

Halifax Chamber of Commerce Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018

Aspirational Statement

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is committed to enhancing the prosperity of its members and to realizing Halifax's potential to be among the top 3 highest growth city economies in Canada by 2018.

Vision

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is an action-oriented business leadership organization whose core purpose is to help Halifax reach its full potential as a great city.

Mission

The role of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce in achieving its Vision is to build and strengthen the business culture through:

- Member Services – adding value through networking, information and member benefits
- Advocacy – The voice of business
- Leadership – shaping the business environment by building business, government and community capacity

Goals

1. To create a positive business environment to be reflected by being among the top 3 highest growth city economies in Canada by 2018.
2. To increase the skilled workforce by 20% from 2012 to 2018.
3. To accelerate prosperity of Chamber members by providing first class networking events, benefit programs, advocacy to governments, education, information and by making connections.

Strategies to meet Goals

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce's ability to achieve its very aggressive goals is predicated on successfully implementing all actions related to the following set of strategies. There are a number of elements to each strategy and it should be noted that the priorities and efforts will change over the 5 years covered by the strategic plan. In addition, the Chamber will be lead on some of the initiatives, but not all. Collaboration with other organizations will be a critical component of delivering on the strategies.

There are two external goals, one focused on the demand side of the economic equation, "A Positive Business Environment", and one focused on the supply side of the equation, "Increasing the Skilled Workforce".

In addition there is one internal goal, focused on the Chamber itself and on the relationship and proactive activities with its members.

Goal No. 1:

To create a positive business environment to be reflected by being among the top 3 highest growth city economies in Canada by 2018.

Strategy 1 – Create a Positive Business Environment

There are five key elements to creating a positive business environment in Halifax that must be focused on to create an atmosphere conducive to attracting and growing, both existing and new, enterprises in Halifax:

1. **Promote entrepreneurship.** There are a number of initiatives underway within the Halifax community geared to providing support to business start-ups and entrepreneurs. This is a very viable alternative to trying to grow larger, mature businesses and provides the ability to retain our highly skilled youth. The Chamber has a definite role to play on this file.
2. **Reduce the tax burden.** This starts with a reduction in tax rates in the city and, in the future, will be complemented by an increase in the city's overall tax base. The focus and advocacy associated with reducing the tax burden will be an area of initial concentration in this strategic plan.
3. **Champion common sense regulations.** There are too many time consuming, business unfriendly regulations that are an impediment to the development of capital projects and business initiatives. The Chamber will identify the top ten barriers and focus on implementing change to substantially reduce these obstructions to a positive business environment.

4. **Capitalize on major projects.** The Chamber can play a pivotal role in providing members with information and tools geared to enhancing participation on major projects such as the ship building contract, the new convention centre, energy projects and ocean technology initiatives. This will include expansion of the successful “All Ships Rise” initiative.
5. **Help build a vibrant downtown core.** Halifax requires an attractive, safe, pulsating downtown that will attract people to put down personal and business roots in this community. We need to morph “Halifax by Design” into a done deal with many more residential properties as well as high quality, fully occupied business properties.

Goal No. 2:

To increase the skilled workforce by 20% from 2012 to 2018.

Strategy 2 – Grow the Skilled Workforce

Halifax is facing a significant challenge to generate a talented workforce that can not only replace the great number of current employees who will be retiring over the next five years, but also to provide for the future growth in our business community. Unless there are skilled workers available, businesses will not choose to remain in, or move to, this city.

There are three key elements to increasing the skilled workforce:

1. **Match postsecondary student development to employer needs.** The NSCC has developed a close link with the business community and future employers; we need universities to build a similar relationship. We must graduate students that meet the needs of the Halifax business community.
2. **Enhance P – 12 skill development.** Our current grade school curriculum is not getting the job done, especially with regards to math and science. In addition, our student drop-out rates are unacceptably high. Halifax and Nova Scotia needs a first class educational system in order to provide highly qualified and motivated students for post-secondary learning, and to attract families to Halifax.
3. **Promote immigration.** We know the demographics of our existing population base are about to create a situation whereby more people will be retiring from the workforce than we have young local people to replace them. In addition, our cultural diversity is stagnant. Halifax must attract immigrants in order to have enough workers to get the job done and to have people with diverse cultural heritage in order to provide a richer living experience for all.

Goal No. 3:

To accelerate prosperity of Chamber members by providing first class networking events, benefit programs, advocacy to governments, education, information, and by making connections.

Strategy 3 – Drive Member Prosperity and Value

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce currently has about 1,700 members and enjoys both one of the highest penetration rates and member retention rates of any Chamber in the country. This high member value delivery must be maintained, and leveraged, to provide member growth that mirrors Halifax GDP growth.

There are four key elements to maintaining a strong and engaged membership:

1. **Provide information and connections.** Over the past several years the role of the Chamber in providing information and making connections for members has grown in importance in members' eyes. This includes both navigation of available programs, as well as providing access to leadership and soft skills training such as the very successful "All Ships Rise" initiative.
2. **Advocate on key issues.** The Chamber represents the collective interests of its members and it is very often the "go to" organization for government bodies and the media searching for a representative voice. The Chamber is very visible in the Halifax community, and continuing to be highly relevant and respected is very important.
3. **Facilitate networking events.** The Chamber holds a great number of these events over the course of the year and these are highly valued by members. These events foster co-operation and business development, and are of particular interest to newer members.
4. **Provide benefit programs.** These are very important to smaller members, and are often the primary areas of interest in attracting new members.