



Atlantic Chamber of Commerce Media Statement

Learning from the present to create more positive outcomes in the future

Windsor, NS – December 20, 2019

On behalf of many Chambers of Commerce across the province the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce observes that this is sad news for thousands of Nova Scotian families and their communities. The Premier's announcement, while supporting the desired objective of closing Boat Harbour, has come with significant social and economic costs to Pictou County and the province. With the anticipated closure of Northern Pulp, the environmental issues may have been resolved locally, but from a global perspective they will simply shift to another jurisdiction with forestry operations while impoverishing people, businesses and communities across Nova Scotia.

In rejecting an extension to Boat Harbour operations or exploring how operations could continue until a permanent solution is developed; all stakeholders and governments must recognize the anticipated impacts of the decision. A huge market for forest products will be lost, impacting jobs at Northern Pulp and materially affecting sawmills, woodlot owners, truckers and innumerable businesses within the supply chain across the province. This is a reality with consequences that will touch people in communities across the province and deserves profound consideration and attention.

Rather than pit the economy versus the environment, we need to strive for win-win outcomes. We are hopeful that the province's commitment of \$50M will be enough to address the immediate personal economic impacts of today's decision. However, in the longer-term government also must recognize the need to create processes which allow business investment and environmental protection to coexist. It is imperative for the province to evaluate and learn from this experience which followed a convoluted process that resulted in this issue becoming so socially, environmentally and economically divisive.

The attractiveness of Nova Scotia for future investment and job creation depends on learning from recent experiences and improving the effectiveness of industrial and environmental approval processes. If investors view government regulations as unreliable and susceptible to political influence, Nova Scotia becomes far riskier as a place to establish or grow a business. We encourage the provincial government to assess the events that have transpired and adopt positive change to avoid a repeat of the Northern Pulp experience.

Moving forward, it is important that regulatory regimes include:

- Consultation with all stakeholders impacted by legislative changes prior to changes being enacted;
- Consultation with business and reliable economic impact studies to avoid imposition of unreasonable burdens and deadlines;
- Reliable expectations for compliance—expectations cannot be repeatedly changed without providing clear direction and adequate opportunity to comply;

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- Recognition that businesses are guided by established regulations and available technology—expectations of businesses should not exceed what is legislated or possible via best available technology;
 - Establishing a balance between economic and environmental goals—stakeholders should be required to address all outcomes of regulatory change; and
 - Where interests are at odds or rights are to be respected, government needs to ensure a respectful dialogue and consultation has been completed in a timely manner.

While the process followed to close Boat Harbour has been regretful, it is far more important that this not be repeated. We encourage the provincial government to undertake a formal evaluation of how this issue was handled and establish framework that reflects Nova Scotian’s desires for maintaining a stable economy, jobs, our highly desirable quality of life, and our natural environment. Anything less will lessen opportunity and reduce the ability of our rural communities to attract investment and the jobs associated with it.

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About the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce

As the strong, credible and unified voice that influences an environment where business in Atlantic Canada succeeds, the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce (ACC) represents more than 16,000 businesses through its network of 93 chambers of commerce and boards of trade in the four Atlantic provinces. ACC is a catalyst to influence, educate and advocate on policy related issues to support business, deliver high-value services and opportunities to our members, and to support and promote initiatives that contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region.

For more information:

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