

September 8, 2010

Clerk of the Board
NSUARB
Box 1692, Unit M
Halifax, NS B3J 3S3

Re: Halifax Water Proposed Rate Increase

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce would like to take this opportunity to address the Halifax Water application for approval to amend its Schedule of Rates and Charges and Schedules of Rules and Regulations for the provision of water, public and private fire inspection, waste water and storm water services and for the determination of a Rate Base.

Not unlike the proposed bridge toll increase, this rate increase appears to be a relatively necessary request for the future of our municipality. It is certainly imperative that this work gets done at some point, and it is an expensive undertaking no matter how you cut it. A lot of our water system infrastructure is very old and in desperate need of these improvements. That being said, it is unfortunate that we are being hit with it “out-of-the-blue” and all at once – a 40% rate hike is a substantial increase for any business or resident, regardless of one’s bottom line or socioeconomic status.

It is for this reason that the Chamber would like to communicate its grave concerns in regards to such a hike. A 40% increase in the cost of our water bill, coupled with the restoration of the HST to 15% and the other seemingly necessary rate hikes sought by Nova Scotia Power Inc. and the Halifax Harbor Bridge Commission, is quite a lot for the business community to bear all at once. Furthermore, this mixture of proposed increases has the potential to be introduced within a relatively short timeframe which, unfortunately, does not give businesses an adequate amount of time for budgeting or planning for these increases.

The Chamber would urge the Utility and Review Board to consider the broader repercussions such a rate increase could have when combined with the other aforementioned increases, and therefore examine any potential resolutions to these requests that would somehow mitigate the financial strain on the business community.

We appreciate the opportunity to put forth our views on behalf of the business community of Halifax.

Yours truly,

Valerie Payn
President & CEO

Copy Carl Yates, Halifax Water