

Toward Prosperity HRM Roundtable (Halifax)

June 19th , 2000

Discussion

Role of Government:

- Too many Strategic Directions. Do a few things well. Government has a key role in business climate, training and infrastructure but lesser roles in other areas.
- Too much bureaucracy in this region slows everything down.
- Is it government's role to lead change or facilitate it? Build more partnerships.
- Explore the link between electoral reform and economic growth. We see the province through a political lens. Sustainable communities must be economic not simply nostalgia items.
- Major public education required. People must realize economic growth is our only way forward.

Economic Development Image:

- Government economic development work has a serious image problem. It must be fixed. Take economic development outside government. The perception of the department has to be changed. The department is too political and something drastic has to be done.

Economic Model:

- What economic model underlies the discussion paper "Toward Prosperity"? What links elements together? What drives an economy? Can government be everywhere or must it focus? Do we want clusters or equality of opportunity? Link critical mass and focus. What comes first, the anchor company or the cluster?
- Can all communities be preserved? If a community wants to survive, it must put some sweat equity into its own survival.

Links:

- Make it easier for the private sector to roam in academia or government. Spread the mind set of the entrepreneur. We need linkages and balance across the economy.

Business Climate:

- Pay attention to securities legislation. Reduce taxes, deficit, bureaucracy.

Business:

- Where are new companies in the discussion paper?

Not for profits sector:

- Recognize the value of the third sector or miss opportunities e.g. culture.

Labour Market:

- Need a forum for education and labour market planners to work together better.

Marketing:

- Branding of Nova Scotia needs work. If we present Nova Scotia as a rural tourist destination, what does that say to companies we want to attract. Are we presenting the wrong image for business?

Exports:

- Turn ourselves inside out. e.g. rethink the place of universities. Not a cost, and more than an asset. Economic sector and export driver. Market ourselves to get a piece of the world's \$2-3T training industry. Think more broadly about non-traditional exports. Pick our export targets better. Government's role: access, funding, cooperation.

Vision/Mission:

- Is "self-sufficiency" desirable or possible today?

Buy NS:

- Do not have a "buy Nova Scotia" policy. We need to be able to compete with the best.

Health care :

- Could be an economic engine. Exports could be a source of income.

Urbanization:

- Urbanization is now a fact of life. We should not fight it. Do not subsidize dying communities. Never say "Halifax has enough." Government should plan for a Nova Scotia with 5-600,000 people in metro.

Context:

- Has money spent on health or education increased or decreased? Figures need to be clearer.

Politics:

- Economic development in Nova Scotia is more political than in Newfoundland. Reduce the political content.

Change:

- Commitment or comfort with change is crucial. Business must demand quality education and commit to achieving it. "I'm accountable for this. Not just government." Dangers of risk aversion. Need to transform the culture of the province. Get beyond a culture of obstruction.

Communication:

- If we live in a sound bite world, government should get good at the skill of giving sound bites.

Strategy:

- Make the strategy more aggressive. Set clear, challenging targets, e.g. the best place to do business by 2005. It is not enough to say where we want to be in five years. The strategy must include an implementation plan for how to get there.
- Articulate where the global economy is going. Show how Nova Scotia must position itself. Define what is meant by the “new economy” and the “knowledge economy”. Government must go beyond clichés.
- Important to make choices in the strategy and stick with them.
- Multi-year plans should be built into the strategy.
- Business should lead and government should support.
- We have heard it all before - get on with it. Attitudes, structure, responsibility: all need to change. Move yards, not inches.

Action Plan:

- With the Strategy include: next steps, action plan, projects, dates, assignments.

Cape Breton:

- Is there more confidence in Cape Breton? How have discussions there gone? Amalgamation - once thought to be impossible - seems to be taking and that suggests some hope for the future. The Partnership Alliance could be a useful tool for progress.