

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chris Huskilson, Chair, Greater Halifax Partnership
Luncheon Remarks (12:05 – 12:10)
Mayor's Forum on the Greater Halifax Economy, March 30, 2009
Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Chris Huskilson.

It is my pleasure to be here today as Chair of the Greater Halifax Partnership.

I am honoured to be a part of this organization.

A public-private partnership,
supported by all three levels of government
and over 150 private-sector investors.

All with one goal in mind: to drive economic growth in Greater Halifax.

I would like to welcome all of you to the first installment
of the Partnership's 2009 Building our Future luncheon series.

"The Mayor's Forum on the Greater Halifax Economy"

Many people have been asking me:

Why are you doing this? Why are you holding this event?

Well the answer is simple.

In these difficult economic times
we seem to be bombarded at every turn
with messages about turmoil in the global economy.

At the Partnership we think it's important
to understand what that means for us here in Halifax.

What is the state of our economy:

What should be our priorities, what are our challenges, and barriers to growth.

Let me start with a little history.

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In 2005 HRM Council unanimously endorsed the Halifax Region Economic Strategy, the path of future economic development work in Greater Halifax.

The responsibility of leading this strategy has been tasked to the Partnership and our Board of Directors.

Together we are responsible for the majority of the actions identified in the Strategy.

Of course, we are not alone.

Other organizations such as HRM, ACOA, Destination Halifax, Nova Scotia Business Inc., and almost 50 others all play a critical role.

Alignment of all our efforts is key.

To this end our Board has an Economic Strategy Committee, led by Partnership Director Dick Miller.

The Committee has representation from the private and public sector organizations that are responsible for delivering activities under the Strategy.

We are now in year four of a five year plan.

And according to the Chamber we are doing a pretty good job.

In their last Economic Scorecard update they reported that we are on-track in areas that are more directly impacted by actions taken at the Municipal level.

But not as close to target in areas that are impacted by a broader range of external factors that require collective actions.

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Areas that require systemic, fundamental shifts in thinking and policy by all three levels of government.

Given the current economic reality, the difficulties and challenges we are facing here and in communities around-the-world, we felt strongly that now is the time to test, validate and confirm the priorities outlined in the plan.

In preparation for today's event the Partnership has been gathering feedback, intelligence and perspective from:

Our Investors;
members of Council;
small, medium and large businesses;
members of the community; and,
the Provincial and Federal government.

We've reviewed the results from the Chamber's Scorecard and we have been trying to make sense of the economic data that seems to change each and every day.

All of these activities will inform the discussion today.

So let's get started, we have a very full agenda: Mayor Kelly, Fred Morley, Dick Miller, Glen Hodgson ...and a great panel of leaders to help guide us.

I look forward to a great discussion.

I'd like to thank Mayor Kelly for his leadership in asking us to hold this Forum.

Dick's Economic Strategy Committee for working the plan and ensuring greater alignment.

And the Chamber for making sure we stay on target

As I said earlier, today is about confirming our priorities.

But first I must ask something of our Mayor.

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Remember when I mentioned how we were not doing so well in areas that require systemic, fundamental shifts in thinking and policy?

Issues like immigration or university enrolment?

Well as our political leader, along with HRM Council we would like to ask you to use your position and your influence, to begin addressing these issues.

We encourage you to take the lead with your provincial and Federal counterparts in an effort to move those parts of the plan forward.

Finally, you may be wondering about the plaques and crystal you passed on your way to lunch.

They are there to recognize the 150 plus Greater Halifax Partnership investors, that since 1996 have invested their time, insights and financial resources in the Partnership.

Our Investors invest on behalf of the entire business community.

Their support enables us to be the catalyst for economic growth in Greater Halifax

For that, they must be recognized. Thank you. *(lead applause)*

Before I move things along I would like to thank today's partners.

This luncheon is presented by The Chronicle Herald.

And partners: the Halifax International Airport Authority, Mount Saint Vincent University, and RBC Financial Group.

I will now call on Dan Leger, Director of News Content at the Chronicle Herald to bring greetings on behalf of our presenting partner. Dan...