

Law Amendments – Sunday Shopping October 16, 2003

The Chamber's position is clear – government should not be in the business of regulating store hours. We have been saying it for years.

The issue of deregulated store hours and Sunday openings remains a significant concern to the business community.

Individual business must have the right to open as the market dictates, and to make their own operating decisions.

By allowing stores to open as the market dictates, it allows communities, particular industries and individual stores to make their own decisions on when, and when not, to be open.

We must deregulate shopping hours if we are to be a truly competitive province.

Survey after survey has confirmed increasing support for Sunday openings. Many public opinion polls indicate that the majority of Nova Scotians, in all areas of the province support Sunday shopping.

An overwhelming majority (83%) of Chamber members called for the deregulation of store hours in a February 2000 survey, including 68% of retail respondents.

According to one estimate, Sunday shopping has the potential to add up to \$21 million in shopping revenue through increased tourism traffic. This could translate into

300 sustainable full-time equivalent positions with 1,036 additional people working on any given Sunday.

General deregulation of retail hours should be introduced now. Rather than implementing the 6 Sundays before Christmas, government should just get on with it. A plebiscite is not needed and 6 weeks is not enough.

However, we believe a compromise could be considered which would provide better time for full evaluation including:

- A one to three year experiment with general deregulation
- A one to three year experiment with deregulation for limited time frame (ie. June- December)
- A one to three year experiment with deregulation in a geographically limited area

To address possible concerns, any move to deregulation could include protections limiting the impact on employees and small retailers.

In Ontario, for example, retailers in a mall can elect to open or close, thus overriding any general opening provisions in mall leases. In addition, Ontario implemented labour-standard protecting employees who declined to work on Sunday.

We would suggest that protections could include:

- Interim protection to existing employees; excluding new employees hired after the legislation comes into effect.
- Interim protection for businesses in a shopping complex that are in leases requiring them to be open when the complex is open; excluding new leases once the legislation comes into effect.

Now is the time to deregulate store hours.

- Nova Scotians want it;
- visitors to our province want it;
- it is a good thing for our community.