

Chamber Applauds Release of New Energy Strategy

December 12, 2001

The Chamber applauds the Province following the release today of the new energy strategy. The strategy, deemed a work in progress to remain adaptable to changing conditions, will ensure sustainable long-term decisions and that energy is given the appropriate priority and focus. This strategy will allow the Province to focus its direction and provide a framework so that the opportunities before Nova Scotians are maximized.

Department of Energy

The Chamber strongly supports the decision to establish a Department of Energy to implement and manage provincial energy policies. The energy industry is one of the most important areas of economic development our economy has seen in decades. A minister dedicated to an energy portfolio will ensure that Nova Scotia receives the maximum industry benefits. The sector needs strong representation in cabinet and across Canada.

The minister must have the ability to create an organization, and to access the resources necessary, to meet the challenges that are before us. Building expertise within government will allow Nova Scotia to effectively compete, position and play in an industry that represents tremendous potential for Nova Scotians and the future of our province. Government must invest in the necessary resources to access the best and the brightest talent available. Those individuals will bring knowledge, experience and a new level of depth in dealing with energy issues. The Chamber looks forward to the specific details of the new Department of Energy.

Strategy Timelines

The Chamber is pleased to see the new strategy contains action items and objectives, but

we do not see any clear tactics. There needs to be a process by which progress and success can be measured. The Province must set more specific target dates for the implementation of the strategy. We look forward to an action plan with timelines and specific targets. These are essential for government to be able to measure progress and success.

Net Royalty Use

It is the Chamber's belief that long-term economic stability is best achieved by paying down the debt. It is critical that Nova Scotians benefit from the development of our natural resources and the financial rewards of those resources are targeted to reducing the debt and building long-term sustainable economic development. The Province has announced a Nova Scotia Offshore Heritage Trust for any net offshore royalties. We are pleased that government has committed to use revenues from the offshore to improve the long-term economic and fiscal condition of the province, but the Chamber stands firm that debt repayment is the first priority area to be addressed to improve the economy. Any net royalty revenues must be invested for ensuring long-term economic stability, best achieved by paying down the debt.

Business Climate

The Chamber is pleased that the Province has committed to work in partnership with the federal government to create and maintain regulatory, fiscal and taxation regimes that are efficient, effective and competitive with other regions. We look forward to the specific details of a plan to ensure a competitive business climate.

For a copy of the Province's energy strategy, visit www.gov.ns.ca/energystrategy

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P.O. Box 8990, Halifax,
Nova Scotia B3K 5M6
Telephone (902) 468-7111
Fax (902) 468-7333
www.halifaxchamber.com

POLICY UPDATE

