

A conversation with Henry Demone, Chairman, High Liner Foods

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As many Business Voice readers are aware, Henry Demone has an impressive career spanning more than 35 years, transforming a struggling business into North America's leading value-added seafood supplier. In light of this, he is well-versed in making tough decisions and conquering adversity with a positive attitude.

A native of Lunenburg, Demone lives and breathes all things ocean related, something that is evident in his business endeavours and his personal interests. He acknowledges that this profound connection to the ocean is a large part of why he loves Nova Scotia.

Having successfully combined his love of business and the ocean, Henry Demone continues to sing the praises of Nova Scotia as a great hub for business and a place that offers a great quality of life.

He chatted with NATIONAL's Jacqui Dean to speak about his optimism for the future of Nova Scotia.

JD: *In your mind, what can we do to create more optimism for the future of Nova Scotia?*

HD: It's important that people have a can-do attitude. How a person does in life or business depends on their attitude. It's not a question of whether or not they will have challenges and difficulties in life because every business does and every person does. It's a question of how they deal with those challenges and difficulties when they arise. Attitude is not everything but a positive and can-do attitude is a very important ingredient to success.

JD: *There has been a lot of enthusiasm in the province around ocean research. Given that your business is directly tied to this, what are you most excited about going forward?*

HD: If you look at the Halifax area, there is a lot of expertise in terms of businesses, education institutions and individual scientists. We have a huge body of knowledge here and what I see happening now are huge efforts to create more economic activity from that immense body of knowledge. That bodes well for the province's future.

JD: *Can you talk about Nova Scotia's progress over the past five years?*

HD: There's a lot of energy and a great number of interesting start-ups in the Halifax area. We punch above our weight in terms of start-up businesses and there have been a number of successes. The university sector has been particularly dynamic; the local demographics force the universities to attract students from other parts of the world and that's had some good benefits. I think that there have been some great economic success stories, Clearwater and High Liner

Foods are great examples of this. Twenty years ago, we were struggling and now we are recognised leaders on a global scale.

JD: *Do you have some real life examples of successful businesses that have stood out for you in Nova Scotia?*

HD: There's a number of success stories but if you look at the group of companies that are owned by Joe Shannon and his family, they are a little bit under the radar but there are many different companies and businesses included under that group and they have grown successfully for many years and created a great business. You can say the same thing about Eastlink and Oxford Frozen foods, the companies under the ownership of John Bragg and his family.

We have our success stories but we should have more.

JD: *You come from Lunenburg, what unique perspective do you think coming from a rural community offered to you in business?*

HD: It's interesting because even though I grew up in Lunenburg, a very small community, it always had an outward looking approach to business and to the world. And that's probably because if you are in the seafood business, especially earlier on, you are going to be an exporter. There was always an attitude to look for new markets and opportunities. That was very helpful for me in a number of ways. And then of course, the connection to the ocean and the connection to the seafood industry. These things now are a part of my life story.

JD: *What advice would you give to a younger generation trying to make a life here in Nova Scotia?*

HD: I think you can combine business and career success with a high quality of life.

I'd like to make the distinction between "staying in Nova Scotia" and "being based in Nova Scotia". I think Nova Scotia is a great place from which to be based. If you're running a business here you're going to be travelling, you're going to be going to Boston, New York and Chicago, wherever business takes you, maybe even Europe or Asia. It's important for people to think about connecting with the opportunities around us in other markets.

JD: *What advice would you give to someone about overcoming adversity in business in Nova Scotia?*

HD: A couple of things; you can't lament and feel sorry for yourself for too long. That's a phase that everybody goes through but there comes a point when you need to accept reality and say, this is where I am today, where do I need to be going forward?

It's very important for your own psychological wellbeing to think and focus on one day at a time. You might be in a business that takes several years to turn around and if you are looking at that point two or three years in the future, you may get discouraged when you go to the office every day.

Live in the moment and focus on one day at a time. That way you can be happy with what you achieved that day and feel good about yourself, knowing that there's still many days in front of you before you have achieved your medium and long term goals.

JD: *What makes you feel hopeful about the future of Nova Scotia?*

HD: The One Nova Scotia Commission identified seven key goals for the future, including immigration, innovation, education etc. Are we hitting every goal? No. But are we moving in the right direction, you bet!

There's a lot still left to do but people are moving forward towards a very specific defined set of goals. Nova Scotia is not without its challenges but it's moving in the right direction to a brighter future.

Jacqui Dean is a Coordinator at NATIONAL with a special interest in content strategy, social media marketing and digital automation. Originally from Adelaide in Australia, Jacqui now calls Halifax her home and considers herself an "Australian Nova Scotian".

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