

# A Healthier Community is a Stronger Community

December 17, 2001

A healthy workforce is a prerequisite to a healthy economy and a strong community. The Chamber has a role in promoting a healthy workforce in our region. By supporting a healthy workforce, we are also promoting a strong business environment.

With this in mind, the Chamber brought together a group of business leaders, guided by Bill Black of The Maritime Life Assurance Company, to review certain aspects of the health care delivery system in Nova Scotia. In particular, the group's mandate was to take a general look at two aspects of health care: governance and management issues. George Cooper, Q.C., of MacInnes Cooper, led the efforts of the team examining governance issues and Jeff Somerville of Premiere Executive Suites guided the management focus of the work. The result was a report on the governance and management of health and health care in Nova Scotia that was presented to Hon. Jamie Muir, Minister of Health.

One of the key messages to come out of the Chamber's report is that we should be focused on improving the health of Nova Scotians and the provision of quality health care. We should be assessing success by the health of our citizens as measured by the attainment of specific health targets.

Nova Scotia is one of Canada's unhealthiest provinces, and it is costing us. Poor health costs our government, our economy, our business sector and our community.

The Chamber believes that, as a province, we must refocus our efforts on health, not health care. This is a move we can make as individuals, business and government. As individuals, we can commit to taking responsibility for our own health and well-being. As business, we can provide health incentives for our employees and commit to fostering a health oriented work place. As government, we can get out of the business of managing facilities and focus on setting the direction for health in Nova Scotia.

It is imperative that the systems governing health in our province are transparent and accountable. Strong accountable governance, experienced and effective boards and board members, and keeping score are critical success factors for our health care system.

An affordable and sustainable healthcare system is dependent on each of us taking more responsibility for our own health and our community's health. The Chamber is committed to walking the talk and we're starting at home by making our own Chamber workplace a healthy workplace.

Your December issue of *Business Voice* includes interviews with Black, Cooper and Somerville. Each has an interesting perspective on the state of our collective health. The focus of the December *Business Voice* is just the beginning on putting this issue on the business community's radar.

The Chamber intends to lead by example and keep the health issue front and centre heading into 2002.