



Saint John Board of Trade

Making It Happen For Business

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NEWS RELEASE

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OUTSTANDING BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

Saint John, NB – The Saint John Board of Trade has announced the recipients of its 2009 Outstanding Business Achievement Awards. At its 25th awards dinner, **Opera Bistro** was honoured with the award for Emerging Enterprise, and **The DPL Group** accepted the Entrepreneurial Achievement Award. In the Business Excellence category, the award went to **Fundy Region Solid Waste Commission**.

In the Emerging Enterprise category, **Opera Bistro** took top honours. From the beginning in 2005, when Opera Bistro's opening night was featured on the Food Network's *Opening Soon*, it has been Margret Begner's intention to make Opera one of the most interesting restaurants in Atlantic Canada. Margret's innovative ideas and unique marketing approach, combined with Master Chef Axel Begner's European charm and flair for fine regional food, has made Opera an industry leader in Saint John. With six full time and four part time employees, Opera Bistro places human resources as a priority, even bringing two chefs from Germany as part of the Federal Skilled Worker Program to work in the Opera kitchen.

Solid marketing has always been at the heart of Opera Bistro's success. Special signature events developed by Opera Bistro include *Couture Saint John*, a fashion show and spring sample menu co-produced with seven Uptown Saint John businesses, and *Books@theBistro*, an intimate book reading and lunch series in conjunction with Inprint Bookstore. Opera Bistro is constantly seeking innovation in all aspects of the business from creation of new ideas to the advent of new processes and embracing of new technologies. Opera Bistro was the first restaurant in New Brunswick to send out 'tweets' of its daily menu specials.

Margret and Axel have encouraged their colleagues in the tourism and hospitality sectors to support local event organizers to ensure that Saint John puts its best face forward to visitors. Margret sits on the planning committee for Hospitality Saint John's Tourism Awards and Tourism Awareness Week and has been active in planning new tourism products such as Chop Chop Restaurant Week involving 22 chefs from uptown restaurants.

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With New Brunswick art on the walls, locally produced ingredients highlighted on the menu, national and international recognition for their food and ambiance, and growing sales even in a bad economy, Opera Bistro is at the centre of life in Saint John.

The DPL Group has been in business since 1974, specializing in the telecom and engineering industry, but when the engineering division was sold in early 2004, the company downsized from 85 employees to four, two of whom were the owners. At first, the focus of their ongoing research and development was on vehicle tracking devices for heavy equipment. DPL's vehicle tracking device allowed customers to retrieve information such as idle times, oil changes, speed alarms and exact location. One of the features of the vehicle tracking device was its ability to work as an anti-theft unit, monitoring the equipment so that an employee cannot use it outside of certain hours, or enabling geofencing to prevent its removal from certain locations.

During this development process, the attempted theft of an ATM machine belonging to one of the owners turned them in the direction of providing tracking and anti-theft units for ATM machines. After much discussion with ATM owners, manufacturers and processors, DPL discovered that what customers really wanted was to lessen their dependence on expensive commercial landlines for monitoring their machines. This completely changed the company's direction and resulted in the development of a wireless unit that allows for over-the-air transactions, changes, updates and enhancements, and redundancy to the internet should cellular service go down.

In the past five years DPL has grown from four to 14 employees, seven of whom work in the Saint John office. Sales take place out of the main office but, with 60% of sales in the U.S., the company warehouses bulk ATM units in Maine and bulk vehicle tracking units in California so U.S. customers do not experience delays and extra fees through customs. Over the next several years, DPL hopes to promote new uses for its wireless units and to roll out its products beyond North America into countries where wireless technology is the future.

Since its inception in 1995, the **Fundy Region Solid Waste Commission** has demonstrated itself to be a dynamic member of the community and a leader in environmental excellence. The Commission is a not-for-profit partnership of Fundy Region municipalities and Local Service Districts. As a not-for-profit organization, the Commission's main source of revenue is from garbage tipping fees. However, the Commission considers the growth of its diversion programs as its main measure of success. The organization has been able to decrease tipping fees for garbage and compost while expanding hours of service and new programs.

As a leader in the province in waste diversion, the Commission launched the Blue Bin Recycling program in 1999. It was soon followed in 2001 by the Green Cart Compost program which is the only program in the province that produces Grade A finished compost. In 2006 the Household Hazardous Waste facility opened, followed by the Computer Recycling program in 2008.

The Commission is an active member in the community. More than 3,000 students visit the on-site Interpretive Centre annually. It participates in Harbour Passage Gardening Party, Saint John Dragon Boat, ACAP Saint John's Green Network and Beach Sweep, and is a partner with Habitat for Humanity's ReStore. In 2009 the Urban Garden Project resulted in 300 lbs of vegetables donated to Romero House.

This year the Commission received \$440,000 from the Building Canada Fund for the on-site Material Recovery Facility, resulting in an efficient recycling program that has simplified recycling for residents and has positioned the program to be adaptable for future growth.

As well, the Landfill Gas Utilization Project was awarded \$1.75 million from the Climate Action Fund. This will eliminate 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide and produce enough energy to power 800 homes. The electricity will be used on site to further reduce the cost of services and additional power will be fed to the grid.

Moving forward, the Commission will continue to build on its reputation of driving down costs, expanding diversion, protecting the environment and reducing per capita Greenhouse Gases.

This year's recipient of the "Young Entrepreneur" award is **Jamie Galbraith, owner of Galbraith Piano Services**. This award recognizes young business leaders (30 years and under) just beginning to make their mark.

The Board of Trade presented this evening for the seventh year "The Big Heart" Award. The recipient of this award is **Key Industries**.

Also this evening, Board of Trade Chair, Kathryn Craig presented **Gerry Pond** with the Chair's Award. This marks the sixteenth year in which a deserving individual or organization has been selected by the Board's Chairperson for their achievements within, and contributions to, the community.

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