



Policy Handbook

2022-2023

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| Number and Name of Policy | Initiated/Renewed | Status |
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| 1. Economic Development | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 2. Tourism | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 3. Government Relations | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 4. Infrastructure and Transportation | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 5. Addressing Workplace and Entrepreneur Mental Health | 2020 Revised 2018 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 6. Membership | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, unless renewed |
| 7. Human Resources | 2022 Revised 2016, 2018, 2020 | Expires in 2024, 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 2017 a three-year pilot project united the Town of Truro, Municipality of the County of Colchester, Town of Stewiacke, Millbrook First Nation and the Chamber, representing the business community, forming the Truro Colchester Partnership for Economic Prosperity (TCPEP). This body is focused on economic development in the region, to encourage business expansion, retention and attraction to the area. As we move from the pilot-project phase, the Chamber will continue a close working relationship with the TCPEP. Economic activity in the region remains below the desired pace with many of our skilled trades people seeking employment in the West and other regions of the country. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has also negatively impacted the business community as it continues into a third year.

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, municipalities, First Nations and support organizations must consider the factors affecting these major decisions made by businesses.

The Chamber recognizes the impact social issues have on economic growth. For example, labour shortages are preventing businesses from thriving and growing. These shortages are compounded by a lack of housing options, lack of training and Red Seal journeymen to mentor apprentices and lack of family physicians. As

of February 2022, more than 20 per cent of the Truro and Colchester population is without a family physician. The housing vacancy rate at this time in the Town of Truro is also around 1.4 per cent, far below a healthy ratio of about 4 to 5 per cent. The inventory of houses for purchase is at a record low level, while purchase prices are at a record high.

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 support economic development, by forming a close working relationship with the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network (operating as the TCPEP) to assist with its effort's 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 to 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.
- Work with stakeholders to address a housing shortage in this region. Encourage councils to share their masterplans to address a housing crisis in the Truro-Colchester region.
- hold the Truro and Colchester Regional Enterprise Network Accountable to its funding stakeholders through representation on the board and liaison and oversight committee, while the Chamber remains a financial contributor.
- 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. Globally, tourism is a significant driver of economic growth. Tourism offers diverse business and employment opportunities for Nova Scotians in every region of the province and is uniquely positioned to create employment opportunities for under-represented groups in the province. There are many organizations, including chambers of commerce, and businesses working to strengthen the tourism industry in the province striving to reach the Ivany Commission's goal of \$4 billion in tourism revenues by 2024.

Traditionally, the tourism industry has been Nova Scotia's largest export valued at \$2 Billion annually. The tourism sector has been deeply impacted by COVID-19 with continuous public health restrictions in effect since the spring of 2020 when the Province called its first State of Emergency. 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. The sector needs ongoing support to rebound and grow in future.

Summary

Tourism is one of the largest employment sectors in the town and county with more than 1,752 jobs¹ directly related to tourism in accommodations, food services, arts, entertainment and recreation, information and cultural industries. In 2017, these types of businesses in Truro and Colchester had an economic impact of \$83, 542, 946. Employees in this sector are also the lowest wage earners in the county. Indirectly, there are more than 3,400 people employed in retail, which had an economic value of more than \$11M in 2017, who are poised to benefit from growth in this industry, as well as spin-off benefits for other sectors.

Tourism Nova Scotia has officially transitioned to a division of the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (CCTH) as of January 1, 2022. It will continue to lead marketing and sector development initiatives aimed at growing a sustainable tourism industry that benefits all regions of our province including Truro and Colchester. It will be working closely with other divisions across CCTH, and stakeholders such as the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce to help the tourism, events and creative sectors recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. Since that time, the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce has administered 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.

During 2020-2021, the Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce established an Explore Central NS brand supported by Millbrook Heritage and Cultural Centre, Town of Truro, Town of Stewiacke, Downtown Truro Partnership and the Municipality of the County of Colchester. During a 12-month long

project, funded by Tourism Nova Scotia, the committee established several tourism assets that can be used in future years.

Background

The tourism sector has been one of the most impacted during the pandemic. Following four years of strong visitation growth between 2014 and 2017 and the province's highest recorded tourism revenues in 2018, tourism visitation and associated revenues have declined in 2019. If current conditions continue, tourism revenues are anticipated to reach only \$2.8 billion in 2024. In 2019, the 10 Visitor Information Centres in central Nova Scotia, funded by the TNS program, counselled 38,766. At the end of 2021, local visitation at VICs remained down 73 % from 2019. 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

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. Specifically, the Chamber will:

- Participate in stakeholder discussions that support the formation of a Destination Marketing Organization with a dedicated focus on tourism for the region.
- Continue to maximize partnerships and work with stakeholders that form the Chamber's tourism committee to carry on the use of the Explore Central NS brand.
- Seek project funding and programs to support tourism within our resources
- Continue as a partner with the Department of Tourism, Communities and Culture to administer funds to the VICs in Central Nova Scotia.



Government Relations

Issue

The actions of Federal, Provincial, First Nation 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 approximately 1,600 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.

We have spent more than two years under a Provincial State of Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Provincial and Federal governments have spent record amounts to fund pandemic measures. The recovery and rebound of the pandemic will require further measures to fund the deficit created by pandemic spending.

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 concerned about bearing the burden of increased taxes or fees related to COVID-19 recovery and repaying deficits created during the pandemic.
- 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 region's 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 high-speed 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.

The Transportation industry is on the cusp of a major shift as the Federal Government has been consistent in its messaging of seeking to reduce Canada's GHG emissions, with a current target of net zero emissions by 2050. The Government of Canada has already initiated a multi-faceted approach to decarbonize transport as part of the plan to grow the Net-Zero economy, as highlighted in the 2021 Federal Budget. The Government has expanded this goal by announcing that all new vehicles sold by 2035 will be ZEVs.

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.

This EV market within Canada is already growing, with electric vehicle purchases comprising 3.7% of new vehicle purchases in Q3 of 2020, up from 3.3% in the previous quarter. This growth will play a key role in the Federal Government's ZEV strategy, which is seeking to increase the market share of ZEVs to 10% by 2025 and 100% by 2050. On a national level, Canada has been slow to react to this growing market. While there have been steps to increase domestic production, invest in mineral mining projects and provide purchasing incentives, there is no existing national infrastructure plan to facilitate this growth.

The main issue is a lack of sufficient charging stations in Canada to effectively support a mass uptake of ZEVs on either a personal or commercial level. At present, there are over 5000 public EV charging stations across the country, which represent the most common ZEV charging options nationally.

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 existing rail lines 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.

In September 2020, a joint project was announced by the Municipality of the County of Colchester to increase highspeed- internet service locally and in Cumberland County. Xplornet will invest \$34 million toward the \$61.1 million project. The Province will contribute \$21.1 million from the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust. The two Municipalities will pay a combined \$6 million over the next three to five years. Cumberland's share will be \$3,327,600 and Colchester's \$2,672,400, reflecting the amount of fibre in each jurisdiction. The network infrastructure will be Open Access for other internet service providers to rent wholesale capacity.

The network will consist of 19 fixed-wireless towers and approximately 670 kilometres of optic fibre, including over 500 km. of new fibre. It will have capacity to serve 100% of civic addresses in the combined Counties, including 24,400 addresses currently not covered. Wireless services require line-of-sight. Xplornet will offer up to 100 Mbps service to 22,500 of these currently underserved addresses and up to 50 Mbps satellite service for the remaining 1,900 addresses. As many as 3,500 civic addresses will have access to fibre-to-the-home service.

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 continued 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.

Collaborate with government regulators at all levels and electricity utilities to develop consistent guidelines to accelerate the deployment of EV charging infrastructure and develop a long-term framework to include greater private access to this infrastructure. They will also work with colleges, universities and the provincial education system to ensure that there are sufficiently trained ZEV and EV mechanics, both by offering training credits and working with educational institutions to provide the required designations.

Addressing Workplace Mental Health

DESCRIPTION

Entrepreneurs create the vast majority of new jobs, pull economies out of recessions and create prosperity. We need a healthy, mentally well workforce to lead economic resurgence.

Despite their importance to the country, entrepreneurs struggle silently with elevated levels of stress, anxiety and depression due to the high stakes of starting a new business.

BACKGROUND

There is no question that COVID-19 has gravely impacted the mental health of Canadians, with the greatest impacts on the workforce age group of 15 to 64 years old. Statistics show that those already experiencing poor mental health before COVID-19 were impacted even more by the pandemic. Since the onset of COVID-19, fewer Canadians report having excellent or very good mental health (55 per cent in July 2020 down from 68 per cent in 2019). Those reporting poor mental health are up to four times more likely to report increased substance use since the pandemic began.

A 2017 study by Bluteau DeVenney showed that 72 per cent of entrepreneurs live with some form of mental illness, 40.5 per cent report their mental health had worsened since becoming entrepreneurs and 47.3 per cent report a decline in their overall health. Entrepreneurs are 3.5 times as likely to experience mental illness and five times as likely to contemplate suicide as the general public.

These issues have a high cost to business and the economy. According to a 2011 study by the Canadian Mental Health Association, the economic burden of mental illness in Canada was estimated at \$51 billion per year. This statistic is a decade old and new data is necessary to guide legislation and investments. This stark number, includes health care costs, lost productivity, law enforcement, corrections and reductions in health-related quality of life. In any given week, pre-pandemic, at least 500,000 employed Canadians were unable to work due to mental health problems. It is estimated this number is now much higher. The cost of a disability leave for a mental illness is about double the cost of a leave due to a physical illness.

In addition to lost productivity, Canadian businesses, through employee assistance programs, healthcare benefits and disability costs also bear a significant cost for mental health care in this country. In fact, with medication, psychologists and specialized treatments, including therapies for PTSD, not typically covered by government-funded health care, many Canadians turn to their employers' benefits programs for help. Costs related to mental health for employees were escalating pre-COVID-19 and are growing at exponential rates. Prevention and management are essential.

In 2010, the Mental Health Commission of Canada conducted a pan-Canadian study of mental health that estimated over the next 30 years the total cost to the economy could reach to more than \$2.5 trillion if focused action is not taken to address issues related to mental illness.

The impact of mental health problems and illnesses is especially felt among working aged people. People in their early and prime working years are among the hardest hit by mental health problems and illnesses. About one person in five of the working population in Canada experience mental health problems and

illnesses, which can affect their productivity. Mental health problems and illnesses account for approximately 30% of short – and long-term disability claims and are rated one of the top three drivers of such claims by more than 80% of Canadian employers. The scope and cost of allowable Workers' Compensation claims has broadened across the country. Increasing claims of workplace mental health injuries are causing rates to rise crippling some businesses.

Action to develop an updated mental health strategy for Canada, dedicated to research and data collection measurement and tracking of incidence rates, broadly sharing treatment techniques, and creating awareness will assist government bodies in developing legislation and regulation. Wide-sweeping impacts of mental illness must be addressed collectively with support of academia, government, health professionals and private business.

It is essential to provide improved access to mental health supports for entrepreneurs to support growth in Canada's economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Be it resolved that the Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce will lobby the Government of Canada to:

1. Work with provinces and territories, municipalities, First Nations, business, labour, academia, health care leaders and individual citizens to update a national strategy on mental health including best practices of current programs in an effort to improve the management of mental health in the workplace. This would include collection of pan-Canadian and international statistics to compare benchmarks, proven examples of prevention, early action to combat stress and early identification of problems focused on increasing worker productivity, along with support for entrepreneurs and employees while highlighting the impact of mental illness on the economy.
2. Ensure funding committed to health in federal budgets continue to provide dedicated amounts for provincial/territorial plans to address mental health challenges within their health care systems.
3. Review government benefits compensation programs for individuals with mental health issues to ensure they are relevant to today's needs and do not disproportionately place the cost burden on employers.

Sponsored by the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce

Co-sponsored by the Pictou County Chamber of Commerce, Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce, The Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, and the Atlantic Canada Chamber of Commerce

ENDORSEMENTS

The National Workforce Policy Committee supports this resolution.



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 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 132 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.
- Seek innovative solutions to increase engagement with culturally diverse groups in our community in an effort to meaningfully encourage minority owned businesses to join the network.
- 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 shopping local, including growth in the Member-2-Member program.
- 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 members.



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. In 2021, the province's population hit the one-million mark. The population of our local region has increased. According to statistics Canada, Truro's population has grown by 7.6 per cent over the past five years to about 13,193 and overall, the County of Colchester grew by 3.6 per cent, to reach 47,387 by July 2021.

Much of this growth is being attributed to COVID-19 trends which saw people leave densely populated areas to relocate to more rural settings, along with the ability to work from home. Nova Scotia has benefited from this migration of Canadians as well as immigration from other counties.

While additional supports are needed to support settlement efforts of newcomers, opportunities must also 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

While employment issues are impacting all sectors, 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 15 and up was 7 per cent, compared to 6.5 per cent 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 of quality post-secondary educational institutions located within Truro and Colchester County, complementing many others across the province.

A total of 10,101 **students** were enrolled in certificate, diploma, advanced diploma and graduate certificate programs at Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) campuses across the province in 2021, along with 52,210 students attending universities in graduate, undergraduate and part-time studies

An increasing share of total university and college enrolments have come from international sources in recent years. During the 2017/2018 academic year, 14.7% and 13.2% of all university and college enrolments were international, respectively. 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.

The Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce supports diverse, inclusive and equitable workplaces 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 are 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 entrepreneurs and foster entrepreneurial spirit in Truro and Colchester County.
- work with partners and businesses to map out the career profile of the region to support career development while aligning labour and skill supply with demand.
- Work with the TCPEP on a special project funded by the Chamber to address workforce shortage.

¹ Economy Overview Colchester 2020-2021, EMSI, economicmodeling.com