

November 24, 2010

Premier Darrell Dexter
Office of the Premier
PO Box 726
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Re: jobsHere Plan

Dear Premier Dexter:

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce would like to take this opportunity to comment on the province's new Economic Strategy entitled *jobsHere - the plan to grow our economy*.

The Chamber is greatly encouraged by the concept of a singular growth strategy that has been designed to build on our existing strengths and assets, strategically focus on our weaknesses and shortcomings, and leverage the opportunities that are currently available to us.

Recognizing the great challenges we have been facing as a province, the imminent threats that we will soon be facing, and the need for immediate action to address these challenges and threats are several critically important aspects of this document. Furthermore, the three key priorities identified in this document - skills and education, innovation and productivity, and helping business compete globally - are all areas the Chamber has enthusiastically supported over the years. It is very encouraging to see that our provincial framework places an equally high degree of importance on these areas.

However, the simple fact that we see this as a great economic framework by no means guarantees its success. For instance, accountability and transparency are values that you have espoused as a government. Next in line is measurement. We need measurement of the outcomes outlined in this Strategy. How do you propose to do this? Can the Chamber help? We do have some experience in this field. As a minimum, a regular, independent assessment is appropriate in this day and age.

Furthermore, a big piece of the success of the Strategy will be the "cultural shift" for regular Nova Scotians - helping them understand that the benefits of any Strategy will not be achieved in 12 months, 18 months, or even 3 years. It won't be easy. We cannot turn around decades-long trend lines overnight. We need to counsel patience and, to this end, your personal leadership will mean a lot. We can, and will, support and communicate this.

The greatest enemy to a successful Economic Strategy for our Province is time - particularly in the sense of electoral cycles. We have been victims to this over the years - even more so in the recent 10 years of minority governments. The two years remaining in your term before a provincial election occurs will be crucial to committing to a clear, transparent accountability that cannot be denied.

This Strategy is transformational. However, the only way it will succeed is if we have a “champion”. This has been lacking in previous attempts at strategies. Will that champion be you, Mr. Premier? We hope so, and will support you in any possible way to do so, and to achieve the outcomes outlined.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Valerie Payn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'V'.

Valerie Payn
President & CEO

Copy to: Percy Paris, Minister of Economic and Rural Development
 Ian Thompson, Deputy Minister of Economic and Rural Development
 Stephen McNeil, Leader, Liberal Party
 Jaime Baillie, Leader, Progressive Conservative Party