

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is a best practice business advocacy organization that strives to make Halifax an even better place to live, work and play. It is the oldest Chamber in North America with roots dating to 1750 and was the first Chamber in North America to become ISO certified. The Chamber is an active voice for business at the federal, provincial and municipal level.

This note outlines key points from the Speech from the Throne that are of interest to Chamber members and relate to Chamber advocacy areas.

The Economy

In relation to the economy, the government stated it will:

- take steps to encourage companies to invest in machinery and equipment
- invest in world class research facilities
- not rule out running a deficit. Stating: “It would be misguided to commit to a balanced budget in the short term at any cost.” However, there was a commitment not to return to structural deficits of the past.

Atlantic Gateway

In relation to the Atlantic Gateway, the government stated it will:

- continue to invest in expanding gateways
- commit to expediting the Building Canada plan to make sure projects are built as soon as possible
- pursue new trade agreements in Asia, the Americas and the EU
- proceed with legislation to ratify the results of trade negotiations that have been concluded with the European Free Trade Association, Peru, Colombia and Jordan

Better Regulation

In relation to better regulation, the government stated it will:

- work with the provinces to make the recognition of foreign credentials a priority
- work with provinces to create a common national securities regulator
- work with the provinces to eliminate inter-provincial trade barriers before 2010
- proceed with legislation to modernize competition and investment laws, implementing the recommendations of the Competition Policy Review Panel

- proceed with legislation to modernize copyright laws and ensure stronger protection for intellectual property
- cut the red tape faced by the private and not-for-profit sectors when doing business with government
- fix procurement to make it easier for businesses to provide products and services to government

Education

In relation to education, the government stated it will:

- continue to support student financial assistance and take measures to encourage skilled trades and apprenticeships

Energy

In relation to energy, the government stated it will:

- set an objective that 90% of Canada's electricity needs will be provided by non-emitting sources, such as hydro, nuclear or wind power by 2020
- reiterate the federal government's commitment to reduce greenhouse- gas emissions 20% by 2020 (short of Canada's Kyoto targets)
- explore opportunities surrounding the natural gas that lies beneath Canada's North, by reducing regulatory and other barriers to extend the pipeline network to the North
- ensure that Canada's regulatory framework is ready to new nuclear projects

Finance

In relation to federal finance, the government stated it will:

- ensure that equalization payments grow, but not more than the national economy
- aid the auto and aerospace sectors – details to follow in the November 28th fiscal update
- commitment to reform global finance, expand investment and make government more efficient
- promise to voluntarily constrain federal spending power

Other

Other areas that the government committed to include:

- Senate reform; legislation will be introduced to allow for nominees to the Senate to be selected by voters and to serve fixed terms of less than eight years

- Legislation will be introduced to move toward representation by population in the House of Commons for Ontario, BC and Alberta
- Tougher crime legislation
- Tighter food-safety rules
- A promise to introduce a "Charter of Open Federalism", which will constrain federal spending power so that any new shared-cost program in an area of exclusive provincial responsibility will require the consent of the majority of the provinces to proceed.
- Increasing access to maternity and parental benefits under EI
- Working the provinces to attract top international students to Canada and increase the uptake of immigrant settlement programs.
- Preparing for the end of military mission in Afghanistan in 2011
- Rebuilding and arming the Canadian Armed Forces, renewing all major air, sea and surface fleets over the next two decades.

To access the entire Speech from the Throne, go to: <http://www.sft-ddt.gc.ca/eng/index.asp>.