



THE PREMIER
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
B3J 2T3

September 16, 2014

Ms. Valerie A. Payn
President & CEO
Halifax Chamber of Commerce
<valerie@halifaxchamber.com>

Dear Ms. Payn:

Thank you for your email of August 12, 2014 regarding government's plan and specific issues of taxes, regulation and the oneNS report.

Since forming government, we have been working hard to deliver on our promises to Nova Scotians and on the mandate with which we have been entrusted. I appreciate your recognition of the positive early moves from our government and also your confidence in our Cabinet ministers.

The oneNS report described the fiscal, economic and demographic challenges facing our province, and we are committed to tackling them in collaboration with the private sector and all Nova Scotians. The report spoke to all of us, and concluded that a long-term, collective effort on the part of many, across all sectors, is needed to achieve our vision of a better future.

The oneNS Coalition was created to foster broad-based action on the oneNS goals. The Coalition has been developing its overall plan and generating specific actions in the areas of immigration and retention, startups and exports, three priorities identified by former Commission Chair Ray Ivany. More detail on the plan and timeline will be shared after the next Coalition meeting, and the first phase of a public engagement program will begin in the early fall.

The oneNS report is clear that the private sector must drive economic growth in Nova Scotia and that we need to build a greater understanding and acceptance of the role of the private sector in our economy and do more to celebrate business successes. I am reassured that the Halifax Chamber of Commerce members and others in the private sector are prepared to do your part to invest, promote entrepreneurship and immigration, grow the economy and create new jobs.

Government, for our part, has integrated the 19 goals and 12 game changers throughout all our plans and priorities. We are committed to make tangible progress on all those goals and to lead where required, including balancing the provincial budget, restoring fiscal stability and creating a favourable business climate for the private sector.

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Over the last several months we have taken many steps that will help us as a province to achieve the oneNS goals. Recent examples include changes to the roles and responsibilities within Economic and Rural Development and Tourism and its agencies to be more responsive to the needs of business; the establishment of a new Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and changes and agreements that will make it easier for workers to transfer skills and training between provinces; and the appointment of the Premier's Immigration Advisory Panel and improvements to the Provincial Nominee Program that make it easier for international students to become permanent residents in Nova Scotia. There are many more examples across government.

Fiscally, we remain on track for a balanced budget within three years. Our first budget was built on keeping our commitments to Nova Scotians and beginning open and honest dialogue about our true fiscal costs and very real revenue challenges. Taken together, these represent a steep hill to climb before we reach a truly sustainable footing. Government is doing its part, reviewing all our programs for savings and opportunities to streamline and coordinate that will ensure every taxpayer dollar is being spent fairly and efficiently and to better serve Nova Scotians.

I agree with you that we need to address red tape, regulations and tax structures to make it easier to do business here. As you are aware, one of the first acts of our government was to launch a comprehensive review of our provincial taxes, fees and the regulatory burden on the private sector. Consultations recently concluded and I thank the Halifax Chamber of Commerce for your participation. The report is expected to be delivered to the Minister of Finance in the fall. It will help us to set a path that considers simplicity, fairness and competitiveness and aligns with the Chamber's strategic goal of championing common sense regulations.

We look forward to returning to the Legislature this September where, among other things, we will provide an update to Nova Scotians on our fiscal situation and set out government's direction, priorities and agenda in our first Speech from the Throne.

There is no doubt that we have a challenging road ahead of us but Nova Scotia has the assets and the opportunities to ensure a strong economic future, if we act together to change our path. Thank you for pledging the support of the business community. I look forward to continuing to work with the Halifax Chamber of Commerce and I will count on you to champion the tough but necessary decisions that will move us forward together as a province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen McNeil', written in a cursive style.

Honourable Stephen McNeil, MLA
Premier

Copy To: Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Office of Planning and Priorities
Jennifer Church, Executive Director, Office of Planning and Priorities