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Steven King - Legislative report highlights growth at Quonset Business Park

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In the last 15 years, auto imports at Quonset's Port of Davisville have quadrupled. In 2010, our port was the second fastest growing auto importer in North America. Last month, a special legislative task force studying R.I.'s ports released a report titled "R.I.'s Ports: Opportunities for Growth." The report highlights the Port of Davisville's success, supports the existing strategic approach and offers useful direction for future growth.

Further, the study suggests that the Port of Davisville is uniquely positioned to spearhead future economic growth here in R.I. Among the highlights of the report is the fact that Davisville surpasses other New England ports in terms of auto imports, while at the same time having the infrastructure required to capitalize on short-sea shipping opportunities as they arise.

Highlighting the auto import business as one of R.I.'s most important port-related economic assets, the report found that the Port of Davisville is now the eighth largest auto importer in North America, with 134,575 autos shipped in 2010 -- over 8 times more than any other New England port. The report also notes the potential for growth in the short sea shipping market, which is anticipated by the arrival of a port crane funded by part of Quonset's TIGER grant by the end of 2012.

Overall, the study's authors, Martin Associates, confirm Quonset's strategic approach to growing its port business, which focuses on expanding the auto business, possibly expanding its food cargo business, and preparing for potential growth in container short sea shipping and the wind energy construction market.

The report is extremely valuable, in that it highlights our strong results over the past few years to confirm our strategic approach at Davisville.

Automobiles are not the only business picking up speed at Quonset Business Park. Developers and state officials, including U.S. senator Jack Reed, congressman Jim Langevin and Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts cut the ribbon last week on the new TownePlace Suites by Marriott at the Quonset Gateway. The "green" hotel will bring additional jobs to Quonset and Roberts called the hotel opening a key part of the "amazing transformation" that continues at Quonset.

"Funding provided for Towne- Place Suites through SBA's 504 program and our lending partners at Ocean State Business Development Authority is the largest in the history of the program here in R.I.," said Mark Hayward, director of the SBA R.I. District Office. "We are pleased that this project is both environmentally friendly and economically sound and it will provide much-needed permanent jobs."

The hotel features an energy efficient geothermal system for cooling and heating. The sustainably built hotel used recycled and local materials during construction and was designed and built with the goal of becoming the first LEED certified facility in the greater Providence region. The hotel's environmental design plans to reduce water usage by up to 30%, utilize optimized energy

management systems, provide enhanced indoor air quality and ventilation, and utilize "Green Cleaning" practices.

The Quonset Business Park in North Kingstown is home to some 168 companies, employing approximately 8,800 workers, or one out of every 50 jobs in R.I. Over the past five years, 2,700 new jobs have been created there.

Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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