

## **Fredericton Chamber of Commerce meets with NB Finance Minister**

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(Fredericton, NB) – Members of the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors and Provincial Government Affairs Committee met with New Brunswick Finance Minister Blaine Higgs on Friday, 24 January 2014 to discuss its pre-budget brief submitted earlier this year. The chamber elaborated on its message of maintaining an economic focus with the Province’s 2014-15 budget by avoiding purely political decisions with a view towards the 22 September 2014 election.

The chamber has noted that the minister has consistently stated that the province primarily has a revenue problem, not a spending problem. While it is the chamber’s position that the government can do more to reduce spending, the presentation focused on creating conditions for businesses to thrive in the province – the only sustainable way to increase revenue. As businesses start and expand, commercial and personal tax revenue rise, unemployment rates fall, and ultimately the population can grow at a sustainable rate.

“The government has made some progress in finding efficiencies within various departments, but as the minister acknowledged, there is still a lot more work to be done,” stated Chris Johnston, chamber president. “We acknowledge that finding the right balance between restraint and strategic investment is not an easy job, but as businesspeople and citizens it is a reasonable request that the minister make financial decisions that are within his control.”

The chamber’s brief takes a holistic approach to the issue of creating an economic environment conducive to business success.

“Obviously New Brunswick’s financial situation is not good and the minister realizes this more than anyone,” added Joseph O’Donnell, chamber first vice-president and co-chair of the Provincial Government Affairs Committee. “In my role at National Bank I am acutely aware that there are some global circumstances beyond our control that are contributing to the province’s woes, but there are also some clear steps that we can take to mitigate external factors and get back on the road to growth. These are issues that we tried to bring to the minister’s attention today and with our brief.”

The chamber will be keenly interested in the actual contents of the budget to be unveiled next month and will closely monitor government initiatives for the upcoming year.

The full-text of the Chamber’s submission to the minister can be found on our website at [www.frederictonchamber.ca](http://www.frederictonchamber.ca).

*With more than 900 members, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is one of Atlantic Canada’s largest chambers of commerce. A dynamic business organization, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is actively engaged in policy development that affects the competitiveness of our members and of the Canadian business environment.*

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