

**WE
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NOVA
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TOGETHER**

The Halifax Explosion occurred on December 6, 1917, resulting in one of the largest human-made explosions prior to the first atomic bomb. Thousands died, were maimed, and left homeless. As the city began to rebuild, posters with the message **WE SHALL NEVER REBUILD HALIFAX UNLESS EVERYBODY WORKS** were posted in shop windows to motivate citizens. This message resonates today as we work together to flatten the curve to reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Nova Scotia, and the world.

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Poster 'a sign of solidarity' for Nova Scotians

Inkwell Boutique recreates poster that provided hope after the Halifax Explosion



Inkwell Boutique owner Andrea Rahal (right) and her partner, Daniel MacDonald, have re-created a Halifax poster that dates back to 1917. PHOTO CREDIT: Michelle Doucette Photography

BY HEATHER CLARKE

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It all started with a grainy black-and-white photograph of children taken in 1917 or 1918, shortly after the Halifax Explosion.

In the background, an out-of-focus poster was barely legible. It read "We shall never rebuild Halifax unless everybody works" — reminding the city to stick together during restoration efforts. It was Halifax's version of "Keep Calm and Carry On" — the famous 1939 poster designed to raise the morale of the British public in preparation for World War II.

Inkwell Boutique on Brunswick Street created their own letterpressed copy using vintage

wood type, and everyone loved it. The shop began selling copies and soon they were all over the city — including the offices of Mayor Mike Savage and MP Andy Fillmore.

Amidst the COVID-19 worry and panic, Downtown Halifax Business Commission CEO Paul MacKinnon shared a photo of his own copy of the inspirational poster — which isn't about people literally returning to work, but rather pulling together.

He approached Inkwell Boutique owner Andrea Rahal about finding a way to share it, and she suggested creating a second version that could speak to an even wider audience.

"She said 'It isn't just about Halifax — it's about all of Nova Scotia. Wouldn't it be great to put it in the hands of people across the province?'" says MacKinnon. "So we found a

way to do that."

The newly-formed Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition (NSBLEC) has made it possible to include a free copy of the poster in the SaltWire Network's flyer package as a way to remind Nova Scotians to stick together.

Rahal and her graphic designer partner, Daniel MacDonald, modified the poster design to read "We shall never rebuild Nova Scotia unless everybody works together." Small print at the bottom explains the connection to the Halifax Explosion and how the message resonates today "as we work together to flatten the curve to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nova Scotia, and the world."

People looking for a high-quality screen-printed 16x20 archival poster can now pre-order it online

(inkwellboutique.ca). But now that a free copy of Inkwell Boutique's poster is being provided to every household across Nova Scotia that receives flyers through the SaltWire Network, Rahal is hopeful she spots them when she goes on walks around her neighbourhood.

"I hope people put it up in their windows as a sign of solidarity. It would be wonderful to walk around and see it everywhere," says Rahal. "This is our own version of 'Keep Calm and Carry On.' It's what you look for to find your perseverance."



Inkwell Boutique's best-selling letterpressed poster, "We shall never rebuild Halifax unless everybody works," is sold in various sizes on their website (inkwellboutique.ca). They are currently taking pre-orders for the new provincial version. PHOTO CREDIT: Daniel MacDonald

'We're all in it together'

Newly-formed Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition (NSBLEC) working to support business, labour, employees across the province

They're phoning in from their living rooms — often with their pets and kids nearby — but members of the newly-formed COVID-19 Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition (NSBLEC) are working hard to support businesses, labour and employees during this uncertain time.

Meeting three times a week via teleconference to discuss the current status of COVID-19 for the business community, the NSBLEC is serving as a point of contact for government as the business environment changes rapidly. The group also advocates on behalf of Nova Scotians to ensure their questions and concerns are heard.

Patrick Sullivan, President & CEO of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, came up with the idea back on March 15. What started as a Halifax-based initiative with about 20 people was so successful that after about a week, it expanded across the province.

Now the NSBLEC includes more than 165 people who represent more than 15,000 organizations (including businesses, not-for-profits and the public sector) and more than 200,000 workers (including employees, self-employed individuals and the Federation of Labour).

Sullivan says its representatives range from the Cape Breton Partnership to the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce, with many in between — including the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia (RANS), the Centre for Women in Business, the Black Business Initiative, Halifax Stanfield International Airport, Screen Nova Scotian, the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

Three times each week, there's an

official NSBLEC video call with usually 100 participants. They discuss new developments and there's an opportunity for each level of government to provide updates. The group also provides suggestions that are often put into action.

Three weeks ago, the provincial government used part of the call to explain their new rent deferral program. As soon as it was mentioned that businesses would need to have at least five employees to qualify, Sullivan says many people on the call piped up that there should be no such requirement.

"Forty minutes later, while we're all still on the call, the provincial government came back on and said there would no longer be a requirement for businesses to have five employees," Sullivan says. "Policy-making in real time, all because of our immediate feedback."

With new policies and announcements coming in "fast and furious," Rick Allwright, Executive Director of the Yarmouth & Area Chamber of Commerce, agrees the NSBLEC has made it easier to connect with all three levels of government — ensuring he can advocate for local businesses.

"I've really been impressed how open, accessible and flexible the government has been during this time — very willing to receive comments and critiques and make changes on the fly," says Allwright. "I don't believe we have ever seen such a unified voice for Nova Scotia business, and we look forward to continuing to work with this entire group as 'we shall never rebuild Nova Scotia unless everybody works together.'"

Tanya Priske, Executive Director with the Centre for Women



The newly-formed Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition (NSBLEC) includes more than 165 people who represent more than 15,000 organizations — all working together to support business, labour and employees across the province. PHOTO CAPTION: Scott Munn

in Business, says while the COVID-19 pandemic has become known as an unprecedented time, there's also been "unprecedented collaboration, innovation and resilience — especially within the business community."

She says through the NSBLEC's work, the CWB has been able to advocate for and support women business-owners as they access funds and support, pivot to new business models, set their business up online and conduct new market research.

"I am a business owner myself. Our hospitality and real estate business in New Glasgow has been closed for over a month now, but I am hopeful," says Priske. "We're seeing collaborations within our local community, CWB community, and with business owners and organizations across the province through the NSBLEC."

Carla Arsenault, President & CEO of the Cape Breton Partnership, says it's critical for the business community to have access to the same information, in real time, to

ensure their concerns are being heard.

"By participating in the NSBLEC, our organization is able to bring forward issues and concerns from Cape Breton companies, and ensure that the Cape Breton business community is represented at a provincial level," says Arsenault.

While the NSBLEC is focused on how it can best help business owners right now, Downtown Halifax Business Commission CEO Paul MacKinnon says it's also discussing how to best plan for the future when many businesses have experienced revenue drops of 80, 90 or even 100 per cent.

"Even if you can't physically go to stores, you can use their online shops. You can buy gift cards to your favourite restaurant for when it reopens, and you can order dinner from the restaurants offering take-out," says MacKinnon. "Right now, we're trying to help these businesses simply survive. After that, it will be about how to really bring them

back and help them thrive. We're all in it together."

Guest speakers are invited onto the NSBLEC calls periodically. Sullivan says a representative from APEC (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council) estimated that across Atlantic Canada, restaurants and bars alone will lose up to \$800M in sales from April to June.

Once the stay-home order has been lifted and we're all allowed back into the world, Sullivan says we're all going to need to work together to help the province's businesses recover.

Since there won't be any international travel this summer — and, likely, very little cross-country travel — Sullivan says it's going to be up to Nova Scotians to take the place of tourists and spend as many dollars as possible right here at home.

"We need to help the folks who are hurting so they can come back bigger than ever when this is all over."