



105B Walker St., Truro, Nova Scotia, B2N 4B1

February 13, 2023

Minister Jill Balsler
Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration
PO Box 697
Halifax, NS
B3J 2T8

Re: Immigration reform needed to attract and retain newcomers

Dear Minister Jill Balsler

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce represents more than 520 members and has been the recognized voice of business in this region for 133 years on economic, political and social matters impacting business. We are the second largest Chamber in the province of Nova Scotia and serve a wide range of business sectors based in rural areas.

Our Chamber has been a long-time supporter of immigration fully recognizing the benefits and have been working with our community stakeholders and private business to be a location of choice for newcomers. We support the Province's goal of attracting 25,000 newcomers annually with a lens on doubling the population by 2060. There is no question that immigration enriches communities, promotes jobs growth, increases cultural diversity and bolsters our economy.

A recent survey of our members, seeking feedback on issues that are holding business back from growth, continues to show a demonstrated need for more workers to fill job vacancies across all sectors. We received notable feedback from within the development and construction sector with unprecedented pressures on this sector to address housing shortages. With Nova Scotia's aging population immigration is necessary to assist with filling these job voids to ensure employers have the employees they require to stay in business and thrive.

We also know from our Chamber's work supporting newcomers in the community, that a strong support system is needed when they arrive to assist with settlement in an area. Often this is achieved by family members who have arrived previously, friends and organized community group efforts.

It is our view that for the government to reach its goal of increasing immigration, the system needs to be reformed to reduce wait times and red tape redundancies, as well as adding more flexibility on a case-by-case basis to address applications, particularly for those trained in skilled trades.



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We recognize there is a backlog of applications immigration staff are working through, along with complex policies and protocols that must be navigated to protect the integrity of the immigration system with respect to safety. However, as a business community we have witnessed times when the regimented, antiquated immigration system has prevented newcomers from settling in this region.

Demographic trends suggest that over the next 25 years, immigration will be a main source of future labour market growth (Kustec, 2012). It is critical that Nova Scotia continues to attract and retain skilled immigrants to meet our labour market needs. Clearly, there is an opportunity for the government at all levels and employers to work together to address these challenges and, in the process, develop an immigration system that is more responsive to labour market demand.

Our Chamber would welcome an opportunity to meet with you, or your staff, to discuss ways the private sector could assist in enhancing immigration, as well as provide timely input on possible ways to streamline and modernize processes. I may be reached at 902-895-6328, or via email ed@tchamber.ca to schedule a meeting in the future.

Sincerely,

Sherry Martell
Executive Director
Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce

CC: David Ritcey, MLA Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River

Tom Taggart, MLA Colchester North

Larry Harrison, MLA South Colchester

Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration

Dr. Stephen Ellis, MP Cumberland-Colchester



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