

Dear Premier Dexter:

With an election call widely expected in the next year, the Chamber felt it timely to undertake the attached detailed review of the platform initiatives released by your government during the 2009 election campaign under the banner “7 commitments that will make life better for today’s families”.

The goal of our review was two-fold. First to provide an unbiased assessment of the government’s adherence to these commitments, and where possible, determine their success in achieving the desired objectives. Second, to use these findings to develop our own platform of issues to raise members of all parties going into an election year.

On balance, the report found that the government has generally done a good job in actioning its agenda and sticking to the fundamentals of its 2009 platform. For this we commend government on its transparency and commitment to execution. Where it becomes more difficult to assess is the area of outcomes and effectiveness of the initiatives. These are made more difficult for a variety of reasons including delays in availability of statistical data and, in some cases, an absence of benchmarks against which to measure success. These include for example, the commitments to “fix rural roads and keep communities strong” and “give seniors options to stay home in their own community”. It is not clear how one measures the success of these issues. Others such as “live within our means” lack clear definition. Questions around the size of contract settlements with public sector unions (well beyond previously published expectations) bring into question the success of this.

As your government moves into the last year of its mandate and seeks re-election, the Chamber believes the government needs to set specific, measurable objectives as it articulates its next platform. In the area of job creation, critical to all Nova Scotians, what are the targets (numbers) for job growth? What are you proposing to implement to achieve these targets? What role will immigration play? What is the planned strategy with respect to taxation? From a legacy perspective, where does the government stand on budget deficit elimination, and what is the timing?

We are intending to release this review in the next 2 weeks to Chamber members and provincial opposition parties. As well, the Chamber Provincial Affairs Committee is preparing a scorecard on your government’s first term in office, which will be released later this fall. We would be happy to discuss the attached review if you would like.

Sincerely yours,

Valerie A. Payn
President and CEO

cc – Minister of Finance