



What about cities?

Halifax makes great contributions to the national economy - it's time to start compensating our city for it.

The important contributions that cities - like ours - make to the national economy needs to be recognized. The federal government needs to examine options and implement plans to support cities in Canada. Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination - at all levels - is imperative for such an initiative to be successful. The federal government needs to show us their plan to deal with cities and the relationships between, and within, the levels of government, when making program or policy change.



What about health care?

Businesses have a role to play in reducing health care costs through workplace wellness. . .the next step is up to government.

Right now, the federal government is spending about \$34 billion a year - or more than 40% of all national public spending - on health care. Government must get this spending under control.

It's essential to promote workplace wellness to ensure strong business and a strong economy. A healthy workforce is a prerequisite to a healthy economy. Fewer ill or injured employees means lower worker's compensation, health insurance, unemployment insurance and disability costs. Improving the health of citizens and the provision of quality health care must be the focus of a national health policy. And workplace wellness programs can aid government in this effort by better educating employees and reducing their dependence on the health care system.

Provinces also need sustainable, predictable and stable health care funding. But, at the same time, Canadian business wants an approach that ensures accountability for each dollar spent. Wise, strategic use of our limited dollars is required.

For more detailed information on these issues, check out our web site: www.halifaxchamber.com

2004 Federal Election Debate

...talking about issues important to business

Tuesday, June 22, 2004

Sobey School of Business,
Saint Mary's University

8:00 - 9:30 AM

~ Light breakfast will be served. ~

Hosted by: Steve Murphy, ATV News

Participants:



Steve Streach,
Sackville-Eastern Shore



Mike Savage, Dartmouth



Bill Carr, Halifax West



Michael Oddy, Halifax

Offered in partnership with:



2004 Federal Election

Questions from the Business Community



HALIFAX CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

stronger together

June 2004

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The Halifax Chamber of Commerce is the voice of business in HRM. As that voice, we represent close to 2,000 businesses from all types of industry.

We've prepared this platform document to help our members highlight the most pressing issues for business. It's time to start asking our candidates "What about. . ." the business community?

What about the economy?

In all our talk about health care, social programs and fiscal scandals we've completely forgotten about the economy.

The health of the Canadian economy is a paramount concern for all businesses. Government must make the continued growth and diversification of our economy its top concern. Without a strong economy, all of our public and private services are in trouble. Weak economy. Weak business climate. Poor profits. Job Loss. Spending cuts on the private and public side - and so, the cycle begins.

What economy are we heading for? Will Nova Scotia be ready? Will the country?

. . .and spending?

Who doesn't like to spend money? The problem is we're spending what we don't have.

The business community has been calling for a better controls of government spending for a long time. Let's see some action. Government must make tough choices, determine priority areas and use restraint.

Strategic, focused investment in areas like health, education and infrastructure will enable government to foster economic growth while still offering Canadians the public services we've come to expect.

. . .and debt?

Our national debt is over \$500 billion and growing everyday.

Debt repayment needs to be at the top of the priority list. Without significant attention to balanced budgets and debt repayment all our programs and services are in jeopardy.

Lowering the debt - and the annual cost of servicing the debt - will free-up additional funding for needed program spending and tax reductions. Lower debt means lower debt service costs - reduced debt service costs mean more money is available to reduce taxes and invest in programs.

. . .and tax cuts?

Cutting taxes without cutting expenses puts us further in the hole. Has anyone figured out how to make government more efficient?

Like all Canadians, business people like tax cuts. But business people also understand finance, and they know that cuts can only occur in balance with decreased costs.

Think of your own business: you want to reduce prices for your customers - this makes you more competitive. But to lower your prices you must reduce your costs. That's what our national debt is - a cost to the Canadian wallet. And we can't reduce taxes until we cut that cost.

Beyond that, tax cuts must be sustainable. For that to happen, spending must be controlled and regular payments on the debt must be made. Without spending control and debt repayment, sustainable tax cuts are not possible.

Business people need to be able to predict government's actions. Introducing a tax cut, when it's not sustainable, makes predictability impossible and leaves business exposed.

What about immigration?

Growing our economy means that we need to become a truly multicultural society - not just pay lip-service to the idea.

Immigration is important to the economic success of our region, province and country. Not only do immigrants help to bolster our shrinking population, they also help to grow our economy. Many bring financial resources, education, training and work experience. Immigrants create jobs by establishing businesses and their presence ensures the development of a diverse labour market, producing a "brain gain".

A truly multicultural community encourages local and foreign investment; and immigrants bring new insights and approaches that help to grow innovation.

It's time to get past our prejudices. We need immigrants to grow our economy.

What about transportation?

Good highways, accessible roads, public transit. . .that's good, right? So why is it so hard to accomplish?

Nova Scotia - Halifax for that matter - is a pretty spread-out place. We are home to small communities and sub-divisions that all feed into Halifax. Regional transportation hubs - centres for public transit access and roadways - are needed. This is the point: the economic success of city depends on the success of the business community.

When the business community profits, so does the city. To profit, the business community must have access to an efficient transportation system that allows for the easy movement of goods and people.

All levels of government need to work together to coordinate multi-modal transportation solutions across the country. Excellent transportation in and out of our region, including first-rate air transportation services, is crucial to the growth and success of our Atlantic Canadian economy.