Towards a Vision of a Prosperous, Self-Reliant, and Sustainable Atlantic Canada

2015-2018 Strategic Plan
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A Message from the CEO and Board President

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A Vision for Atlantic Canada,
A Message from the CEO and Board President

Atlantic Canada has great potential to become a prosperous, self-reliant, and sustainable region that is a great place to live, work, and foster ongoing economic development. This potential can only be reached through strong leadership within and among the business community. The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce is proud to play an important role in bringing this leadership to the Atlantic region, working closely and collaboratively with, and on behalf of, our many partners including local Chambers and corporate members as well as other representatives of the business community and government.

On behalf of the Board and our membership, we are pleased to present the following 2015-2018 Strategic Plan for the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce. This plan is intended to incorporate feedback received from our many members across the Atlantic region. This is a great starting point as we recognize the continued importance of engaging our members, seeking feedback to ensure we meet their needs, and supporting them through direct programming.

This Strategic Plan commits to providing an excellent standard of service and programs designed to continuously meet the needs of our members, including small, medium and large size businesses from all sectors. It also outlines priorities for our efforts as strong influencers, educators, and advocators of policy-related issues to support and enable business growth in Atlantic Canada.

We value your comments and suggestions and encourage feedback from our members. We look forward to working on the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Collectively we will work towards a strong vision for Atlantic Canada, one that can only be fulfilled with your help and continued support to ensure that we succeed together.

Sincerely,

Valerie Roy, Chief Executive Officer

Barry Zwicker, President, Board of Directors 2014-2015
### VISION

ACC will be a strong, credible, unified voice for business and will provide excellent service and maximum value to our members.

### MISSION

The strong, credible, and unified voice for business, fostering ongoing economic development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foster ongoing economic development in Atlantic Canada</th>
<th>Act as the catalyst to influence, educate, and advocate on policy-related issues to support business</th>
<th>Deliver high value products, services and opportunities to our members</th>
<th>Support and promote initiatives that will contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region</th>
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### CORE VALUES

FOCUS    CONSULTATION    DIVERSITY    LEADERSHIP    ACCOUNTABILITY

### GOALS

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<th>#1. Enable business growth in Atlantic Canada through focused, insightful, and timely policy development and advocacy.</th>
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<td>2.1 Continue to grow and build our relationships with our members – local Chambers and corporate partners – and support them in building their connections.</td>
<td>3.1 Explore membership opportunities including categories and corporate partnership development that will benefit ACC and local Chamber members.</td>
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1.0 Targeting Efforts, Aligning Resources

Our mission is clear: be a strong, credible, and unified voice for business, fostering ongoing economic development. Together, through these efforts, we will have a greater influence on our future in Atlantic Canada. This future is envisioned as a prosperous, self-reliant, and sustainable Atlantic Canada as a great place to live, work, and foster ongoing economic development.

The Roadmap outlined in this document presents the strategic direction for the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce Inc./La Chambre de commerce de L’Atlantique Inc. (ACC). ACC has been championing the cause of business in Atlantic Canada since 1896, and continues to promote and support business and economic development in Atlantic Canada.

ACC is a not-for-profit, membership-based organization made up of local Chambers and corporate partners. Today ACC represents more than 16,000 businesses throughout Atlantic Canada through member Chambers of Commerce.

The organization plays an important role in supporting business in Atlantic Canada. The ACC Board and staff have established this plan with the intent of providing value to members and support for the growth and prosperity of the business community.

Working together, we can establish a strong, credible, and unified voice for business in Atlantic Canada. Through fostering relations with our members and guidance provided by our newly established Provincial Advisory Committees (PACs), ACC will be on the pulse of provincial advocacy issues. Common advocacy issues will be identified on a regional basis as well.

As an organization, we are confident we can provide excellent service and maximum value to our members.

This plan sets out a clear roadmap for the next three years as well as priorities for the next 12 months. Targeting our efforts on these priorities and aligning our resources, ACC will bring value to members and support for businesses in the Atlantic Canadian region.
2.0 The Voice of Business in Atlantic Canada

2.1 Mission

Atlantic Chamber of Commerce exists to be:

The strong, credible, and unified voice for business, fostering ongoing economic development.

To achieve our mission, we will:

1. Foster ongoing economic development in Atlantic Canada.
2. Act as a catalyst to influence, educate, and advocate on policy-related issues to support business.
3. Deliver high value products, services and opportunities to our members.
4. Support and promote initiatives that will contribute to sustainable economic growth in the region.

2.2 Core Values

Our everyday activities are guided by the following:

Focus
Our members are our priority. We strive to bring the greatest value to our members and business in Atlantic Canada by targeting our efforts and aligning our resources.

Consultation
We proactively address business-related issues and opportunities through a united voice based on consultation and collaboration with our members of all sizes and the business community.

Diversity
We promote and support business interests in Atlantic Canada, and recognize the diversity within the region. Our advocacy focuses on regional and province-specific issues.

Leadership
We strive to champion the implementation of standards in Chambers of Commerce for vision and deliverables.

Accountability
We make evidence-informed decisions, and track and report on our actions and outcomes.
2.3 The Business Voice in Atlantic Canada

The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce (ACC) is a member-based organization, which means that the Chamber’s membership is the single most important priority to the organization as a whole. Dedicated to our members' growth and prosperity, we can help strengthen our member organizations, connect our members to business and government leaders within the region and nationally, and provide valuable savings on benefits and services.

The most significant benefits of ACC to our members are:

- **We are Uniquely Atlantic Canadian** – We champion Atlantic Canadian views to support local Chambers and corporate members. Our organization represents the business community throughout the Atlantic region. We support advocacy issues at provincial, regional, and national levels. Our Provincial Advisory Committees help us to identify priorities at the provincial level, enabling ACC to work with local Chambers to develop policies. We also focus on common advocacy issues at the regional level.

- **We have a strong Network of Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade.** Our greatest strength is our ability to work closely with our members, both small and large, and support them in strengthening their organizations and enable business growth in Atlantic Canada.

- **We are the Unified Voice of Business in Atlantic Canada,** representing in excess of 16,000 businesses from throughout the region through our member Chambers plus our corporate members. Our advocacy is based on priorities from business, which are developed through consultation and research.
3.0 Our Strategic Direction

3.1 Vision

ACC will be a strong, credible, unified voice for business and will provide excellent service and maximum value to our members.

ACC will contribute to the ultimate goal:

A prosperous, self-reliant, and sustainable Atlantic Canada as a great place to live, work, and foster ongoing economic development.

3.2 Goals

ACC identified the following goals:

1. Enable business growth in Atlantic Canada through focused, insightful, and timely policy development and advocacy.
2. Promote and grow the value to members through support and engagement.
3. Achieve long-term sustainability through revenue growth and diversification and adopted standards of operations.

3.3 Measures of Success

Success in 2018 will be measured based on the following:

- Recognition as a unified voice on behalf of local chamber members by government, media, and other stakeholders (e.g., media, discussions, opinions, public statements)
- Level of satisfaction by local Chamber members
- Advancement of Top Priorities for business in the region
- Strong Provincial Advisory Committees in each province
- Dedicated research capacity
- Effective policy development process, standards, and reporting including Chamber Accreditation
- Membership and revenue growth and diversification
4.0 Strategic Priorities

The following section outlines strategies for each goal.

A. FOCUSED, INSIGHTFUL, AND TIMELY POLICY AND ADVOCACY

GOAL# 1: Enable business growth in Atlantic Canada through focused, insightful, and timely policy development and advocacy

The priority strategies related to this goal for the next three years are as follows:

1.1 Advance Top Priorities for business in the Atlantic region through identification of unified policy positions and advocacy. ACC recognizes the significant provincial and local efforts already in place to identify priorities for advancing economic development. A priority of the Provincial Advisory Committees is to identify common issues and concerns from a provincial perspective; these efforts lead to the identification of common regional issues. ACC will confirm the Top Priorities in consultation with members, the Board, and Provincial Advisory Committees, and will involve a review of existing regional and provincial strategies and reports. ACC will help to champion advocacy efforts for policies that are national in scope through the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

1.1.1 Establish a dedicated research position on staff in the fall of 2014.

1.1.2 Confirm the Top 4 Priorities through feedback received directly from businesses in collaboration with local Chamber members and corporate members through surveys, roundtables, and other means.

1.1.3 Develop policy positions and implement an advocacy plan for each priority.

1.1.4 Collaborate with local Chamber members to develop and advocate on policies that are national in scope.

1.1.5 Report on progress to members and the business community at large.
1.2 **Advocate for pro-business policies that create wealth and grow our economy through ongoing discussions and feedback received from members of the Board, PACs, local Chambers, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.** The more we invest in internal resources to support policy development, the more we can deliver as a Chamber. We anticipate our internal research capacity to expand in the next three years.

1.3 **Bring provincial advocacy issues to the forefront through effective and efficient Provincial Advisory Committees (PAC) in each Atlantic province.** The Chamber introduced the PACs in the spring of 2014, as a vehicle to ensure advocacy issues that are at the forefront of each province are identified and discussed at the regional level. These efforts recognize that while we are one region, our pro-business priorities may differ by province (and even within each province). PACs are business-led groups providing guidance on policy and advocacy recommendations.

1.4 **Build our research capacity to support policy development through investment in a longer term staffing plan and collaboration with other regional and provincial groups and associations with similar membership interests.**

   1.4.1 Establish a dedicated research position in the fall of 2014 and continue to explore options to develop internal research capacity as demand for policy development expands. Leverage the expertise of policy and research staff of local Chamber members.

   1.4.2 Identify stakeholder groups with similar membership interests and mandates and explore opportunities to work together.

1.5 **Foster and grow relationships with members, government, media, and other key stakeholders to support advocacy.**

   1.5.1 Implement a communications plan to effectively and consistently communicate to, and on behalf of, our members that expands the use of media (including social media) to promote business in Atlantic Canada.

   1.5.2 Implement periodic annual meetings with the provincial government and opposition offices in each Atlantic Province, the Council of Atlantic Premiers, and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to share and discuss priorities for Atlantic Canada and advocate on relevant policy issues.

   1.5.3 Continue to strengthen communications and joint activities with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (such as policy development, meetings with the Federal Government) and actively communicate relevant information to members.
B. VALUE-DRIVEN MEMBER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT

GOAL# 2: Promote and grow the value to members through support and engagement

The priority strategies related to this goal for the next three years are as follows:

2.1 Continue to grow and build our relationships with our members – local Chambers and corporate partners – and support them in building their connections. We will hold at least one networking event in each province annually and will invite the boards, staff, and members of local Chambers as well as other representatives of the business community. We will expand member services and create ongoing opportunities to bring our members together.

2.2 Support local Chambers in building their capacity (e.g., board training, orientation, and governance) and explore how to develop our resources to expand these offerings. We will further investigate the needs identified by our members and programming development options. We will also promote and continue to support local Chambers in achieving accreditation through development processes and implementation of national standards of policy, service and performance.

2.2.1 Facilitate professional development opportunities for our members. We will target at least two opportunities per year, including during our annual gathering within each province.

2.3 Promote, grow, and diversify our value-added programming for members, building on the success of the Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan. We will establish a Membership Task Force mandated to review the member services and benefits on an annual basis and make recommendations for improvement and we will secure the Membership Services position to champion the implementation of recommendations and carry out membership-related priorities.

2.4 Explore opportunities to build connections and leverage partnerships with ethnic-based and international Chambers and other business-related organizations in the region. While this strategy is a longer term priority, ACC has identified immediate opportunities including participation in the 2015 American Chamber Executives Annual General Meeting to be held in Montreal in August of 2015.
C. STRONG, SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

GOAL# 3: Achieve long-term sustainability through revenue growth and diversification and adopted standards of operations

The priority strategies related to this goal for the next three years are as follows:

3.1 Explore membership opportunities including categories and corporate partnership development that will benefit ACC and local Chamber members. We will seek to generate new revenue for reinvestment in resources to support advocacy and policy development as well as delivery of our services. Revenue targets will be established for new revenue generation as well as increased promotion and growth of membership and current programming.

3.2 Implement a formalized policy development process and clarify roles and responsibilities including that of the Board and Provincial Advisory Committees. Continue to implement national standards for operating and achieve accreditation status through the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.
5.0 Priorities for the Year Ahead

ACC has identified the following priorities for the year ahead that will help to achieve the overall vision for Atlantic Canada.

- **Be Visible to Our Members and Engage Them:** Visit each province at least three (3) times and meet with local Chamber and corporate members, providing networking, professional development, and other training opportunities.

- **Build Our Efforts to Influence, Educate and Advocate on behalf of Business in Atlantic Canada:**
  - Build internal research capacity to support ACC’s core activities to influence, educate, and advocate on policy-related issues to support business in Atlantic Canada and promote regional economic growth initiatives.
  - Determine the Top Priorities through consultations (members, Provincial Advisory Committees, and other stakeholders), and review relevant strategies and reports; define priorities; and implement the annual plan to address these priorities.
  - Strengthen the Provincial Advisory Committee structure with representation in each province, and define and implement advocacy priorities for the year ahead.
  - Take a leadership role, working with local Chamber members (that are CCC members) to identify and advance policy of a national scope through the Canadian Chamber of Commerce at the 2015 AGM.

- **Foster and Grow Our Network:** Host a reception for Atlantic Chamber of Commerce members inviting Members of Parliament and Senators and implement a roundtable discussion with the provincial government in each province. Develop and implement a communications plan to support relationship development involving members (local Chambers and Corporations), government, media, other Chambers of Commerce, and other stakeholders.

- **Assess and Deliver Value to Our Members:** Establish the Membership Task Force and implement the review of membership services and benefits based on member feedback as well as recommendations for growth opportunities.

An Implementation Plan outlines the Responsibilities, Time, Success Measures, and Status of Priority Actions for each priority and is presented as a separate document. The Implementation Plan is presented as a chart where progress on Priority Actions can be captured.
APPENDIX I: ACC Board and Staff

Board of Directors

CHAIR
Barry Zwicker, President
Smart Tower Energy Ltd., Dartmouth, NS

FIRST VICE CHAIR
Debra Feltham, Principal
Feltham & Associates, Mount Pearl, NL

SECOND VICE CHAIR
Terry Malley, President and CEO
Malley Industries Inc., Dieppe, NB

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Stephen Lund, Business Advisor
Deloitte, Saint John, NB

PAST CHAIR
J. Keith Lambe, Regional Manager (retired)
Bell Aliant, Charlottetown, PE

DIRECTORS
Paul Beasant, Business Development
Terra Firma Developments Corporation, Halifax, NS

Rory Francis, Executive Director
Prince Edward Island BioAlliance, Charlottetown, PE

Pete Gauvin, Regional Vice President
NS South & Divisional Director Investment Sales, Atlantic Provinces Division, BMO Bank of Montreal, Halifax, NS

Don Hay, Owner
Haydon Restaurants Limited, Truro, NS

Andy Lodge, Partner and Lawyer
BLR Law, Saint John, NB

Richie Mann, Vice President Marketing
Maher Melford Terminal, Canso, NS

Tony Rogers, Owner/operator
Rogers Financial Services Ltd., Gander, NL

Staff

Valerie Roy, Chief Executive Officer
Moncton, NB

Tracy Dauphinee, Manager, Administrative Services
Windsor, NS
APPENDIX II: OUR ENVIRONMENT

Strengths
The primary strengths of ACC are as follows:

- Our people - experienced business people on the Board and Provincial Advisory Committees and talented staff
- Diverse regional network through our membership
- Value-added member benefits programs
- Support provided to local Chamber members including assistance with board development and accreditation
- Longer-term commitment to the region and advancing advocacy issues; growing recognition for adding value to local Chambers and the region
- Financial self-reliance

Challenges
The primary challenges facing ACC are as follows:

- Recognition of the value ACC provides to members in all provinces. High turnover in staff and Board members at local Chambers negatively impact the member Chambers’ knowledge of ACC benefits/value proposition
- Ability to represent Atlantic Canada, as a unified voice, given the existing and perceived differences provincially and the ability to find adequate advocacy representation in each province
- Recognition of ACC as a strong, credible and unified voice for business by government, corporations, media, and other stakeholders
- Ongoing ability to engage and be of interest to corporations and businesses as members of local Chambers
- Access to evidence-based research for policy development
- Emphasis on longer term sustainability including revenue growth (membership, sponsorship, and benefit programs); succession planning; and staffing capacity issues
- Businesses seeking greater return on their investment in membership-based organization given the diverse offerings available.

Opportunities
The primary opportunities that ACC should pursue are:

- Develop policies for Atlantic Canada, through the establishment of a policy framework/process, and advocacy to advance united provincial and regional issues
- Bring leadership on behalf of business on regional economic development, including provincial economic reports
- Establish fully functioning Provincial Advisory Committees in each province providing relevant and valuable guidance and recommendations to support advocacy
- Build internal research capacity to support policy development
- Support national policy development on behalf of the region
- Grow membership value including benefit programs, supports (e.g., training, accreditation), engagement, and networking
- Increase corporate sponsorship