

There's give and take when you volunteer

The chair of the Halifax Canada Games Committee encourages business people to reach out

By Lynne Wells

"It's very important for people to share the skills or talents they have developed over the years to help benefit community organizations," says Jean-Paul Deveau, president of Acadian Seaplants Limited and chair of the Halifax 2011 Canada Winter Games Host Society.

"You should put your skills to good use," he says. "Every volunteer, no matter what their background, brings expertise to the table. It's a great opportunity to learn from others and to accomplish great things for the community.

"Even though you're donating your time and talent, you will get back so much more. One of the things you don't realize is how much you will grow and learn as a volunteer. I never realized how much I would learn from getting involved. It's been a wonderful and fulfilling experience."

As president of the ever-growing bio-tech company (more than 300 employees in eight countries, with exports to 70 countries) specializing in manufacturing, cultivating and processing marine-plant products, Deveau doesn't have a lot of room in his schedule, but he's carving out the time to lead more than 75 staff and 5,000 volunteers for the Canada Games.

"I agreed to chair the 2011 Canada Winter Games because it offered an opportunity for me to use my skills to make a difference and to help our community host a very substantial event," Deveau says. "It's a very serious commitment and a once in a lifetime opportunity. Not only will HRM be ready to host a very successful

event, we will have built a lasting legacy of sport infrastructure and a community ready to host larger and more complex events for our community and its residents. I can't think of a better reason than that."

The Nova Scotia games are expected to pump about \$90 million into the local economy and leave behind \$15 million in sporting infrastructure improvements and a new \$40 million training facility and recreation complex in Halifax.

Approximately 3,500 high performance athletes, coaches and managers from across Canada will come to Halifax to participate in 20 sport competitions over an 18-day period in February 2011. The games will also showcase an impressive arts and cultural exposition with participants from across Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

"One of my strongest characteristics is that I'm a good multi-tasker," Deveau says. "For some reason I'm able to manage multiple issues coming from all directions and not feel overloaded. It also helps that I'm not averse to working long hours. I enjoy working hard and I like a good challenge."

It also helps, he adds, to know that Acadian Seaplants and his family totally support his involvement in the games.

"We have an excellent group of talented people in the company who are willing and more than capable of filling any gaps while I'm away. Everyone in my family volunteers. It's a family tradition. I grew up in a home where my parents were very involved in volunteer work."

