

November 3, 2011

Labour and Advanced Education, Policy Division  
Labour Management Review Committee  
PO Box 697  
Halifax, NS B3J 2T8

**Re: First Contract Settlement Discussion Paper**

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce has reviewed the October 2011 Discussion Paper on First Contract Settlement and would like to submit its feedback on the document.

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is a best practice business association representing over 1600 businesses in Halifax and the province. These businesses have around 90,000 employees.

First, we would like to thank the Minister for undertaking this consultation. The majority of our members are businesses with less than 20 employees, and are not currently unionized. This is consistent with the NS business profile.

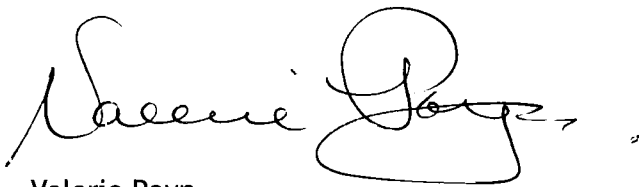
When examining these sorts of issues, the Chamber considers whether this will make our city and province more competitive. We already know we have the lowest provincial GDP growth in the country and some of the highest taxes. We know we need more economic growth. That comes from business, not government. Government just re-circulates our own tax dollars.

Recently our province has spent considerable time developing a jobsHere economic strategy. Its focus is on developing the right skills for good jobs, helping businesses be more competitive globally, and growing the economy through innovation. How will this legislation support this? We currently have very good labour relations in this province. There are many good examples of contract negotiations with government, where everyone made compromises. If there are no serious problems, what are we trying to fix?

In Nova Scotia we can make our own way and frankly business does not need another issue to consider before they set up shop here or decide whether to stay or leave. The Chamber has been doing research on the arguments both for and against the use of first contract arbitration, including a preliminary survey of its members. Results indicate that our members are opposed to the first contract arbitration changes to the Trade Union Act.

In summary, will FCA make us more competitive globally? Will it make us more innovative? Will it help add to our skilled labour force? Will it create more good jobs? If we cannot reply 'yes' with confidence to these questions, then this will simply appear as more government red tape and regulation that will not help business or grow our economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Payn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Valerie Payn  
President & CEO