

SMALL BUSINESS MATTERS

Business Advocacy: Strength in Numbers!

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Some people may sympathize very little with the plight of businesses, especially big business. Publicized increases to business tax rates, changes to regulations, or other issues that impact upon business, do not cause great concern for most folks. However, when there are changes that will impact on social issues such as health care or education there is most often great protest. This difference is probably due to the human face we can put on social issues versus the view of businesses being profit driven. In fact, both social and business interests often have common ground and there is also a human face associated with business when one looks closer.

The contribution made to the economy by business and small businesses in particular, can not be overlooked. Many of the matters important to small business are also important to individuals especially those employed by them as well the individuals and their families that make living from operating small businesses.

So there is a real role for business networks, chambers of commerce and any business association, in advocating on behalf of their interests and the interest of the people who rely on these businesses. There are many benefits that can be realized from a common voice on small business matters and having an appreciation for the big picture. The benefits of business advocacy and business cooperation by a business network or group include:

- More successful communication with all levels of government – municipal, provincial, and federal on policy as it pertains to regulations, infrastructure investment, taxes, etc.
- Support businesses with matters important to members but would not otherwise get consideration without support from a larger group of businesses working together.
- Work on local and regional concerns and be able to work with other groups with the same concerns – ie infrastructure such as roads and highways, local government services, etc.
- Networking opportunities within the business group and being able to build relationships with other members.
- Liaison with other networks, chambers, groups, or industry associations with common objectives.
- Share resources to minimize costs such as group advertising.
- Leverage of group buying power for common products and services like insurance.
- Educate the public on behalf of members within local area or region in which businesses operate on common issues important both to area residents and small business.
- Greater recognition of the concerns of small business and greater appreciation for these in the local operating area of the group.
- Joint initiatives and training opportunities for members.

The power of business groups or networks is very real and wherever one exists businesses should consider participation. If one does not exist in your area or region, it is worthwhile exploring the establishment of one by talking to other members of the business community. There are different forms of business groups or associations from informal to formal incorporated chambers or associations.

If there are challenges, such as a small business community to draw upon or large distances between communities in your area or region, think about ways to overcome these challenges. Challenges sometimes also bring opportunity such as greater advocacy power of a business community representing multiple communities or areas. Remember when it comes to business advocacy, there is strength in numbers!

For more information on business financing and other services of CBDC South Coast call 1-800-303-2232 or 538-3846.