



Policy Handbook 2020

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Number and Name of Policy	Initiated/Renewed	Status
1. Economic Development	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
2. Tourism	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
3. Government Relations	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
4. Infrastructure and Transportation	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
5. Addressing Entrepreneur Mental Health	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
6. Membership	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed
7. Human Resources	2020 Revised 2018	Expires in 2022, unless renewed

Note: Any policy adopted by the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce at each year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is adopted for two years unless otherwise specified or reconsidered at a subsequent meeting. At the end of the Annual General Meeting, two years after a policy is adopted, it expires unless it is renewed for an additional two years, or such other time as passed by motion at an AGM. Should circumstances require changes to a piece of policy before an AGM, it will be at the discretion of the Board of Directors, in conjunction with the policy committee. Those changes will then be voted on at the next AGM.



Economic Development

Issue

At its heart, economic development is about building healthy economies to create and maintain healthy communities. Economic development helps communities in a variety of ways such as an increased tax base to improve local infrastructure, such as roads, parks, libraries and health services; job development; business retention; economic diversification effectively reducing a community's vulnerability to a single business sector; self-sufficiency; productive use of property for its "highest and best use" to maximize the value of that property; quality of life; and recognition of local products.

Summary

Truro, and Colchester County in general, has historically been considered an ideal hub for business, situated in a key location near other major centres with access to various modes of transportation. In recent years, the region has been left to grow organically without a coordinated, focused effort by key stakeholders, municipalities and the province to encourage business expansion, retention and attraction to the area. Economic activity in the region is below the desired pace with many of our skilled trades people seeking employment in the West and other regions of the country.

Efforts to attract new industry and expand existing businesses are met with strong competition in neighboring regions, provinces and globally; many of whom are implementing new business incentive programs to promote their regions.

Background

To enjoy economic growth in the future, making it possible for residents to maintain or improve their standard of living, an effort must be made to diversify our industry base, attract those employers who offer skilled labour or professional positions and to develop or find individuals willing and able to fill these positions.

Identifying incentives that are both appealing to business existing and new, and beneficial to tax-payers is an important step towards developing a healthy and diverse economic base in our region and a step towards creating a growing economic environment in which business can prosper and, in turn, residents benefit through well-paid employment opportunities and increased tax revenue. A key driver of a consistently high standard of living is an economy diverse enough to weather weakness in one sector by enjoying strength in others. To be competitive in efforts to attract and

expand industries, regions must consider the factors affecting these major decisions made by businesses.

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce supports the sustainable use of natural resources for economic purposes when sourced or processed in environmentally responsible ways which have met regulatory standards implemented by government.

Recommendation

Be it resolved The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will take a leading role as a stakeholder supporting economic development, contributing financially and fundraising to support the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network efforts to market, grow and attract business and people to the region. The Chamber will support economic development efforts verbally and in writing, and financially, where fiscally responsible, as decided by the Board of Directors, in its absolute discretion. Also, be it resolved the Chamber will:

- lobby the municipal governments of the Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Municipality of Colchester County and Millbrook First Nation to establish economic development strategic plans in concert with the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network, with tangible and measurable goals.
- lobby all municipal governments and Millbrook First Nation to support the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network establish a database of the assets available within each community to be shared with a global market.
- lobby for the reduction of red tape at all levels of government impacting business.
- Work with partners to promote an awareness of succession planning, natural strength of the region as an agricultural hub, people and business attraction and export opportunities for local companies to increase economic growth through global competitiveness.
- support physician recruitment efforts by the Nova Scotia Health Authority, as well as other health-system support staff, to ensure the majority of local citizens have access to appropriate healthcare in their own community.
- hold the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network Accountable to its funding stakeholders through representation on the board and liaison and oversight committee.
- foster economic entrepreneurship through partnerships with CBDC/NOBL and others, to deliver skills-based training and mentorship.



Tourism

Issue

Tourism is a key economic driver in this region. The tourism industry is Nova Scotia's largest export valued at \$2 Billion annually. This region is sharply competing with others in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere in the province where iconic tourism attractions are located (i.e. Bluenose, Fortress Louisburg) to attract and offer one-of-a-kind experiences to high-yield, first-time travelers.

Summary

Tourism is one of the largest employment sectors in the county with more than 2,000 jobs directly related to tourism in accommodations, food services, arts, entertainment and recreation. Many of these employees are also the lowest wage earners in the county. Indirectly, there are more than 3,500 people employed in retail poised to benefit from the industry, as well as other spin-off benefits.

Tourism Nova Scotia was established as a private sector-led crown corporation in April 2015. The province's new strategic plan outlines its goal to double tourism revenue to \$4 Billion in the next 10 years. Tourism Nova Scotia will offer partners funding opportunities aligned with its strategic priorities, creating a number of new funding programs which local groups traditionally funded by the province could apply for consideration but may not qualify putting local, well-established tourism initiatives at risk.

Central Nova Scotia has been without a destination marketing organization since 2016. This presents the tourism experiences in Cumberland, Colchester, Fundy and North Shores at a marketing disadvantage. The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce administers the Visitor Information Center (VIC) funds from the province that support the administration efforts of various visitor welcoming sites in Cumberland, Colchester and East Hants.

Background

In 2015 the number of visitors to the province exceeded 2 million for the first time since 2002. Portions of the county are included in two marketing regions of the province, the Northumberland Shore (Pugwash to Antigonish) and Bay of Fundy, Annapolis Valley (Five Islands to Annapolis Valley). This poses a challenge to determine the overall economic impact of tourism in the county through traditional tracking methods.

Attractions and festivals, in whatever form, are all revenue generators for businesses in many different sectors, and as such, are vital to our economic prosperity.

In 2015, the Municipality of the County of Colchester purchased the former Palliser property with the vision to transform the location into a tourism destination for tidal viewing. Plans to develop the Fundy Discovery Site have been established with input from a variety of stakeholders including the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce.

Recommendations

Be it resolved, the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will support advancing the tourism opportunities of the region by engaging stakeholders, identifying opportunities, uniting efforts and investing where financially and fiscally possible, in an effort to exploit the economic potential the industry has to offer.



Government Relations

Issue

The actions of Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments can have varying effects on the residents and businesses they serve. Businesses operating on a local, national and international scale must maintain their competitiveness with fair and equitable regulations. Engagement and co-operation of Federal, Provincial, Municipal and First Nation leaders that provide representation to residents and businesses within Truro and Colchester County will strengthen the community as a whole.

Summary

There are multiple elected bodies, each with individual mandates, representing constituents in Colchester County and Truro; three municipal units (Town of Truro, County of Colchester and Town of Stewiacke), Millbrook First Nation and two village commissions (Bible Hill and Tatamagouche). The programs offered through these units are further influenced through operational and funding arrangements with the Federal and Provincial Governments. Improved co-operation, communication and consultation of all units will directly benefit the 63,000 residents and several hundred businesses that operate within its boundaries.

Background

Residents and businesses within Colchester are represented by various layers of government: Federal, Provincial, Municipal, and First Nation. The roles and responsibilities of each often overlap, often leaving constituents frustrated when competing agendas impede progress.

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce realizes that each level of government in the Colchester region have their own mandates and the best interest of their constituents at heart. However, there have been disagreements between levels of government in the past, which have held up developments that would benefit our entire region. The Chamber also realizes that increased co-operation between local municipalities could decrease the cost of some of the services these municipalities provide which, in turn, should ease the burden on taxpayers and provide more money to be entered into our local economy.

Recommendations

Be it resolved that the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will

- urge Federal, Provincial, First Nation and local governments and government agencies to work together and engage its constituents whenever possible for the greater good of all businesses and residents in our region.
- advocate Federal, Provincial, Municipal Governments and First Nations to operate and govern in a fiscally responsible manner.
- advocate for business when government regulation damages the health the of business environment by impeding growth, productivity and overall competitiveness.
- collaborate with other business organizations and professional membership groups when deemed appropriate, to increase the voice in its lobbying efforts of government.
- Improve communication with the business community
- Be accountable for reasonable timeframes for service expectations such as the issuance of permits – building, renovating, or others – to enable business to better allocate resources
- Continually demonstrate leadership by following their own legislated guidelines, rules and procedures for enacting regulations that impact business including transparency and consultation with stakeholders.
- Lobby government to provide a clearly defined regulatory guidelines for business with acceptable processes that support sustainable growth.

And, when conflicting approaches or the actions of local municipalities and governments stall economic development or impact and impede business in our region, that the Chamber use any resources it deems necessary, as decided by the Board of Directors, to help resolve those differences as quickly and efficiently as possible.



Transportation and Infrastructure

Issue

Limitations in vital transportation and infrastructure, are restricting the regions ability to grow and prosper.

Summary

Economies prosper and succeed with efficient and modern infrastructure. Well-designed streets and road networks combined with sequenced traffic signals, support the efficient flow of traffic at peak and non-peak.

Access to air and rail service offers a competitive advantage to a number of businesses in the region. Maintaining this service is key to sustaining, growing and attracting business.

Access to reliable and modern electrical, cable, telephone, cell and internet service is becoming a necessity to compete in a global world. Markets can be developed and made accessible with an expansive network of information and communication technology.

Truro and Colchester County's strategic location close to other major centres, such as Halifax and Moncton, creates opportunities for expansion and growth of existing businesses, as well as being a prime location to attract new business. Truro was named the most competitive business location of any major city or town in Canada or the United states, according to the 2012 KPMG study on International Business Location Costs.

Background

Truro and its surrounding area has long been recognized as the "Hub of Nova Scotia." Many goods and people travelling to other areas of this province and country pass through our region. The safe and efficient movement of these goods and people is a vital part of the economic well-being of the Colchester region and has been for many years.

The Truro Business Park is home to nearly 70 existing businesses which perform a wide variety of uses such as distribution, manufacturing, processing and warehousing, with the largest employers in textiles and plastics. There is great potential to expand the Truro Business Park making it an attractive location for new or expanding businesses. Often traffic is congested at the intersection of McClures Mills Connector and Willow St, impeding access to and from the park.

The Debert Air Industrial Park is home to a large number of manufacturing, warehousing and industrial related businesses as well as an airport. There are many opportunities to grow the park and support existing business with strategic investments in the airport, roads, water and sewer and transit.

The rail industry has been synonymous with Truro for a long time and as such, improvements and upgrades to it should be encouraged by the business community as a way to strengthen the local economy.

In rural Colchester, access to reliable and modern internet and cell service has been a barrier to business and residents seeking to perform ever increasing government services migrating to an online only platform. Business development has further been impeded, and real estate resale values impacted. Access to up-to-date information and communications technology will enable ICT businesses to grow in Truro and Colchester, while offering a welcoming environment for new start-ups and entrepreneurs. As the “Hub” of the province, Truro and the surrounding areas in Colchester County are positioned well to recruit businesses ICT.

Recommendation

Be it resolved the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will actively lobby all levels of government to invest in the region’s infrastructure to improve productivity, competitiveness, and appeal that leads to business and job growth in the region, even if tolls are required to complete the work.

More specifically, the Chamber of Commerce will:

- lobby the regions’ municipalities and First Nations to collaborate and invest in infrastructure to improve access to the Truro Industrial Park and any other developable lands that will contribute to the economic growth while promoting a safer and more efficient movement of goods and people increasing the region’s position in the global trade network.
- advocate for maintaining and improving the access to rail service for the many businesses that use its service and to promote the availability of rail service to prospective business.
- advocate with all levels of government for the investment of modern internet and cell service to rural Colchester, as well as advocate the regions utilities to increase investment in upgrades to their infrastructure to minimize the frequency and length of service disruption.
- Advocate for all levels of government to modernize their processes to increase efficiency for business i.e. faxing documentation.
- advocate with the Municipality of Colchester for strategic investments in infrastructure in the Debert Air Park, to support business attraction and development.

Addressing Entrepreneur Mental Health

Issue

The degrading mental health of employees and entrepreneurs is threatening the well-being of the nation's economy. Exposure to excessive stress, which contributes to anxiety and depression, is impacting productivity while further depleting the entrepreneurial spirit. Despite a greater focus on entrepreneurship by government, investors and academia, overall rates of new business formation have been falling since the 1980s¹, and only 51 per cent survive past five years².

Background

Entrepreneurs create the vast majority of new jobs, pull economies out of recessions, introduce useful products and services, and create prosperity. Despite their importance to the country, entrepreneurs deal with elevated levels of stress, anxiety and depression due to the high stakes of starting a new business. A recent study³ by Bluteau DeVenney showed that 72 per cent of entrepreneurs live with some form of mental illness, 40.5 per cent of respondents reported their mental health had worsened since becoming entrepreneurs and 47.3 per cent reported a decline in their overall health. It also identified the stress of starting and building a business caused negative impacts in the personal relationships and social lives of 74.5 per cent of respondents. Entrepreneurs are 3.5 times as likely to experience mental illness and five times as likely to contemplate suicide as the general public.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, the economic burden of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year⁴. This includes health care costs, lost productivity, law enforcement, corrections and reductions in health-related quality of life. There is a measurable impact on the economy as individuals with a mental illness are much less likely to be employed. Unemployment rates can be as high as 70 to 90 per cent for people with the most severe mental illnesses. In any given week, at least 500,000 of employed Canadians are unable to work due to

¹ <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/dp2015-11.pdf>

² https://www.startupcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Statistics-on-Small-Business-in-Canada_StartupCanada.pdf

³ Mindset: The Intersection of Entrepreneurship and Mental Health by Bluteau DeVenney and Company, January 2017.

⁴ http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/about_camh/newsroom/for_reporters/Pages/addictionmentalhealthstatistics.aspx

mental health problems. Also worthy of note is the cost of a disability leave for a mental illness is about double the cost of a leave due to a physical illness.

“The working environment for the entrepreneur is one of unhealthy stress, tension and strain. The resulting pressure affects the mindset of the entrepreneur to the point of creating poor mental health conditions,” Michael DeVenney, Bluteau DeVenney. “There is a strong stigma attached to mental illness in entrepreneurship, under a veil of ‘never let them see you sweat.’ The stigma leads to suffering in silence and amplifies the potential for significant problems.”

Entrepreneurs self-identify with the business, which often contributes to success, but can cause dangers when businesses don’t meet expectations. By setting unrealistic growth targets of 20% or more, their confidence and entrepreneurial spirit is damaged. The average small- and medium-sized business grows on average of three percent, with potential to grow by 7.2% as reported in a study by Industry Canada.

Federal Budget 2017 proposes to invest \$5 billion over 10 years to support mental health initiatives. Through this funding, it is anticipated access to mental health support will be improved for as many as 500,000 young Canadians under the age of 25 who cannot currently receive even basic mental health services. While recognizing the need within that age bracket, it is also essential to provide improved access to mental health supports for entrepreneurs to support growth in Canada’s economy.

Recommendations

That the federal government:

- develop a national strategy on mental health that would involve the creation of a “Centre of Excellence” dedicated to research, prevention and treatment of mental illnesses supported by academia, government, health professionals and private business.
- collaborate with the provinces/territories and municipalities to stimulate awareness and increase supports for entrepreneur mental health, such as the development of employer/employee and mentorship programs to educate and identify mental health issues within the workplace, as well as raising awareness of treatment or support options to improve outcomes, which will increase the economic potential of all citizens and entrepreneurs.
- establish accountability criteria for health-care funding investments with the provinces/territories to ensure funds earmarked for mental health are used responsibly providing the greatest impact possible, reducing wait times and “red tape” for those in immediate need.
- examine the existing Employment Insurance system to ensure it meets the mental health needs of entrepreneurs.



Membership

Issue

Long-term sustainability of the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce is directly linked to the strength of its business community, supported by successfully engaging, adapting and addressing to their needs.

Summary

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce is the leading business advocacy organization in Truro and Colchester area with a membership of more than 450 enterprises. For businesses to thrive, a pro-business environment and supportive public policies are critical.

Background

The Chamber has been a strong voice in matters of political, social and economic matters in Truro and Colchester County for more than 131 years. It represents a cross-section of businesses from non-profit organizations, to sole proprietorships and large employers. It is a not-for-profit organization that takes a business-like approach to its operations funded exclusively through membership fees and fees for services and benefits it provides.

The Chamber is a specialist in the development and advocacy of public policy, events and disseminating information. It is an objective, non-partisan, diverse organization made-up of businesses that mirror the Truro and Colchester, Nova Scotia and Canadian economies.

Recommendations

Be it resolved that the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will:

- advocate on behalf of its membership at all levels of government. It will organize activities and events to benefit members, strengthen relationships with key partners, as well as establish new partner relationships to expand benefits and opportunities for members.
- actively promote a members-first mentality among the membership and business community as a whole in an effort to increase recognition of businesses willing to invest in the community through Chamber membership.

- proactively engage its members to remain current with the needs and challenges of business to effectively advocate on their behalf
- promote and encourage the importance of shop local
- actively communicate its activities and initiatives to the membership and public through a variety of means including E-newsletter, website, radio, newspaper, social media and marketing materials
- effectively communicate its role and mandate in supporting business while investigating opportunities to strengthen its brand and relationship with member

Human Resources

Issue

One of the largest issues facing business is the access to human resources. The province faces high rates of out-migration of youth and the oldest population in the country. These trends are placing enormous stresses on the labour pool, impeding business growth and competitiveness.

Summary

Attracting and retaining people in Nova Scotia will define the future of the province. Opportunities must be created to give young people confidence to achieve their career and family aspirations in their home province. Further, efforts to attract and retain immigrants and in-migrants will shift the balance and offset out-migration and the in-balance between the birth and death of the province.

Background

Greater strides must be made to boost the employment rate of youth, as well as the workforce participation of youth who are not in education, employment or training. Our young people are leaving because of a lack of entry-level career opportunities, with an estimated 42 per cent of employed university degree holders between the age of 25 and 34 working in jobs that do not require a university degree (Statistics Canada).

Also according to Statistics Canada the unemployment rate among Nova Scotians age 20 -29 was 12 per cent, lower only than Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland Labrador (13.4 and 13.9 per cent respectively) across Canada.

A Special Analysis on Youth Retention by the Halifax Partnership indicates Nova Scotia's workforce is forecast to decline by 100,000 workers, or 20 per cent, by 2036. Out-migration has a negative impact on the labour pool, making it shallower and affecting the quality and cost of labour for business. Other implications of out-migration show substantial losses in lifetime after-tax income, estimated to be about \$1.2 billion each year, as well as losses of approximately \$46.4 million in future annual taxes.

There is a number quality post-secondary education institutions located within Truro and Colchester County, complementing many others across the province. There are approximately 56,000 students attending post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia, with about 22,000 from other provinces and countries.

Institutions in Truro and Colchester County welcome hundreds of international students each year, which gives us a competitive edge that could help revitalize the area.

Efforts to become a more inclusive community, by shedding some of the perceived stereotypes, will offer a more inviting community for in-migrants to return to and immigrants to settle and remain in.

At Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace is one where all employees and volunteers, whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation or identity, education or disability, feels valued and respected. We are committed to a non-discriminatory approach and provide equal opportunity for employment and advancement in all of our departments, programs, and worksites. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard.

We're committed to modeling diversity and inclusion for the entire Truro and Colchester business community, and to maintaining an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.

Recommendations

Be it resolved that the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce will urge local governments and government agencies, community partners, industry and small business to participate in the development of a coordinated strategy that support youth retention and highlights the opportunities for attracting immigrants and in-migrants.

Be it also resolved that the Chamber will:

- establish a strong relationship with educational organizations and institutions operating within the region. This partnership should be designed to provide relevant training with limited delays for prospective employees of new or expanded businesses.
- Advocate for public and private-sector policy that promotes diversity, inclusion, and equity. Challenge systems and policies that create inequity, oppression and disparity.
- work specifically with the Department of Education to address gaps in student job-readiness skills while fostering and supporting an increase in trades training.
- continue to develop and expand partnerships to support and mentor young entrepreneurs and foster entrepreneurial spirit in Truro and Colchester County.
- work with partners and business to map out the career profile of the region to support people career development while aligning labour and skill supply with demand.