



General – the Organization

What is a Chamber of Commerce?

A Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of business and professional men and women who have joined together for the purpose of promoting the civic, commercial, and industrial progress of their community.

The area's economic well being is directly related to the calibre of work that is done by the Chamber. This is why the Chamber has a major impact on business, income, and future growth of the area.

There are three primary functions of a Chamber of Commerce:

1. **Lobby Government** (*municipally, provincially, & federally*) for changes that positively affect business, translating into action the group thinking of the Chamber members.
2. **Provide Member Services** (*value-added programs*). It renders specific services that can be most effectively delivered by a community Chamber – to its members.
3. **Facilitate Networking and Cross Selling.**

Objectives of the Chamber

1. To promote a better understanding of our private enterprise system.
2. To coordinate the efforts of commerce, industry, and the professions in maintaining and strengthening a sound and healthy business climate in the surrounding area.
3. To provide creative business leadership and effective coordination of all interested parties in solving community problems and initiating constructive community action.
4. To create broad understanding and appreciation of the great opportunities in the surrounding area and to promote the advantages and assets of the community.

How It Operates

Board of Directors

The board of directors is the policy-making body of the Chamber of Commerce. Its members represent the business and professional leadership of the community. The board consists of X number of members, of which Y are elected for Z number of years (as per the bylaws). The president of the board presides over all meetings of the board.

Officers or Executive Committee

The executive council or committee consists of X number of directors. It exercises the powers of the board between those times when the board meetings are held.

Committees

A committee system is the most effective means of harnessing energies and abilities of volunteer workers. Committees are responsible to the board of directors and normally report to the president, either directly or through the administrator.

How It Is Financed

The Chamber of Commerce is primarily financed by *member funding* in the area of membership fees and/or corporate donations and non-dues income. In addition, however, the maintenance of an adequate level of support from all business and professional interests in the community is essential to finance the programs that are vital to community growth and development. Non-dues income includes (but is not restricted to) trade shows, business directories, day timers, and fund-raising activities.

The amount of membership fees will vary depending on the size of the community and according to the fee schedule as approved by the board.

What Does the Chamber of Commerce Really Do?

You have probably heard that question asked at one time or another and you may have wondered about it yourself. It is a legitimate question and many people — including those to whom the Chamber of Commerce is very important — have no real concept of exactly what a Chamber is, how it works, or what it was actually established for in the first place.

There are a lot of misconceptions about the Chamber. For example, there are those who believe the Chamber gathers statistics, prints nice brochures, visits new businesses, answers inquiries, and advertises what a great place the local area is in which to work and live.

They are right, up to a point. These are fringe benefits of the Chamber — the things done as a matter of routine because they need doing, but they alone are not why the Chamber exists.

The **primary** functions of the Chamber go far deeper than those niceties. The Chamber of Commerce is a catalyst — ***a common vehicle through which business and professional people work together for the common good of the community.***

A better community means better business conditions and the Chamber works for a better community for everyone. This brings us back to that original question, **what does the Chamber really do?** There is, in the final analysis, one prime reason for the Chamber to exist — ***to do whatever is necessary to keep the local area's economic condition at a level where businesses will risk their resources in the locality in the hopes of making a profit*** — everything else is just a means to the end.

In any community, it is from the profitable operations of business that all other benefits are derived. Only by succeeding in this fundamental goal can jobs be provided and produce the wealth to finance all the governmental, civic, educational, cultural and charitable needs that communities are faced with everyday.

This means WE must do the job needed.

That leaves a final question, **who is the WE that does all this?** We is **you!** The staff, the Chamber members, and all of your business professional friends who are also Chamber members.

You are the Chamber of Commerce. **You** provide the ideas, the drive, the goals, the funds, and the voluntary services to keep the Chamber doing what it does. **You** are the Chamber, and without **you**, there wouldn't be any Chamber. Ask yourself — who would do all those things if the Chamber didn't?

Thank you for what **you** have done today and for what **you** will do tomorrow.

Because **you** are the Chamber of Commerce.