

'Tons of Work'

D.F. Barnes fabrication company expanding in anticipation of Hebron

By John Rieti

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Jerry Byrne's voice races with excitement as he talks about the Hebron deal, the fabrication contracts it holds for his company, and the hundreds of Newfoundlanders he plans to bring home to get the work done. "

"To use the word literally, there will be tons and tons of work for a company like D.F. Barnes, everything from rails to hatches to watertight doors." Byrne tells *The Independent*.

"We have a three-year window, we can actually do some really good planning, make the right kind of contacts and make sure we have our competitive strategies in place so that we can compete around the world."

"In the last five years D.F. Barnes, a local metal fabrication company, has grown from 10 employees to 400, and has won major international contracts. Byrne attributes the success to quality and timely production and strong communication with major multinational companies.

He says the business climate in Newfoundland has improved dramatically with the Hebron deal and local companies should look for networking opportunities as more large companies move into the province.

Minutes into the interview, Byrne has to take a call, but he is soon back with more good news to announce – another contract.

Byrne predicts more work to come in the three years before Hebron gets underway, specifically to do with White Rose extension and the south Hibernia project.

"The timing is really good... we will benefit from those and be able to build up and ramp up for Hebron in a sensible way," says Byrne.

He says a key part of his planning will be bringing home Newfoundlanders with skilled trades.

"We've got a sizeable workforce in Alberta that we hope to be able to bring home," says Byrne, whose company currently has 200 workers out west.

"They're all Newfoundlanders, they're all looking to come home and we're looking to bring them home, so it works out for everyone."

Byrne says his company is also hiring more engineers and technicians than ever, necessary to be successful in the wide array of contracts he hopes to win. He's hoping for both steel working contracts and a chance to tie in his company's work with international companies making rigging parts like compressors and control modules.

"We've got a very well-trained workforce here in Newfoundland with a lot of experience. We bring a lot to the table, we can compete with the best in the world there's no doubt in my mind."

Despite the vague details of the memorandum of understanding signed by the provincial government, Byrne says the Hibernia project is a good guide to what work needs to be done, and how much money the project should bring in.

He says more construction will be done in Newfoundland than was the case with Hibernia, which has most of its top side components build in Europe. As chair of the Newfoundland Ocean

Industries Association, Byrne says his isn't the only company positioned to win contracts, but finding a place to build could become a problem.

"I think we will max out our facilities. I think out problem in the future, especially by the time Hebron comes on stream, will be a stress on the facilities," he says.

"There's a great opportunity for Newfoundland companies to start building capacity."

D.F. Barnes has built a plant on Logy Bay Road in St. John's and Byrne says they will continue to invest in infrastructure that can be used for the Hebron project.