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Irving Oil proposes building a second oil refinery in New Brunswick's Port City, an estimated \$7-billion project that could employ 5,000 people during construction and more than 1,000 people long-term.

Saint John: city positions itself as energy hub

The job prospects Saint John, N.B., has in store are of historic proportions.

With the port city positioning itself as the energy hub for the northeastern seaboard, jobs will be plentiful over the coming months and years for people dreaming of coming back east.

No doubt the biggest project coming down the pipe in Saint John is Irving Oil Ltd.'s proposed second refinery – an estimated \$7-billion venture. The refinery would produce more than 300,000 barrels a day and employ 5,000 people during construction and more than 1,000 long term. The mega-project's construction would begin in two year's time with operations to get under way in 2012.

The refinery, along with the planned liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal (also an Irving project) and the installation of an Emera pipeline, will result in unprecedented growth.

From the proposed refinery project alone, economic spin-offs are expected to be in the \$17-million range, which will have a huge impact on all sectors from hospitality to housing developments.

The current refurbishment of the Point Lepreau nuclear station and a study on the feasibility of a second unit at Point Lepreau are also helping lead the way in the further development of Saint John's economic engine that is energy.

New Brunswick premier Shawn Graham

says the province's geographic location, advanced transmission network and the fact that it is the only jurisdiction in Atlantic Canada certified to produce nuclear power, all bode well for positioning and growth in the years ahead.

Now that the opportunities are coming to Saint John, the demand for the appropriate workforce has slid from serious to critical.

Bob Manning is the financial adviser and chairman of the Saint John Board of Trade.

He says the thriving port city is an exciting place to be these days.

While the 2009 potential start date for a second refinery is what many people have in mind for job opportunities, the planning for these huge projects is now. People without all the expertise need to receive advanced training not only to work directly on the planning and construction, but also to provide support services like manufacturing to the projects.

Forty staff members at Atomic Energy of Canadian Ltd., for example, are developing the necessary knowledge for engineers working on the Point Lepreau project. As well, manufacturing firms are developing appropriate techniques and products to supply the Lepreau project.

In terms of the LNG plant, world-leading experts are in the region to offer their expertise for training initiatives for workers involved in the projects.

As talents develop and become more special-

ized, opportunities will continue to come to people in Saint John and the rest of the region.

"We as a business community really haven't painted the entire picture for people. The opportunities are broader than the possibility of a second refinery."

With the city's advanced knowledge resulting from these specialized projects, economic developers can tell large-scale industries looking to set up a plant in Saint John that there's no better place to settle.

"We have highly-trained staff, we have the port to get product to market, we have a great rail infrastructure," Manning says. "We're saying we are willing, ready and able to accept outside investment."

"We have been preparing for opportunities like these for a long time," he adds. "The opportunities are here now."

Manning expects that to meet the demand of the current and future projects, as many as 3,000 skilled workers and professionals are needed within the next six months.

And to fill the demand over the coming months and years, Manning says more than just the New Brunswickers and fellow Atlantic Canadians who left need to come here.

Manning says development of the waterfront in Saint John, as well as the on-going improvement to infrastructure, makes the city the place to be on the east coast.