



FROM PROVINCE HOUSE TO HOME

Leo Glavine, MLA

Kings West

It is with increasing dismay that I watch the state of the world economy. The economic downturn is an all-too-real example of how global our economy really is. When big financial institutions in the United States make bad decisions, people here in the Annapolis Valley are losing their jobs. The state of the world economy shows us just how vulnerable big business is and how important it is to support our economy here at home.

Small business is the backbone of our province. It employs half the people in Nova Scotia, yet too often we find the tomatoes in our grocery store are from Mexico, the blueberries from Ontario and the beef from Alberta. If we want our Nova Scotia communities to stay strong we need to support our local entrepreneurs; be they farmers, retailers or even writers.

That support starts in our communities with our citizens. It means not just buying local but living locally. We need to support the people around us who are trying to make our lives better, and make a little money for their families at the same time. The support also has to come from government. The Conservatives need to do more than just put out a poster encouraging people to buy locally produced food; they need to make sure government purchases, wherever possible, are made in and from our communities. It needs to help foster an environment where local, small business can thrive.

Right now, Nova Scotia is not a very encouraging place to be a small business. The tax burden for these entrepreneurs is much higher than it should be, and much higher than it needs to be. We don't need to be taxing this segment of our economy so heavily. This province currently has the third highest small business rate in Canada and it has the highest corporate tax rate. Nova Scotia also has the second highest Workers' Compensation Premiums in Canada. With small business being such a major driver to our economy, particularly in rural areas, it's no wonder our province has been dead last in economic growth compared to the other provinces since 2003.

We are proposing a significant reduction in the small business tax rate; from 5% down to 1%. This may seem like a big dip, and it is, but freeing up some badly needed resources will give small businesses the chance to invest in themselves, creating growth and employment. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses in Nova Scotia, 85% of small business owners list the tax burden as their top concern.

The Nova Scotia Liberals are further proposing a micro-credit fund that will make ultra-low interest loans available to small businesses. These operations are a stabilizing force in very tough times. Giving businesses access to the funds they need to sustain themselves, will give our local economy the security it needs to sustain our communities.

Employing half of the province, Nova Scotia small businesses are at the heart of our economy. Why should we stand by and watch the world's economy plummet, taking us with it? A simple change to the tax laws could mean real change, having an immediate effect on the viability of small business, on the competitive environment in which they operate and on the people who own and work for these companies. I for one am tired of seeing Nova Scotia place dead last in Canadian economic growth year after year. Let's lower small business tax and stimulate our local economies.

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