



GREATER CHARLOTTETOWN AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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February 11, 2021

Trish Altass, MLA

Chair, Special Committee on Poverty in PEI

Office of the Official Opposition

Second Floor, 175 Richmond Street,

Charlottetown, PE C1A 1H8

Dear Ms. Altass;

We want to thank the Special Committee on Poverty in PEI for your work on tackling the complex and critical issue of poverty in our province. As an organization that represents over 1,000 businesses who employ more than 20,000 Islanders, we have an important stake in our community and province's health. Therefore, we would like to address the committee's report, *Recommendations in Response to Motion No. 36: Creation of a Special Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Poverty in PEI*.

The Chamber believes that a robust consultation process is still needed to gather additional perspectives. We understand that through your process you did host public consultations, however in reviewing your list of committee meetings which included presentations by 32 individuals representing community or government organizations, the absence of business or employment groups was noted. As individuals vested in our community's health, we feel that feedback from the business community and employers would have been valuable in your committee's deliberations.

We recommend that a workforce lens be applied to ensure there are not any unintended negative consequences for our local small businesses and the provincial economy. In speaking regularly with members, finding employees is still one of their top challenges. In fact, a recent study by the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council indicated that half of Atlantic Canadian businesses are struggling with labour recruitment and retention. Additionally, the demographic trajectory we are facing with an ageing population will continue to place pressure on our economy, our tax base and therefore our government's ability to support social programs that are needed. Significant initiatives that could exacerbate this problem must be considered carefully.

We recommend that clear and defined metrics for measuring success be established. Currently, there is no complete data on the impact an income guarantee may have on individuals and/or the local

economy. Therefore, before proceeding further, we feel it will be important to clearly define baselines (what problems are being fixed and not served by other programs), individual socio/economic, labour participation and education engagement outcomes. Plus, measures of the economic impact on local businesses to identify unintended consequences.

We request a full accounting of the actions taken to date through the 2018 PEI Poverty Reduction Action Plan. The extensive work to create the Island's poverty reduction strategy should not be neglected with a focus on a single solution income program. Within the strategy were many well researched and evidence-based recommendations regarding upskilling, education, workforce supports, etc. We feel it is essential to determine if more comprehensive measures, as outlined in the strategy, have been implemented and their impact before moving on to other options.

Thank you for considering our recommendations. The Chamber looks forward to hearing how we can be a part of and support evidence-based solutions for poverty reduction in our province.

Sincerely,



Penny Walsh-McGuire

Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Hon. Brad Trivers, Minister of Social Development & Housing;

Sidney MacEwen, Government House Leader;

Michele Beaton, Opposition House Leader;

Heath MacDonald, Third Party House Leader

