

## OPEN LETTER

December 8, 2011

Dear Premier:

Since the business community was first informed of your intent to introduce legislation to bring in First Contract Arbitration (FCA), we have been united and consistent in communicating our serious concerns that FCA is unneeded, unwanted and is anti-business. Collectively, our associations represent tens of thousands of businesses and over 200,000 employees and operate in all areas of the economy and all communities. The people we represent – small-and medium-sized employers – are our province’s job creators. They are our risk-takers. We strongly believe we need to work together to create an environment that inspires more of them and we remain unanimous in our view that forging ahead with First Contract Arbitration will not help do this.

With one voice, we’ve asked why this legislation is needed. The only response that you have provided is that it exists in other provinces. The fact is that the model being introduced exists only in one province – Manitoba.

With one voice, we have shared repeatedly that the current labour relations environment in Nova Scotia is enviable. We have one of the lowest lost days due to labour disruptions in Canada. Only three orders have been issued as a result of “bad faith bargaining” in the last 14 years; not all against employers. Still, we were not heard.

United and unprecedented, businesses of all sizes appeared before Law Amendments. There, we suggested improvements to the proposed legislation that would maintain a commitment to collective bargaining and ensure that a third-party agreement is introduced only as a last resort. Such principles exist in all FCA legislation – except for the model we seem to be intent on adopting. Again, we were ignored.

So today we are making one final plea: do not turn your back on the tens of thousands of businesses that have – in extraordinary fashion – joined together to urge you and your NDP colleagues to listen. These are not businesses looking for a bailout, nor are they asking for special treatment. These are businesses asking you and your caucus colleagues to listen to them, work with them and align your priorities with those of Nova Scotians.

Mr. Premier, there is still time to listen to our concerns and consider our amendments. By doing so you will demonstrate that you understand the debate around FCA has evolved into a much wider concern within the business community. At its core, this is about how government involves job creators in decisions that will ultimately impact how they operate. It is also about whether – or not – their perspective matters. Business owners need confidence that their government will listen and work with them to address their concerns. Now more than ever, they need you to give them this confidence.

So, together and united, Mr. Premier, we are urging you to step back, consider the messages your actions will be sending if you move forward, and compromise. We believe there is a win in this for us all.

Sincerely,

Atlantic Building Supply Dealers Association  
Canadian Federation of Independent Business  
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters  
Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association  
Construction Association of Nova Scotia  
Canadian Taxpayers Federation  
Contact Centre Nova Scotia  
Halifax Chamber of Commerce  
Hotel Association of Nova Scotia  
Merit Contractors Association of Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Chambers of Commerce  
Nova Scotia Home Builders’ Association  
Nova Scotia Road Builders Association  
Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia  
Retail Council of Canada – Atlantic Office  
Sackville Business Association  
Scotia Group of Companies  
Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia  
Truro and District Chamber of Commerce