

Stephen Dempsey
Opening Remarks (Beginning of Program)
Building our Future, featuring Rebecca Ryan
September 12, 2006

Good afternoon. My name is Stephen Dempsey and I am the President and CEO of the Greater Halifax Partnership.

Welcome to the third instalment of this year's Building our Future speaker series.

As the economic growth organization for Greater Halifax, the Partnership is committed to stimulating discussion and raising awareness on leading issues that impact the growth of our economy.

Today we're talking about understanding, attracting and retaining the next generation of workers.

The future of our economy is dependent upon successfully identifying and resolving labour issues.

The workplace is changing—and so is the worker.

Well over one-half of Halifax's population is under the age of 40.

More than 25 per cent are 20 years of age or younger.

After 1000 SmartBusiness interviews, Greater Halifax CEOs have told us that one of the consistent obstacles they face is recruiting and retaining skilled employees.

Fifty-seven per cent said that the availability of a skilled workforce was fair or poor.

Fifty-eight per cent of these CEOs rated workforce quality as good or excellent – DOWN nine percentage points from the year before.

Workers are being bombarded by media reports, recruiters and stories of opportunity in not-so-far away places.

This has the makings of a perfect labour storm.

Today's labour market is not the same as it was twenty years ago.

Competition is no longer between employees for jobs;

It is now between employers for workers.

Employers must become sellers.

They must become "employers of choice".

They cannot afford to ignore the characteristics of upcoming labour markets.

Young people are looking for more than a job, they are looking for an experience.

Now, there is more emphasis on "live first, work second".

No longer is it only dollar figures attracting and holding employees in positions.

The next generation of workers identify as much, if not more, with the community they live in as with the company they work for.

As we look around Greater Halifax today...

The economy is strong, with good fundamentals and lots of construction activity.

We have an economic strategy, a regional plan, and soon, a cultural plan.

One of the world's leading social theorists and public intellectuals, Richard Florida, has us on his radar screen as an up-and-coming community

As business people we must focus not only on being employers of choice, but also on supporting efforts to make Greater Halifax a community of choice.

There is a lot at stake.

That is why we have brought Rebecca Ryan here today to share her own perspective on how businesses and communities can embrace this new employee demographic.

I encourage you to look at today's edition of The Chronicle Herald. You will find two pages dedicated to the topic about engaging and retaining the next generation employee.

You'll read about organizations who are working on retention strategies, engaging their employees and evolving to respond to today's worker.

Finally, we need your help. *(hold up survey card)*

Before you leave the event today, could you please take the time to fill out this brief event survey.

There is one at every place setting.

At the end of the program we will collect the completed surveys from each table.

Your feedback will help us improve our efforts.

Thanks to our Building Our Future partners – Presenting partner, The Chronicle Herald. Other partners: the Halifax International Airport Authority, Mount Saint Vincent University, Office Interiors and RBC Financial Group. For the important role you are playing in advancing our economy.

I would now like to call on Dan Leger, Assistant Managing Editor, The Chronicle Herald to bring greetings on behalf of our presenting partner.

Anna Hounsell
Closing Remarks (End of Program)
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Thank you, Rebecca.

My name is Anna Hounsell and I am Manager of the Partnership's SmartBusiness initiative.

When I look at the data from over two years worth of SmartBusiness interviews

When I speak with our account executives

When I go out and visit with CEO's

It's loud and clear.

Employers are challenged in attracting and retaining talent

That's why your message, about engaging the next generation, is so important.

You've certainly given us a lot to think about today.

Thank you.

(Present Gift)

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Before we close, I have a few housekeeping items...

If you haven't already done so, please fill out the survey card at your place setting. We'll come by and pick them up after the event is over.

If you parked XXXXX, your parking is covered. The gate should be up. If it isn't, please indicate to the attendant that you were attending this event and they will wave you through. (Confirm)

And finally, please join us on November 9th to hear best-selling author, strategist and leadership advisor Lance Secretan at the next installment of our Building our Future series.

Thank you and enjoy your afternoon.