

Toward Prosperity

Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association Consultation

June 27th, 2000

Notes:

Business Climate:

- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) need some incubation by government.
 - Small businesses are the job creators in this province - need support.
 - 70% of SMEs are closing down at great cost to themselves and the economy.
- If you start a business with a deficit, that deficit will only get larger and larger.
- There are countless immigrants trying to start businesses but they have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars due to a lack of guidance and have now left the province.
- Government should not be giving large loans (ex: \$5million) to computer companies that might fail in 5 years. The same amount of money would help create 100,000 small businesses which will in turn employ hundreds of thousands of people.
- Nova Scotia treats its SMEs like it treats Sobeys.
 - Who will protect small businesses?
 - There is great pressure by large companies here and elsewhere in Canada for small businesses to stay out of their markets.
- Need someone who will go out and work with immigrant entrepreneurs.
- Need a discussion of the climate and need a realistic picture painted of the situation here.
- Could assist SMEs with easier, more accessible loans.
- The power is concentrated in a few hands.
- The current regulations and laws make it difficult to expand a business. The laws do not seem to have any logical basis.
 - Ex: Laws preventing outdoor cafe seating in a parking lot in Fairview.
- The application of regulations needs to be flexible and sensible.
- There seems to be a lack of communication between government employees - convey conflicting messages and information.
- Government does not have money itself - why should it regulate the economy? There are business people who are more knowledgeable about how to do this.
 - Ex: Mexico - people took control of their future and changed things - co-ops.
 - Should encourage people in NS to do that - make laws more accessible and equitable.
- Need to identify regulations that need to be revamped - perhaps second small business people into advisory committees to have real input from the front lines.
- Should have at least one representative from small business, large business, immigrants etc. working on the Strategy.
- At present we recruit business people to Nova Scotia but once they arrive there is no follow-up done.
 - Are losing money because they use the services provided to them but are not held accountable to make sure that they remain and give back.

- There is no sense of loyalty.
- The Entrepreneur Program has enormous potential but needs to be structured differently.
 - The 2 year deadline does not allow immigrant business people to get acquainted with Canada and identify opportunities before embarking upon a business venture.
- What of the concept of Halifax as an international city?
- New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (NS) were sending missions to Germany at the same time. New Brunswick was promoting small business partnerships, while NS was promoting Bed & Breakfasts and land sale. What kind of opportunities are we seeking?
- The attendees at these Growth Strategy consultations and roundtables are people who are concerned about the status quo and are willing to be part of the solution. Those recommendations that government cannot implement itself, should be made known to these people for possible action.
- Perhaps could create a Department of Small Business as in Quebec to be a voice for small businesses?

Immigration:

- Need a recognition of the role of immigration in each of the principles.
- There is currently a declining rate of growth - immigration is the only hope for recovery.
- The current law governing immigration is rigid and outdated.
 - Need to make the law more useful.
- Government does not seem to know what it is doing with regard to immigration.
- New Brunswick and Newfoundland are signatories to the Provincial Nominee Agreement.
 - This agreement allows those governments to identify immigrants whose applications they can fast track for acceptance.
 - Nova Scotia should have a similar policy.
- There is no mention in the document of immigration or public-community partnerships.
 - Would like to see MISA and the Department of Economic Development working together on a strategy and implementation plan.
- Need a critical mass of diversity.
- Need a separate place to house issues relating to Immigration.
 - Will require investment in order to have any real impact.
- The situation surrounding immigrants is unique so the programs supporting them should be unique.
- The cities experiencing growth are those with strong immigration.
 - Must ensure that the word-of-mouth information being spread about NS is positive.
 - Must balance development so that immigrants are not only settling in the Halifax/Dartmouth area.

Education:

- There are problems with the acceptance/transferral of international qualifications.
- Need to put pressure on the professional associations to address these issues.
- Government should work with self-regulatory associations.
- Immigration is beneficial not only for highly educated jobs but also in tourism jobs etc.

- Businesses are not clear on what kinds of skills they require in new workers.
- There is too much “legalese” in government documents to be fully comprehensible to the public.
- Literacy needs to be a chief goal for the government.
- With the elimination of evening high-school courses, there are very few opportunities left for returning students.
- Must seek more flexible ways to get an education.
- Government must serve as a model user of the new methods of information dissemination.
- Leaving your job to get more education is risky, but should be rewarding such behavior.