

## Support for Bill 85

### Presentation to Law Amendments Committee

Mar 26, 2018

Good afternoon and thank you for having me here today. My name is Michelle Wilson. Since many of you don't know me, I'll give you some background information about myself. I opened my own business, Timeless Moments, back in 2005 and sold it in 2014. It is still thriving today. I spent much time volunteering with Sydney Waterfront District Business Association, previously known as Sydney Downtown Development Association, and completed a term as president. It was during that time that I also joined the Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce, and soon after was asked to sit on the Chamber Council. After selling my business I was hired by Sydney Waterfront District Association as Executive Director in 2014, and that remains my role to this day. With my new role as Executive Director, I was asked to join the Chamber board, and just this past week I have accepted the role as Incoming Vice Chair.

It is in the capacity of Vice Chair of the board of Sydney and Area Chamber of Commerce that I am addressing you today. Our chamber represents over 300 businesses in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. We are the voice of the private sector, and base our initiatives on four pillars: networking, education, benefits, and advocacy.

Today, I am here to advocate in support of Bill 85. There is much to be excited for in the CBRM. We are excited for the future of our community. We are excited about new businesses opening each month. We are excited about the construction of a second cruise berth to accommodate more cruise ships and more passengers. We are excited that NSCC is relocating to the Sydney Waterfront District. And we are excited about the future development of the Novaport container terminal, and Novazone, logistics park.

The fact still remains that we face a number of challenges. Our Chamber is familiar with the hindrance to economic development that can be caused by high commercial tax rates. This poses challenges in providing an attractive market for new businesses to choose CBRM as their preferred location. There is a need to promote economic development and business growth in our area. Since the closure of our major industries our population has seen a significant decline. Now more than ever we are looking to our government officials to make the necessary changes to address this issue.

There is no one answer or fix to the issue. I see it as a puzzle, and Bill 85 is one piece of the puzzle. As each piece fits into place, we look forward to seeing the whole picture - a prosperous and thriving community.

Fostering economic development means that our young people will have more opportunities and choose to stay here in Nova Scotia. It means families stay together, instead of parents having to travel West. It means future generations will choose to stay and further grow our community. Strong communities build a better tax base, attract doctors, and more businesses.

It is in the best interest of the Province of Nova Scotia to support its municipalities to create self-sustaining organizations. Bill 85 is a step in the right direction.

In speaking about the CBRM, we are the second largest municipality in Nova Scotia. We look forward to having a Charter. That will provide our elected Municipal officials some autonomy, allowing them to be creative in addressing specific issues according to the situation. In the meantime, we see Bill 85 as a move in the right direction to allow things to move forward with port development.

Our Chamber's Board and council, on behalf of our membership, see this as a positive thing for all of Nova Scotia. Therefore, we wish to express our support for Bill 85. Thank you for your time.