



## **Gerry Pond Named Chair Emeritus Mariner Co-founder's Grand 'Project' Continues**

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Photo by Kelly Lawson

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SAINT JOHN - "The Project" is Gerry Pond's life's work to help Atlantic Canada's economy flourish through innovation. Begun in the early 1990s, it has taken many forms, spanning corporate leadership, mentorship, volunteerism, and investment.

In 2003, it expanded to include entrepreneurship when Gerry co-founded Mariner Partners Inc.

Mariner is now Atlantic Canada's largest privately held IT and business transformation consultancy, with over 350 employees and clients globally.

Today, just over 20 years later, Mariner has named Gerry Chair Emeritus, a lifelong appointment in honour of his deep, distinguished service. The appointment comes as Gerry transitions out of his role as Board Chair, which he has held since Mariner's founding. The role will now be filled by Mariner CEO Curtis Howe, who, along with Bob Justason co-founded the company with Gerry.

The Chair Emeritus role recognizes not only his contribution to Mariner but the broader impact of his big idea – that technology innovation is a powerful force for economic growth in Atlantic Canada – which continues to reverberate across our organization and the region.

The Project has always focused on the unique advantages of our people and place, harnessing the intelligence and drive of the former and defying the traditional constraints of the latter to nurture a thriving innovation ecosystem.

It started at NBTel, where, as Vice President and then CEO and later President of Aliant Telecom, Gerry reimagined a phone company in a largely rural market with a few small cities. His thinking was decades ahead of its time.

From there, as evidenced by the following highlights, Gerry began and backed initiatives supporting the change-makers who were working to make our small economy flourish. Key roles included:

#### **Co-founder**

- Propel ICT, a regional start-up accelerator
- Pond-Deshpande Centre at the University of New Brunswick
- UNB MBA Applied Research Chair in Sales
- UNBSJ MBA with a stream in Business Development and Professional Sales

#### **Investor & Mentor**

- East Valley, which mentors and invests in emerging companies
- 51 startups, notably iMagicTV, Q1 Labs, Brovada Technologies, Radian6, Shift Energy, Cirrus9, SmartSkin

#### **Director**

- Upside Foundation
- New Brunswick Business Council
- National Angel Capital Organization
- Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI)

Gerry's contributions have been recognized at home and beyond. Honours include the EY Entrepreneur of the Year Atlantic Lifetime Achievement Award, the Wolf Blass Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Canadian Red Cross Humanitarian Award for New Brunswick. He was named the 2011 Canadian Angel of the Year and the first Business Development Bank of Canada Entrepreneurship Champion; he has twice been named by the Learning Partnership as a Champion of Public Education. He is the first InnovateNB Hall of Fame inductee. Gerry is particularly proud to be a member of the Order of New Brunswick and the Order of Canada.

Curtis Howe, praises the breadth and depth of his impact.

“Gerry’s leadership and dedication to our region cannot be overstated. He has had a singular impact as a business leader and a humanitarian,” Curtis says. “Gerry’s influence will continue to guide Mariner into the future. His principles are in our marrow.”

These principles may be summed up as follows:

**1. People are the difference.**

Gerry’s first principle. He believes much of the value in startups and community impact is created by people. “It is always, always about the person,” he says. “Is this person driven and can we develop trust to do the hard things? If they are driven, I will back them.”

**2. Challenge conventional thinking.**

Conventional thinkers come from the bigger markets. New Brunswick has beautiful constraints that make things harder but also make some things possible...but only if we design business ideas in a way that takes advantage of what we have rather than think as have-nots.

**3. Be tireless in your ambition for the region.**

It’s the Big Idea that matters: to become a global innovation hub. Gerry sees the need to leverage successful ecosystem initiatives into a collective force. It includes those he helped create and champion, like Propel, TechImpact, the Wallace McCain Institute (WMI), and the Pond-Deshpande Centre, and other regional initiatives he supports because they matter.

**4. Serve your customers and community.**

Gerry is a servant leader who believes that putting customers and community first is foundational to value creation. We can create greater impact for others by bringing unlike things and people together in their service.

**5. Think big.**

While many start with a small box and work outwards, Gerry draws a big circle and fills it in. He describes it as letting your mind go out. “It’s like a camera; instead of coming in and focusing, I back up and look at the entire room. This approach allows you to connect dots that you wouldn’t usually see. It allows you to imagine a difference for those we serve through change.”

**6. Push harder and never give up.**

Rejection is part of the game and can be very humbling, but Gerry’s advice is to never give up. “Try again. Care enough to go the extra mile. This drive needs to be visceral and part of your DNA.”

In Gordon Pitts’ book, *Unicorn in the Woods*, a story of high-tech value creation far from Silicon Valley, he describes Pond as, “The most influential networker, mentor and technology power player in the province [of New Brunswick] - indeed in the Maritimes.”

A belief shared by Frank McKenna, Deputy Chair at TD Securities, Former New Brunswick Premier and Former Canadian Ambassador to the United States. “When we talk about the tech ecosystem in NB we are really talking about Gerry Pond. He is the glue that holds it all together. He has been a wonderful partner, friend, and inspiration over many years. Knowing Gerry, he will not stop his unselfish pursuit of excellence for our province and region. In a world of chaos he is a refreshing voice of calm and reason.”

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**Mariner** innovates always and everywhere, turning novel ideas into practical solutions. From products and services to venture creation, we build better futures powered by people.

Our purpose has always been to be a great, everlasting technology company for those who make an impact – elevating people, data, and technology in the best way to solve hard problems.

We partner with people embracing change, leveraging data, cybersecurity, cloud, and change management to drive successful business outcomes that matter to our customers.

Mariners build for change. Like **SHIFT Energy**, our energy management and decarbonization company. Or **East Valley**, created to scale social economic impact in our communities through investment and mentorship of emerging change-makers and their companies.

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