

February 24, 2010

Mayor and Council (via email):

I am writing to express the Chamber's concern regarding the options under consideration by Council to deal with the city's \$30 million short fall projected for fiscal year 2010-2011.

Halifax now accounts for fully one-half of Nova Scotia's gross domestic product; it is also home to forty percent of the entire provincial population, and growing. Halifax itself employs over 3,000 people and has an annual budget of three-quarter of a billion dollars.

The options presented to deal with the shortfall included a 3 to 4% tax increase. Council must be aware that this will impact members of the Halifax business community at a time when they are just beginning to recover from the economic downturn.

It appears, for the most part, the 2010-11 shortfall is coming from increased expenses in the form of increased costs of services, increased compensation costs and new services. We feel that it's important that the city balance the public demand for new services and living within their means.

Raising taxes is the easy approach, we ask that Council step up to make the difficult choices necessary and do all that it can to avoid a tax increase. Any spending must be within our means and have a sharp focus on council priorities and areas that will increase the competitiveness of our city.

Sincerely,

Valerie A. Payn  
President