

January 10th, 2012

Office of the Municipal Clerk
City Hall
1841 Argyle Street, Main Floor
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

To: Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee

I am writing to you to express concern from Chamber members regarding the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committees recommendation that the Halifax Regional Municipality adopt a wood first strategy when designing new and recapitalization facility projects.

Before such a policy is potentially implemented, I would like you to consider the fairness of such a policy. Indeed, forestry is an important pillar to our economy, employing approximately 11,000 people with exports worth roughly \$1 billion dollars. On the contrary, would it be fair to give this industry precedence over sheet metal and iron industries? They too employ thousands of jobs and stimulate our economy.

In addition, wood does have a low carbon footprint; however, in the age of environmental sustainability shouldn't we be innovative and entrepreneurial by increasing our support for cleaner technologies?

From the Chamber's perspective such policy can limit economic opportunity. Our preference would be for City policy to be focusing through a 'competitive lens' that will include the following key elements of a competitive economy: good infrastructure, open-for-business' attitude, regulations that make sense, reasonable taxes, sustained growth and fiscal prudence

Finally, I would like to suggest that the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee reconsider this policy, and ask themselves: is this a slippery slope; for example, should we advocate for only seafood in restaurants? It too is a multimillion dollar industry that employs tens of thousands of people. Also, ask yourself, is this policy self-interested and most importantly, is it fair? Should you like to discuss this further, I would be happy to meet at your convenience.

Should you like me meet with me to discuss this issue further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Nancy Conrad, Senior Vice President, Policy
Halifax Chamber of Commerce