

John Bonin Speech

Chamber AGM (October 11, 2006)

Thank you, Debbi. I appreciate this opportunity to speak directly to the membership.

Ladies and gentlemen, as this year's Chair of the Board of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, I am committed to the strengthening of the Chamber's visible presence in our community.

As an effective "voice of business", the board will continue its tradition of advocating for and supporting local businesses and giving local business owners a forum in which to be heard.

During my tenure, I will concentrate on working with all 3 levels of our elected officials to create stronger relationships of understanding and to advocate on behalf of local businesses.

As Chair of your Chamber, I can assure you that we want to be the "go to" organization in this community for all 3 levels of government. Our goal is to foster an environment where governments, particularly at the municipal level, would look to us as the first organization to contact early in any process that involves business.

Once the coming November elections are over, our plan is to begin regular dialogue with the Mayor and councilors to sit and discuss issues. We want to make sure that they understand the business needs of our community. We also want them to know that the Chamber can offer them support and help with local business issues. This newly strengthened relationship at the municipal level will benefit both partners.

Another focus for the coming year is the Mining Service and Supply sectors. The Chamber has already formed a task group to specifically identify the needs and the future of mining service and supply companies in order to help them continue to grow their business.

It is not commonly known that this sector is collectively the largest employer in the region...with more staff than INCO, the recently purchased

Falconbridge (Xstrata) and the Hospital combined. It is the Chamber's intention to work with this sector to provide an even stronger voice for them.

We will also continue to monitor and advocate on behalf of businesses and the City of Greater Sudbury in regard to all potential impacts of the INCO and Xstrata mining takeovers. When I say continue, I refer to, among other initiatives, the Chamber's letter to CVRD. Even before the Mayor has sent his paper to Brazil, the Chamber had already contacted CVRD to question them directly regarding how they would continue to invest and support our community. The Chamber has also done this with all suitors for Falconbridge.

It is equally important to note that the Chamber created the first public forum that Xstrata was offered in order to discuss these issues locally.

In our continued efforts to promote the best interests of Greater Sudbury business, the Chamber will also remain focused on the Centre for Excellence. This is an important initiative that we have been involved in since the beginning. The Chamber has helped to advocate for this, and for many other local interests and initiatives at all levels of government.

Locally, we have advocated directly at the municipal level through our mayor and council. We have also taken local business issues to the next 2 levels of government in 2 distinct ways. We have sent letters directly to the provincial and federal levels and we have actively enlisted the advocating strength and assistance of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. We will continue to represent business interests directly and through our Chamber organizations.

In fact, we are at this point avidly advocating for federal funding to complete the Centre for Excellence. I look forward to hearing what the Honourable Tony Clement has to say this evening.

In closing, let me just reiterate that my commitment as this year's Chair is to solidify a noticeable increase in the visible presence of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you.