

Chamber hopes Waterside Centre decision will help Halifax Council see the light

For immediate release

March 27, 2009 – Halifax, NS - The Halifax Chamber of Commerce couldn't be happier with the decision by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to give the go ahead to the Waterside Centre project.

The Chamber's arguments before the Board were directly reflected in the reasoning behind the Board's decision. During the Waterside hearing, the Chamber pointed out that the Regional Plan explicitly states that the overall goal of the plan is to *"outline how future, sustainable growth should take place in the HRM, in a way that preserves the environment, while at the same time maintaining a strong economy."* "Council was losing sight of this fact. It's unfortunate that it took this much for city Council to see the light," states Chamber President and CEO Valerie Payn. "But it's better late than never."

The Waterside Centre decision arrives during the same week that an important market survey of downtown Halifax by Turner Drake & Partners Limited came to HRM Council. The study stated that Council must take a leadership role, not an intermediary role, in the ongoing heritage versus development debate. "The Chamber believes that heritage and development can coexist. Both are necessary to have a vibrant downtown," states Payn. "But we can't expect developers to maintain buildings just for the sake of heritage. Buildings need to be profitable, too."

The Chamber is concerned by a conclusion contained in the Turner Drake study, which said that if trends persist, the downtown will continue to decline as a

business centre. “We clearly need leadership now and support for the business community, to prevent the heart of our city from weakening,” states Payn.

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