

Working for You – Policy Year End Review

December 2008

The Chamber continues its work on the issues for you. Below is a review of this year's work:

Education Committee

2008 has been productive for the Education Committee. A key accomplishment was submission of a school board governance report to the Department of Education, which was used as input to changes made to the Education Act.

The Committee's ongoing quest to strengthen links between schools and the business community, led to a business leaders' panel with local guidance counselors in November. During this session, local employers shared information with guidance counselors, concerning what traits they will be looking for in future employees and what employment sectors will be in demand.

The Committee also gave school board candidates an opportunity to post their views on the Chamber web site leading up to the October 18th Election.

Most recently, the Education Committee gathered up to date information concerning university, community college and high school co-operative programs.

Transportation Committee

Earlier this year, the Transportation Committee created a set of unprecedented national transportation policy guidelines. These became official Canadian Chamber of Commerce policy in October. Both Premier MacDonald and Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Murray Scott, publicly commended the Committee for its leading edge work.

The Committee also submitted a formal response to Transport Canada's request for feedback on the national rail service review. The Committee has offered ongoing assistance to this panel while it conducts its research over the next 18 months.

On a sad note, the Committee lost a valuable member with the death of Air Subcommittee Chair, Chris Ketchum, in August. Committee members will honour Chris' legacy by following his example of enthusiasm, hard work and service.

In this post-federal election scenario, the Committee continues to monitor all developments in rail, surface and air transportation including evolving Gateway and infrastructure renewal details.

Health

The Chamber continues its national leadership in the area of workplace health, with its second annual Healthy Workplace Awards. Held on October 14th, the awards saluted local healthy business leaders. Seven businesses won highest Health Innovator honours: Maritime Paper, Capital Health, Bird Rideau Construction, Nova Scotia Public Service Commission, Nova Scotia Power, the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons. The IWK Health Centre was named a Health Leader. Secunda Marine, Boyne Clarke Barristers and Solicitors, CFB Halifax, Office Interiors, Medavie Blue Cross and CIBC were all designated Healthy Businesses.

Earlier this year, the Chamber analyzed the results of the Corpus Sanchez Report and publicly recommended that the Government adopt all its recommendations. After accepting the report, the Province's Department of Health is now involved in the wholesale change that is necessary to carry out the report's recommendations. The Chamber continues to monitor all developments regarding health and workplace wellness.

Municipal Affairs

This past year, the Municipal Affairs Committee continued to focus on its priorities of HRMbyDesign, tax reform, municipal finance and the municipal Charter, while building relationships with key municipal players.

Key accomplishments this year include:

- A pre-budget submission, which was presented to Council in March
- The Mayoral debate, which the Chamber hosted on September 25th
- Posting Council candidates views to the Chamber's web site, pre-election
- Submission of the Municipal Annual Update to HRM in August
- Attendance at HRMbyDesign consultations
- Giselle Kakamousias continues to be a member of the Tax Reform Committee
- Presentation to Law Amendments Committee, supporting HRMbyDesign

Plans for the upcoming year include:

- Producing a municipal budget report card
- Support of the Scorecard work and event in February 2009

Provincial Affairs

The focus of the Provincial Affairs Committee continues to be on provincial finance. Key accomplishments this year include:

- Creation of a provincial budget report card in March
- A pre-budget submission to the Province in March
- Relationship building; attending a mixer with the Deputy Ministers at the Chamber in October
- Posting the opinions of candidates for MP regarding the Gateway to the Chamber's web site
- Participation in Nova Scotia's Better Regulation Initiative

Plans for the upcoming year include:

- Consultation with the Bio-science sector in Nova Scotia regarding opportunities for that sector

Energy Advisory Council

Energy issues are top of mind for many Chamber members. The Energy Advisory Group is working hard on behalf of Chamber members. Accomplishments of the past year include providing input to the province's renewed Energy Strategy regarding the issue of energy security. The Group is now examining the issue of carbon emission pricing and the impact it will have on business in Nova Scotia.