



**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Thursday, April 23, 2020**  
**Halifax Chamber of Commerce**  
**Via Zoom**

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**  
Patrick Sullivan

The Chamber's Annual General Meeting is a mandatory function of the Chamber's Bylaws, where certain processes must be completed and traditions upheld.

First, I would like to give a brief update on what we have been working on since last year's Annual General Meeting.

The AGM is the perfect time to pause and reflect on what your Halifax Chamber of Commerce has accomplished over the past 12 months. It also gives us time to examine our opportunities and challenges. And I think we are all facing very similar challenges right now. I will go through my usual update first, and then will give you all an update on what we're doing for our members during COVID-19.

Your Chamber of Commerce is made up primarily of small businesses, with 82% of the member companies having fewer than 25 employees. Many of our events and advocacy work is focused on their needs and challenges. Now let's review the year.

This year was strong financially.

Expenses and revenues were better than budget which led to a net income of \$160,028 versus \$115,172 the previous year.

Our revenue sources are primarily from our members, whether through annual dues, ticket sales for our events, and larger partnerships with government, like our Trade Accelerator Program.

We are into year two of our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, designed to help guide the Board of Directors, task forces and staff in our efforts around advocacy, event and communication themes.

Our purpose is to create value and prosperity for our members.

We provide services they need, events that will help them learn and we advocate for conditions in the economy that enhance their prosperity.

We are first and foremost here for our members. We want to see them succeed in Halifax.

Before building this plan, we listened to our members' feedback through roundtables and surveys and narrowed our areas of focus based on their needs. The plan's two pillars are:

- Fostering Private Sector Growth
- And Accessing a Skilled Workforce

Our Member Services Specialist and the Chamber team have been working hard to ensure member satisfaction remains high. We can see the evidence in our retention rate, that are currently the best we've had in years.

We want all members – which represent 65,000 individuals! – to really understand the value of the Chamber to our city, our province and to them. We provide value to the businesses through networking events, insurance programs, advocacy work, and training.

We want them to see the Chamber is in their corner and prove to them the value of the chamber. In fact, they can check out that value themselves with the ROI calculator on our website.

In 2019, we reshaped our two task forces, focusing on the two pillars of the strategic plan.

Hospice Halifax's Board Chair, and Fostering Private Sector Growth Chair, Paul Bent, has been part of this evolving task force for nearly 5 years, with many at the helm.

While the task force may have evolved over those years, Paul's dedication to the business community has not wavered. Through his leadership, our task force members have met with important stakeholders, like the Nova Scotia Department of Business, HRM's CAO, Jacques Dube and the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness.

This task force has also provided our policy team with invaluable input for our foundational documents like our annual issue notes and pre-budget submissions that detail our asks and recommendations for the municipal and provincial government.

This is Paul Bent's last year as Chair, and we are certain to miss his enthusiasm and voice for the business community. We will keep moving forward and continue to hear from Halifax's key players to ensure the most up-to-date and relevant information is provided to our members as we welcome Caroline Wolf-Stewart as our new Task Force chair. Caroline is the current Senior Director of Strategy and Operations with the Nova Scotia College of Nursing.

As the principal leader of non-legislative operations, she focuses on leading cross functional projects, enterprise wide strategy and business performance processes. We are looking forward to working closely with Caroline during her time as chair.

Our task force members engage in social media posts, Chamber member polls, business voice communications and issue note and pre-budget submission creation.

Last year the Accessing a Skilled Workforce Task Force, chaired by NSCC's Don Bureaux, focused on work-integrated learning (WIL). Some of you may have attended the Chamber's 2019 Spring Dinner and learned more about how important it is to hire a student for both the benefit of the employee and employer.

You may have also seen our WIL video at our State of the Municipality luncheon that brought to life the ROI an employer gains by hiring a student. Thank you to NSCC and Bruce Bottomly for the video.

We are continuing our work on the importance of hiring students and have also begun expanding that focus to awareness of the “untapped” labour market (those who have been statistically underrepresented in the labour market).

Keep an eye out for upcoming Fall 2020 initiatives as we look to showcase case studies and success stories of those businesses that have realized the enormous value of hiring students and those in the ‘untapped’ labour market.

Don Bureaux will be handing over the title of task force chair to Michele Peveril. Over the past four years that Don has been chair of the Accessing a Skilled Workforce task force, we have seen the group grow both in size and in ability to enhance our member's understanding of Nova Scotia's workforce. Through the efforts of Don and this task force we have created videos showcasing success stories, business voice pieces and a theme for our 2019 Spring Dinner. We will be sorry to see him go, but his constant endeavor to better our task force has left it in great shape for our new Chair.

Michele Peveril will begin chairing meetings as soon as May.. Michele, as some of you may know is a current board member of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and has been sitting on our task force for the past few meetings. We are excited to have her lead us!

We are looking forward to another great year with the task forces.

Last fall, we led the biggest Small Business Week Halifax had ever seen. In partnership with BDC, we reached out to Business Improvement Districts and business associations and hosted a week full of free events, free training, and an expo.

With more than 1,000 individuals attending the week's events, 500+ businesses reached through our Storm the City initiative, 10 sponsors and 7 community partners, we consider the week a huge success.

We want to double that impact this year, just like we did from 2018 to 2019.

We've hosted a variety of free training sessions for member businesses to brush up on skills to make them more productive and competitive in the marketplace. Some of the training included marketing, social media, business management, communications, project management and human resources. All training sessions have been sold out with a waiting list.

Since COVID-19, with the help of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education who allowed us to quickly pivot, trainers have been using ZOOM to continue offering courses online, and we are about to begin a new round of training that will be all online.

Halifax is growing, and we want to support our members in taking advantage of every single opportunity that is out there. And perhaps create a few of their own!

As I mentioned, I would like to talk to you about some of our latest projects at the Chamber. Member engagement and support looks a bit differently in our current climate, but our team remains dedicated to helping our members in any way we can.

We want to help our members succeed and push through these economic interruptions, so they are ready for recovery when the time comes.

We're committed to providing you with more value for your membership through:

**New Mode tool:** Our advocacy tool that lives on the website. We are encouraging members to use the tool to show their support on certain issues, and they can use the tool to write directly to political leaders.

**Website and newsletter surveys:** We've implemented quickpolls on our website and in our e-newsletters to hear from our members on how COVID-19 has impacted their business and what types of support they need from the government.

We want to hear from our members on red tape, taxes, and any other issue preventing them from focusing on their business.

Right now, these issues are focused on COVID-19 related impacts, and we are encouraging members to send an email to 'concerns@halifaxchamber.com' to let us know what they are experiencing and how we can help.

Last June and December, we hosted our third and fourth editions of the Wonder Women conference.

We had 400 attendees in December and hosted a very special guest, Dr. Sara Iverson, a local marine biologist who had a Barbie modelled after her.

We got in touch with Mattel and managed to get Polar Marine Biologist Barbies for all attendees. It was a big surprise giveaway to encourage attendees to give their Barbies to an up-and-coming 'Wonder Women!'

We even had enough to donate to a variety of local shelters and family support organizations.

We were working towards an even bigger and better Wonder Women for September 2020, but of course those plans are currently on hold. Stay tuned for more updates.

Last September, we offered a trip to India. Members saw the Taj Mahal at sunrise and tasted one of the most popular cuisines of the world.

We're looking forward to more travel program adventures in the future.

This is clearly an atypical AGM, and just like other businesses, we've had to adapt to the changing landscape.

We are first and foremost, here for our members. We meet regularly with the team to discuss how we can support them and create a membership of value.

We started by creating a COVID-19 resources webpage, which is updated daily.

The webpage gathers information from all levels of government about their funding programs, B2B resources, member webinars and training opportunities, and how to support local during this time.

It's a one-stop-shop for all things COVID-19. We've received a lot of great feedback from members that it's been a helpful way to navigate all available resources.

We're also sending emails multiple times per week to update members with this information. New programs were announced almost daily for several weeks, and it could be very difficult to keep track of everything. We need to be the experts so our members know they can rely on us.

All our events, including our Spring Dinner, are on hold for the foreseeable future.

We've started hosting weekly free webinars with member experts on a variety of topics, such as finances, business planning, virtual selling, and mental health support.

You heard from Margaret and Gavin about the Chamber led Initiative, the Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition. I lead the group and we meet 3 times per week. We have had 2 federal Ministers on the calls, multiple provincial Deputy Ministers, and our own Mayor joins us when he can. This group was founded for the following reasons:

1. To have a point of contact for government as they make rapid decisions for this group to provide feedback or distribute information.
2. To advocate for businesses and employees at this time.
3. To work with the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments at this time to ensure Nova Scotians are taken care of at a time of reduced economic activity.
4. To eventually work to develop a recovery plan for the businesses and employees in our area.

This group is accomplishing those objectives and more. We are advocating, informing and assisting government at all levels as they create policy in real time.

But ultimately, why was this group formed?

It is to keep members and the larger business community informed. We will continue to work for Halifax, and we will be there when it's time to recover and rebuild.

The Halifax Chamber is committed to working together to support Halifax through this time.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,



Patrick Sullivan  
President and CEO