

Chamber Impacts - Areas of Recent Progress

December 13, 1999

Federal Spending

Since the last federal budget, there has been growing pressure on the government to deliver new program spending and immediate tax relief. The Chamber's most recent member panel poll indicated support for a three-step process in managing federal finances: 1) First, we need to control spending and achieve surpluses; 2) With spending under control, we can then bring down the massive federal debt; 3) Having reduced the debt, and freed up money currently being spent on interest payments, we can deliver sustainable reductions in personal taxes that will have a meaningful impact on the national economy. On November 15, Michael Schmid and Ian Tramble of the Federal Finance Sub-Committee presented this plan in the Chamber's annual pre-budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Provincial Spending

On November 22, the Chamber submitted a report to the Nova Scotia Fiscal Management Task Force, emphasizing that the province's finances are out of control and if steps are not taken to put our fiscal house in order, we will lose our ability to control the delivery of programs and services. The Chamber's message is simple: the solution to our problem requires structural changes rather than quick fixes.

The Chamber set out five basic principles which should be the foundation of sound fiscal management of the province's limited resources: 1) Government must urgently eliminate its operating deficit and commit itself to *sustainable* balanced budgets; 2) Government must establish a framework for the future that sets a clear vision and direction for a fiscally responsible province; 3) Government must restore public confidence in the province's accounting policies and financial reporting; 4) Government must select its priorities and provide only those services that can be funded over the long term; 5) Govern-

ment must promote and foster a culture of self-sufficiency.

Air Mergers

A recent member poll showed that the business community was concerned about the uncertainty and potential direction of the *reorganization* of the Canadian air carrier industry. From a broad business perspective, members are greatly concerned with the preservation of competition, the effects of any proposed restructuring upon Atlantic region air services and airports, and the future of the many valued employees of both national carriers and their respective affiliates in Nova Scotia.

The Chamber summarized this feedback and forwarded it to federal transportation minister David Collenette. The message is clear - as consumers of regional and global air services, the businesses represented by the Chamber are seeking three basic things: 1) Good frequency; 2) Good pricing; 3) Good connectivity with other airlines on long haul travel and cargo movement.

Business & Policing

A member panel survey resulted from the interaction between the Chamber's Retail Committee and Halifax Regional Police. The committee felt that we could supply the Halifax Regional Police and RCMP with valuable guidance on the business perspective on crime, what business needs from the police, and how business can help. Two areas highlighted by members were the need for an increased emphasis on identifying crime trends and criminals in the local area. The introduction of "City Watch", an automated warning and notification system that is now being tested in the Burnside Industrial Park area, is designed to meet just these types of needs.

For full details on any of the above issues, contact the Chamber office at 468-7111 or visit our website at www.halifaxchamber.com and click on the Policy Update section.