

May 4, 2016

The Honourable Randy Delorey, M.L.A., Minister of Finance and Treasury Board

Department of Finance
7th Floor, Provincial Building
1723 Hollis Street
P.O. Box 187
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Dear Minister Delorey,

On behalf of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce I would like to congratulate you, and the rest of the provincial government, on tabling a balanced budget for 2016/17.

This is the first balanced budget Nova Scotia has seen since 2011, and it represents a major step forward for fiscal sustainability in our province. We hope that this is the beginning of a trend, as continued balanced budgets will help reduce the burden of Nova Scotia's debt.

It will be important, as you know, to keep a close eye on spending going forward as the provincial economy remains fragile. The budget projects economic growth of only 0.9% in 2016 and 0.8% in 2017. This means that while things are looking better, we are by no means out of the woods just yet. We understand you are under pressure to increase spending from many competing interests, and we hope that you keep the broader economic picture in mind.

Despite the surplus, I would be remiss if I did not mention Nova Scotia's high tax burden which remains one of, if not the top priority of our members. We are looking for the government to begin planning to reduce the tax burden on businesses in Nova Scotia so that our members can compete with the rest of Canada. The Chamber has also been a persistent advocate for a Tax Working Group, as promised in last year's budget, and was disappointed that it was not included this year.

We appreciated your budget speech's focus on regulatory reform and increasing immigration to Nova Scotia. These are two key priorities for the Chamber under our 2013-2018 Strategic Plan and we have vocally supported the government's recent work, including:

1. Creating the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness;
2. Increasing Nova Scotia's allotment of provincial nominees; and
3. Opening new immigration streams.

Increasing immigration and reducing red tape are critical issues for Nova Scotia and we hope to see even more progress in the year ahead.

In the end, while the business community didn't get everything it asked for, balancing the budget is a major achievement for Nova Scotia. We look forward to continuing to work together to help our province achieve its potential. If there is ever anything the Chamber can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Respectfully Yours,



Valerie Payn, President and CEO
Halifax Chamber of Commerce

cc:

The Hon. Stephen McNeil, M.L.A., Premier of Nova Scotia