

TODAY'S E-
PAPER

SUBSCRIBE

E-
FLYERS

OBITUARIES

LOTTERIES

HOROSCOPE

SUDOKU

CROSSWORD

CONTESTS

CONTACT

The
ChronicleHerald.ca
LETTERS

[News](#)[Opinions](#)[Business](#)[Sports](#)[Arts & Life](#)[Community](#)[WheelsPress](#)[JobsPress](#)[Classified](#)[Archive](#)

Print E-Mail Digg this Share on Facebook Report a Problem Text + -

Undersea coal could be Sydney's portal to prosperity

By JOHN HARKER
Sat. Jul 18 - 4:47 AM

Sixty years ago, in a different time of challenge and tension, great statesmen gathered around a common purpose and created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

In doing so, they showed how worthy they were of the mantle fashioned not long before by a trio of leaders who mastered the North Atlantic in war and ensured that it would see us safe from totalitarian domination.

President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Prime Minister MacKenzie King met in Quebec City in 1943. They knew that the North Atlantic could save us all. It's the same today.

The existential threat we face, however, is not the armed might of a hostile power.

It is our seeming inability to both provide our peoples with secure, clean, energy and slow to a halt the polluting of our environment and the warming of our planet.

Can our leaders, successors in office to the great trio of 1943, meet and overcome the threat we currently face?

Yes, if they turn, as did their predecessors, to the North Atlantic, truly an ocean of destiny.

The Port of Sydney, Nova Scotia, served as a major convoy staging point when Roosevelt, Churchill, and MacKenzie King set about winning the Battle of the Atlantic.

It has given its name to the Sydney coalfield, a vast deposit of quality coal under the waters of the North Atlantic stretching from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland and Labrador.

This deposit, amounting to some 150 billion tonnes, cannot be mined, and nor should it be in this carbon-conscious era.

Search: Today 7 Days Web

MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

TOP VIDEO



[PLAY VIDEO ▶](#)
Guardian gardeners tend city park

TOP VIDEO



[PLAY VIDEO ▶](#)
History made as 2 Canadian astronauts meet in space

TOP SLIDESHOW



[PLAY SLIDE ▶](#)
Pictures of the Week July 12-18

ANNOUNCEMENTS: [Obituaries](#) | [Births](#) | [Cards](#) | [InMemoriams](#) | [Milestones](#)

WEEKLY VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

[New government gets down to business \(2009-07-20\)](#)

[Out of sight, mind \(2009-07-20\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-20\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-19\)](#)

READER'S CORNER (2009-07-18)

[Undersea coal could be Sydney's portal to prosperity \(2009-07-18\)](#)

[By its very attitude, Canada complicit in Honduran coup \(2009-07-18\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-18\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-18\)](#)

[National securities regulator would improve co-ordination \(2009-07-18\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-17\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-16\)](#)

[One biomassive project \(2009-07-16\)](#)

READER'S CORNER (2009-07-16)

But the energy it contains can be accessed, and must be, if we are to enjoy secure clean energy and protect our environment.

Here's how. Technology now exists through which we can safely burn the undersea coal where it is, leaving the ash behind where once was the coal, and clean harvesting the synthetic gas, or Syngas, which would be given off in huge commercial quantities.

The technological process is Underground Coal Gasification, UCG, which converts coal in-situ into Syngas and because of the in-situ chemical conversion process, the Syngas is low in many of the contaminants normally associated with burning coal, such as sulphur, tar, particulates, and mercury. These are mostly left in-situ with the ash.

And Syngas is made up, in equal measure, of the natural gas we are all familiar with and the hydrogen now touted as the cleanest possible fuel source, vital to future prosperity from California to Colchester.

Carbon dioxide is present but can be captured and sequestered, joining the ash itself under the ocean floor, to remain there undisturbed.

In conventional mining, ash-management can be costly as well as problematic. The economics of UCG are very favourable. At today's energy prices, not next year's, a mere 50 million tonnes of undersea coal will produce \$250 million worth of clean energy annually for 25 years.

And there are at least 250 blocks of 50 million tonnes in the Sydney coalfield.

The deposit could be exploited massively for many years, enabling us to transition to a fossil-free low carbon economy.

And as we do so, it will be possible to similarly clean harvest undersea coalfields elsewhere, along part of the U.K. coastline for example, or in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, estimated to hold a further 200 billion tonnes.

Yes, this takes technology, but it is available. It takes capital, but this is affordable. It also takes leadership.

Is this available? Are the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Britain, and the Prime Minister of Canada, the men their predecessors were?

Will they meet, perhaps in Halifax, and see in the Sydney Coalfield what their predecessors saw in the waters of the North Atlantic, the battleground they could and must win on?

H. John Harker is President and Vice Chancellor of Cape Breton University in Atlantic Canada and serves as an Executive Committee Member of Canada's National Research Council.

[We must grow our capital city to truly grow our province \(2009-07-16\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-16\)](#)

[Atheist ad chases wrong bus \(2009-07-15\)](#)

[READER'S CORNER \(2009-07-15\)](#)

[Sift through the garbage for solid tips on governance \(2009-07-15\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-15\)](#)

[Protect farmlands from sewage sludge \(2009-07-15\)](#)

[Voice of the people \(2009-07-14\)](#)



RECOMMEND THIS STORY?

5 votes

The
ChronicleHerald.ca

NEWS

- Front Page
- Metro
- Nova Scotia
- Canada
- World
- Business
- Sports
- Arts & Life
- Travel
- Books
- Religion
- Science
- The Nova Scotian

COMMUNITY

- Community News
- NS Communities

OPINIONS

- Editorials
- Columnists
- News Columns
- Business Columns
- Sports Columns
- Arts & Life Columns
- Community Blogs
- Community Reviews
- Posting Up Blog
- MacKinnon Cartoon

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Obituaries
- Births
- Cards
- InMemoriams
- Milestones
- Contact us to place an Announcement

MULTIMEDIA

- Photos
- Videos
- Community Photos

JOBSPRESS

- JobsPress
- News & Resources
- Advertising
- Post a Job

WHEELSPRESS

- WheelsPress
- Search
- Sell Your Vehicle
- Dealers
- Advertising

NEWSPAPER

- Today's E-Paper
- Classifieds
- Place a Classified Ad
- Subscribe
- NIE
- Professional Directory
- South Shore Calendar

ABOUT THE HERALD

- About Us
- Contact Us
- Work @ The Herald
- F.A.Q
- Library Services
- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Use

ADVERTISING

- Web Advertising
- Sales Executives
- Media Kits, Rates, Etc.
- Place a Classified Ad
- Pay Your Account

CLIENTS

- Print Upload
- Web Upload
- Real Estate Portal
- Media Kits, Rates, Etc.

FUN & GAMES

- Lotteries
- Sudoku
- Crossword
- Comics
- Contests

CHARITIES

- Chronicle Herald Charities
- Bill Lynch Memorial Fund
- Rainbow Haven Opportunities Fund
- The Goodfellows' Club

USEFUL INFORMATION

- E-Flyers
- Eye on Nova Scotia
- N.S. Highway Cams
- Horoscope
- Lotteries
- Tides
- Weather
- Movie Times
- What's Happening
- Mayflower TV Guide
- Herald Archive