

'Minding Your Business'

The Opportunity

Statistics Canada estimates that small and medium-sized enterprises employ half of all Nova Scotians and create 40 per cent of new jobs in the province. Despite their large economic contribution, many small business owners say that too much regulation makes their work harder. Business owners have also told us they need easy-to-understand information on how to comply with government regulations.

In a 2005 Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey, business owners said they spend eight hours a week on regulation-related tasks. They spend most of that time on paperwork to meet provincial regulations. Filing out and filing federal taxation paperwork – for Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax (GST/HST) and income tax – are a close second.

We need safety regulations in the workplace. They protect people's health and help the economy thrive. And taxes must be paid. But for small business, too much regulation costs time and money. Extra hours spent completing and filing forms cut productivity and profits.

The Response: 'Minding Your Business'

'Minding Your Business' is a good example of government streamlining paperwork for business. In Nova Scotia, three regulatory bodies have the biggest impact on business owners: Environment and Labour oversees workplace-related health and safety regulations; the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) makes monthly payroll assessments and billings; and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) collects sales and income taxes.

All three agencies wanted to reduce the administrative burden on small and medium-sized businesses. So they joined forces to develop 'Minding Your Business,' a series of workshops designed to make it easier for businesses to understand and follow their regulations.

'Minding Your Business' sessions provide a basic introduction to occupational safety and health, workers' compensation, and tax regulations. They walk participants through the steps they must take to comply with these regulations, and give tips to help business owners take these steps more efficiently. The workshops also provide a venue for business owners to ask questions and raise concerns.

From 2003 to 2005, the project partners delivered 'Minding Your Business' workshops in Halifax, Truro and Sydney. Participants across the province responded favourably to the sessions.

In another popular workshop, Environment and Labour and WCB combined 'Minding Your Business' content with information about WCB's return to work program and a new injury prevention initiative. Through this partnership, WCB was able to take new information directly to its target audience. More than 1700 people attended these sessions in Yarmouth, New Minas, Bridgewater, Antigonish, Sydney and Halifax. Many of the day-long sessions were filled to capacity, with waiting lists.



Environment and Labour and WCB have also created a special day-long workshop for union business agents. This workshop covers the role of the business agent; occupational health and safety issues; workers' compensation appeals; the role of the safety officer; and facts about Environment and Labour investigations.

New 'Minding Your Business' sessions will roll out in 2006.

How 'Minding Your Business' Improves Competitiveness and Compliance

'Minding Your Business' makes compliance easier for small business in several ways. It offers 'one-stop shopping' so business owners can learn about all the relevant regulations in one single day. It presents the information in a simple, well-organized way, so business owners clearly understand the regulations and how to complete and file the necessary forms.

Representatives from each organization stay after the sessions to answer questions; business owners get real-life problems solved right away. This means they can return to their businesses equipped to manage paperwork as efficiently and effectively as possible. It also means they file and complete documents correctly the first time, so they don't need to re-do any of the work. The result is that businesses spend less time on regulation-related paperwork. The less time spent on administrative paperwork, the more time business owners can spend on growth and productivity.

There is another benefit. Easy-to-understand occupational health and safety information – available at the workshops and from Environment and Labour – prevents accidents. Preventing accidents saves lives and suffering.

It's a simple equation. Less time needed to comply with our laws equals more competitive business.

Where can I get more information?

For more information on 'Minding Your Business' or on occupational health and safety, contact the Information Specialist, Occupational Health and Safety Division, Environment and Labour. Phone: (902) 424-5400 (Toll-free 1-800-952-2687)

About the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative

The 'Minding Your Business' sessions support the goals of the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI). The CCI is a key part of *Better Regulation – Everyone's Business*, the Government of Nova Scotia's far-reaching plan for improving regulation in the province.

Environment and Labour is the main regulatory department in Nova Scotia. Through the CCI, the department is changing the way laws are designed, communicated and enforced in Nova Scotia.

The CCI is a multi-year, systematic approach to making sure that our regulatory programs meet the needs of Nova Scotians. In short, the CCI is working to make a brighter future for our people, economy, environment and communities.

Where can I get more information on the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative?

Find out more about the CCI at its Web site at:
www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci



Environment and Labour