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Abstract

**Ports and Shipping
Challenges and Opportunities for Atlantic Canada Ports**

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With its relatively sparse population and immense distances between major urban centers, Canada depends on efficient transportation to support national and international supply chains. Canada's economy depends on ports as key gateways underpinning the federal government's ambitious international trade strategy. Major Canadian ports, including Atlantic Canada facilities have evolved into some of the world's most efficient facilities as they strive to meet the challenges of a dynamic global economy and mounting competition from their U.S. counterparts. Canada Port Authorities (CPA) in Atlantic Canada and in the rest of the country handle over \$400 billion worth of goods each year with trading partners in more than 170 countries.

This paper provides an overview of the many challenges and opportunities facing Canadian ports in general and Atlantic Canada specifically, including:ⁱ

- responding to the pressures of dynamic and growing international trade,
- reinforcing Canada's gateways and trade corridors strategy, including the Atlantic Gateway,
- considering border challenges, including the bi-national Beyond the Border initiative,
- reflecting on CPAs duty to consult First Nations,
- ensuring port infrastructure meets tomorrow's trade demands;
- developing port infrastructure financing including potential asset recycling and the Canada Infrastructure Bank,
- protecting the marine environment,

- ensuring effective relations with local communities, and
- meeting these challenges through potential reform of port governance and structure.

Productive ports are trade-enablers and key to Canada's economic growth. CPAs have evolved through several waves of port reform to reach their current commercialized status.ⁱⁱ Are CPAs on the cusp of change as the government contemplates a fourth wave of port reform?

To support future trade, CPAs need expanded infrastructure, improved cargo-handling systems and a more commercially oriented governance structure. The federal government has challenges in funding its ambitious transportation infrastructure agenda. Will it look to its major ports to provide infrastructure funding through asset recycling?ⁱⁱⁱ Will potential port asset recycling lead to CPA privatization? Or, will a more moderate approach of CPA corporatization be undertaken? These and other key policy questions currently await government policy decisions.^{iv}

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ⁱ Ircha, M.C. (2017), "Canadian Ports Policy: An Evolutionary Approach", chapter 11 in Beresford, A. and Pettit, S. (eds), *Ports Policy and Management*, Kogan Page, London UK.

ⁱⁱ Brooks, M. (2016), "A new direction or stay the course? Canada's port-specific challenges resulting from the port reform program of the 1990s", *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, Vol. 22 (March 2017), pp. 161-170.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ircha, M.C. (2016), "Asset Recycling *vis a vis* Canadian Port Authorities", Association of Canadian Port Authorities, Ottawa.

^{iv} Ircha, M.C. (2016), "Canada's Ports: A Vision for the 21st Century - The integral role ports can play in implementing the Minister of Transport's long-term vision for Canada's transportation system", White Paper for Minister of Transport, Association of Canadian Port Authorities, Ottawa.