



tracc

Tri Regional Action Collaboration

Stony Plain, Spruce Grove & Wabamun Chambers of Commerce

Executive Summary

It has been the mandate of our respective boards to form a committee, the Tri Regional Action Collaboration Committee (TRACC), to explore what potential unification may look like and how it may happen. To be clear any move to unify the chambers will require a formal membership vote from both membership bodies, by no means has this decision been made at this point in time, but is supported by both respective Boards of Directors.

OUR MOTIVATION

The goals of unification are two-fold with the first being to provide better service to our collective membership by way of more efficient use of resources. Maintaining separate memberships lists, separate event calendars, separate sets of finances to name just a few means that our staff spend a significant amount of their time maintaining each organization as opposed to providing membership facing services such as business education or advocacy. Under a unified organization these “day to day” responsibilities can be streamlined leaving time for a combined staff body to provide more attention to our membership base. The other key motivating factor is that a larger membership base carries more weight at the advocacy table. In Canada the primary historical role of Chambers of Commerce is to act as advocates to all three levels of government on behalf of the business community.

HISTORY

On June 21st TRACC gathered member feedback regarding the idea of chamber unification. A total of 44 individuals participated and of the 44 respondents, 39 expressed support for the idea of unified chamber. The 44 respondents were made up of 17 members of the Spruce Grove Chamber, 12 members of the Stony Plain Chamber, 6 members of both chambers and 9 non-members.

NEXT STEP

The next step of TRACC was to conduct a formal email survey of members during the month of September. Out of the 40 participants of the Spruce Grove survey 36 (90%) expressed support for the idea of a unified chamber. Out of 69 respondents to the Stony Plain survey 56 (81%) expressed support for the idea of a unified chamber.

In September of 2018 both the Stony Plain and Spruce Grove Chambers help round table discussions at their respective general meeting to facilitate feedback and discussion regarding the idea of a unified chamber. Both meetings were very well attended, and some excellent feedback was collected as a result of the round table discussion. The most prevalent comment which was raised during the round tables discussions and during the

survey process was the idea that combining the chambers would result in a loss of identity for one or both organizations and their memberships. The final primary question raised by members was in regard to membership fees increasing under a unified body.

OUR RESEARCH

With positive feedback around the idea of unification in mind TRACC opted to hire a research consultant to gather additional information for other Chambers throughout the County that have under gone unification projects.

The Chambers interviewed include the following:

1. St. John Board of Trade (New Brunswick)
2. The Ottawa Board of Trade
3. Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce (Battlefords, Sask.)

Overall the result of unification for all three was positive. Membership Communication was highlighted as being imperative. Organizations that rushed to unify and that did not concisely communicate with their membership had a much more difficult time during this process.

When exploring the options of how a chamber would unify there were found to be two predominant styles with one being recommended over the other. The prevailing option is one by where a single chamber dissolves and its boundaries, membership and staff is assumed by the other.

Following review of the provided research TRACC has undertaken to formulate the framework of the business model for a unified chamber. The focus of the business model has been to ensure that primary objectives, duplication reduction, advocacy and networking, may be met under a unified model but also to ensure that feedback regarding identity, representation and cost are adequately addressed.

This will form the framework for a unified chamber to join with other regional entities such as the Wabamun and District Chamber of Commerce which has expressed support and interest in joining a unified chamber.

CONCLUSION

Next for TRACC and the idea of unifying our Chambers of Commerce? TRACC has commissioned the treasurers of the Spruce Grove and Stony Plain Chambers to meet with staff to draft a detailed sample budget for a unified entity. The results of this draft budget will be reviewed by TRACC and will play a big role in answering some of the outstanding questions that remain regarding impact to fee structure. As these updates become available, they will be shared with membership via email newsletter, Chamber general meetings and potentially in other round table discussions focused on the unification project.

Please [click here](#), if you wish to read the entire membership update.

Debra DeBernardo, Tracc Task Force Chair

On behalf of Tri Regional Action Collaboration Committee (TRACC)