

Recent Progress Made on Several Policy Fronts

May 22, 2000

The last several months have been a very busy time for the Chamber and its volunteers. Some recent developments include:

Govt's P3 Study Concurs with Chamber

In February, the Province released a report prepared by KPMG on the private partnership process in Nova Scotia. The report reinforced the conclusions of a March 1999 Chamber discussion paper: *P3 offers significant benefits to government as a means to deliver needed infrastructure and other services.*

The KPMG report echoed the Chamber's findings that improvements are needed to maximize the benefits from P3 but that the concept itself is a sound alternative to traditional methods. There is a need for clear objectives, consistent procedures, and transparent assessment and evaluation. The provincial study should allow the government to implement improvements to the P3 process and apply it to a broad range of non-core activities.

Minister Buys into 4th Iceland Flight

Transport Canada Minister David Collette recently announced a proposed amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding between Canada and Iceland that would allow Icelandair to add a fourth weekly flight to Halifax. This means more tourism and increased economic growth for Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

An active proponent of this change, the Chamber worked closely with the province and other community stakeholders to see it realized. We are pleased to have the federal government come onside and look forward to quick ratification of the amendment and introduction of this service.

WCB Introduces Periodic Payment

For more than two years, the Chamber's Small Business Committee has been pressing the Work-

ers' Compensation Board (WCB) to introduce periodic payment of premiums. In 1999, the WCB introduced a pilot project to test the idea and several Chamber members were enthusiastic participants in the group. With the introduction this year of periodic payment for all employers, another step in streamlining red tape has been made.

Chambers Nationwide Involved in Parental Leave Debate

Another initiative of the Small Business Committee was a recent national call to action to oppose impacts of a federal extension to a full year of parental leave and parental leave benefits. The Committee submitted a position paper to the federal and provincial governments outlining its concerns and the need to revisit the idea or look at remedial action. This was distributed nationally with the assistance of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and various regional and provincial chambers. Several Chambers have contacted us for more information and are following up with the federal government and their own provincial governments to begin discussions on the proposed changes.

UARB Orders HRM to Reduce Council Size

On March 2nd, the Chamber submitted its comments to the Nova Scotia Utilities and Review Board (UARB) on the review of the current electoral boundaries for Halifax Regional Municipality. The Chamber expressed strong support for the view that a smaller council of 16 is preferable. The UARB has accepted this position and has ordered HRM to reduce the number of councillors in time for the 2004 municipal elections.

The UARB reported a reduced number of councillors would create a "more efficient, cohesive, effective governing body to better address regional issues."

Editor's note: Watch your Policy Updates and Business Voice for other advocacy initiatives underway at the Chamber on your behalf.



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