

Tracking Chamber Progress Through the Fall

December 11, 2000

Following is a summary of recent developments the Chamber has made on various issues as we continue to strengthen our community and work on your behalf as the voice of business:

Meeting Government Caucus

At the Executive Committee's annual meeting with the PC caucus, Chamber President Ian Thompson noted that while we were pleased by the Province's continued determination to eliminate the deficit and ultimately reduce the debt and lower taxes, we would have preferred to see an even more aggressive effort to date on the deficit. Further steps could be taken *now* that would make government smaller but protect its revenues, while creating private sector opportunities. In particular, the Chamber would like to have seen a bolder approach when considering the privatization of the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission.

The meeting also covered such issues as economic development, immigration, energy, transportation and deregulated store hours.

Canada Transportation Act Review

In November, Chamber representatives appeared before the *Canada Transportation Act (CTA)* Review Panel, chaired by Haligonian Brian Flemming, while the federal group was in Halifax on a cross-country consultation. The Chamber submission, presented by Michael DiPenta, Chair of the Transportation Committee, covered the following areas: recommendations that the *CTA* and *Canada Marine Act* be complementary to ensure we have a comprehensive national policy; the importance of our rail connection to the Port of Halifax; fair cost recovery fees for marine services; and future financing for our Port. The Chamber and

other presenters, including Premier Hamm, raised the panel's awareness of this region's future transportation issues and needs.

Federal Finance Poll Results

In October, the Chamber polled members on the issue of debt reduction vs. tax cuts. The 100 respondents supported the continuation of the Chamber's stance that our federal priorities must be: (1) control spending and achieve continued surpluses; (2) bring down the massive federal debt, and (3) use the savings to deliver sustainable personal tax cuts followed by corporate tax reductions. When asked, "Recognizing that by reducing taxes we would take money away from debt reduction, do you support putting tax reduction ahead of debt reduction as a fiscal priority?", 69% of respondents indicated that debt reduction had to come first. These priorities will form the basis of the Federal Finance Committee's pre-budget work early in the new year.

Working With Industrial Cape Breton BOT

Earlier this year, the Chamber entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Industrial Cape Breton Board of Trade (ICBBoT) to help build stronger ties between our two communities and take a provincial perspective on some issues. Representatives from the two groups met recently to identify policy issues that could be jointly advocated. They include: deregulated store hours; moratorium creep; roads and highways, and the skills shortage. The MOU also identified a need to increase mutual awareness of the business environment and climate in both regions. To enhance this awareness, a joint networking event will be held in 2001 that will feature businesses from the ICBBoT. Watch for more details on your email or fax.

Check the Policy Update section on our website for more information on many of the above items.



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