an opportunity to advance toward a stronger economic future and greater prosperity," Baldacci said. "Together, we can reach our shared goals."

Local business and civic leaders joined representatives from Emera, NB Power, Repsol and Irving Oil to welcome the premier and governor, who were joined at the announcement by Energy Minister Jack Keir and Jeff Matthews, the director of business development at Irving Oil.

Matthews confirmed that his company is exploring the feasibility of constructing a power plant to export up to 1,500 megawatts of electricity to the United States. The facility, which would generate power with wind and natural gas,

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Corridor of power - the proposal

The proposed Northeast Energy Corridor includes several targets:

- First phase of the project expected to generate \$2 billion worth of investment and create thousands of jobs
- 1,200 to 1,500 megawatt transmission line, wind power and a cogeneration natural gas plant would be part of the first phase.
- Canaport LNG site identified as likely location for cogeneration natural gas plant.

Saint John mayor congratulated governor

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relies on the international corridor to distribute products to America's energy-hungry northeast.

"This isn't a typical time to be at a podium making an announcement like this, but these aren't typical times and this isn't a typical region," Matthews said. "As an energy company, we get a buzz out of doing new projects."

In a room packed with so many dignitaries, it would have been easy to overlook people who have long supported such an international corridor. Saint John Mayor Ivan Court, who discussed the idea with Baldacci years ago when Baldacci was a state legislator, sat in the front row and raised his hand at one point to congratulate the governor.

"Long ago, you were a dreamer and a visionary," he said. "Now, you are a realist."


More than a decade ago, Court enjoyed a family dinner with the Baldaccis in Maine and seven years ago introduced a motion to council proclaiming Saint John to be part of an international gateway to America's eastern-most state.

Near the back of the room stood Steve Carson, who has been chief executive offi-

cer of Enterprise Saint John for 14 years.

In 1999, Carson introduced a campaign called Imagine the Possibilities that was designed to get people to think about the future and suggest ways to improve life in the Fundy region.

Using that input, Carson and others

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JEFF MATTHEWS

helped devise a long-term strategy for the community.

"What we heard from people helped us understand the values we shared and we built a plan around that," he said. "We thought that people and ideas were going to be magnets for investments, so we set out to create a community that would attract and retain people.

"It is one thing to attract industry, but that alone is not going to build the community you want."

Enterprise Saint John lobbied for a

medical school in Saint John, worked with the tourism industry to attract more cruise ships and promote the Fundy Trail and rallied behind the local information technology and energy sectors.

Now, the region is beginning to see those efforts come to fruition. The energy corridor will bring more money and jobs, Carson said, but, more importantly, it will bring people here that share the same vision.

"One of the things that has happened is that the community has begun to appreciate what it means," Carson said. "From a community perspective, it allows us to reach our social and cultural goals as well as our economic ones.

"The people that are coming here aren't simply bringing cheques. They share our community values and are bringing solutions and people who volunteer and help us.

"It's not your billions and your electricity molecules that make a difference. It's all about people and relationships"

Marty Klinkenberg is contributing editor of the *Telegraph-Journal*. He can be reached at martyklinkenberg@hotmail.com.
