

The Trade Centre has made a significant contribution economically as well as culturally to Halifax in particular and to HRM and Nova Scotia in general. The diverse events there over the last 30 years clearly indicate the vast number of visitors who consistently choose Halifax and Nova Scotia as a place to do business and visit.

The current facility, however, has two significant drawbacks. First, it is 30 years old and a great deal has changed in the conference and meeting industry. While upgrades can overcome some of these constraints, the bottom line is that in terms of competition with other facilities on the Eastern Seaboard, ours is outclassed.

Secondly, the configuration of the facility is surpassed by most offerings in the country. Those organizations that initially choose Canada as a destination will be less likely to choose Halifax due to the size and ability of the facility to allow them to have the most successful event possible. We must enable the Trade Centre to get to “yes” ahead of these alternative markets.

The trade centre must be recognized as an economic engine for the province. The investment in this type of asset is critical to the sustained growth of the province. Now is also the time to invest as this project will help the province recover from its severe deficit position. Also, when this project does go forward, other investments in hotel and restaurants will follow.

The Deloitte Report has outlined the economic benefits and they can be read and easily understood but the value of this asset goes beyond numbers and money. The opportunities it creates for the growth of technical skills, for continuing excellence in the service industry and a world class facility for locally trained expertise from whether from the community college or university system.

The ownership model is a public/private partnership. Some may have trouble with that but the experience with the current Trade Centre is very good. In fact, many of the economic benefits can only be derived by government. Surely HRM would not want to decline \$8 million in corporate property taxes. Surely the provincial government would not want to say no to \$30 million in additional taxation. Objections to private sector involvement is simply reflex but the private sector already provides services like the emergency ambulance service, senior's Pharmacare, road construction and recently orthopaedic surgery better than the public sector can deliver them.

The real question becomes that of our desire to be a part of the national and global economy. The investment in and construction of this project tells a very important story; that we are open and willing to host the rest of the world. The failure of this project to proceed would send the worst possible message. Not only would we exhibit our indication that we will be held hostage to fear and special interests but also our unwillingness to overcome them. The Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce would ask all businesses to support this investment.

Wayne Fiander
President, Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce