



# Local ports of call

*Sheet Harbour remains the commercial centre of the Eastern Shore*

Nova Scotia's winding coastlines and busy ports continue to set it apart as a world-class location to do business. The waters surrounding three sides of the province not only appeal to beach-goers and tourists but also to importers and exporters. Exporting from Nova Scotia, shippers save an entire day of sailing when entering major markets in northern Europe, while vessels coming from Asia or India from the Suez Canal are welcomed by Nova Scotia as their first inbound port.

Stretching across part of the eastern side of the province's 7,600-kilometre coastline is Sheet Harbour, a community built on a history of forestry, fishing, tourism, and local commerce. Sheet Harbour has remained the commercial centre of the Eastern Shore since it was first settled in 1784. Its natural deep harbour was a key selling feature from the early beginnings of shipping lumber and pulp. Sheet Harbour continues to operate as a local port, shipping forest products from the Musquodoboit Valley and the industrial Pictou County area during the winter.

Sheet Harbour has long sustained stable daily activities, but the real business potential of any port is best measured by the companies that continue operations year after year. For more than a decade, Northern Fibre Terminal Inc. and Shaw & Shaw Ltd. have been using Sheet Harbour as a strategic shipping port.

Led by many tradespeople from the area, Northern Fibre Terminal ([www.nfti.ns.ca](http://www.nfti.ns.ca)) operates a state-of-the-art terminal at the port, which includes a scale and unloading facilities for trucks delivering roundwood and chips. The company also runs a debarker, chipper, storage facility, laboratory for monitoring chip quality, and conveyor system for loading chips dockside.

"Operating out of the Sheet Harbour port is one way we've established our presence there, but we've also made it our priority to be an engaged community player," says Tony Mee, the president of Great



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Northern Timber, which owns and operates Northern Fibre Terminal. "So how do we define community engagement? It means we hire local and we buy local—anything we can do to give back to the community and show our commitment."

The port has many competitive features, including a pool of skilled workers and cost and capacity. In 1987 the area added to its appeal with the construction of the 52-hectare Sheet Harbour Industrial Park. Side by side, the port and park provide companies with a venue for manufacturing, processing, and transportation facilities. In particular, the industrial park services the offshore energy project on Sable Island, one of the largest known natural gas deposits in Nova Scotia.

In 1997 Shaw & Shaw ([www.shawgrouppltd.com](http://www.shawgrouppltd.com)), formed by The Shaw Group Ltd. of Halifax and Shaw Pipe Protection Ltd. of Calgary, began operating from the Port of Sheet Harbour. At the time, the company used the port for its anti-corrosion and concrete weight-coating applications for the offshore oil and gas industry, but the port's advantages quickly led to more business uses and opportunities.

From then until now, the deep ice-free

harbour and sound infrastructure, and its proximity to the airport, Halifax, and the centre of offshore activity, have helped propel Sheet Harbour as a location of choice for Shaw & Shaw's operations. In fact, the company has used this region as its base of coating operations for three successful offshore operations for Exxon Mobil and Encana, says Dan Gibson, Shaw & Shaw's vice-president of business development. "The port has strong employee relations, solid management and ownership, skilled local suppliers, and a very supportive community," he says. "It has been an excellent place to do business."

The benefits have flowed both ways. In addition to helping Shaw & Shaw land lucrative offshore deals, Gibson says the local community, and the province as a whole, have reaped rewards. "Securing offshore work in Nova Scotia has resulted in many benefits, including the transfer of world-class technology, expertise, and enhanced health, safety, and environmental standards to Nova Scotia industries and businesses."

— MARY-ELEANOR WALKER

For more information about ports and industrial parks in Nova Scotia, visit <http://nsbi.ca/property>.