



State leader: Don't compete with each other for investment, jobs

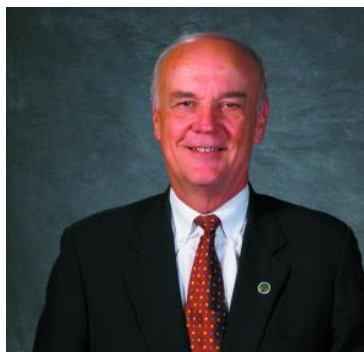
August 27, 2010 Frank DeLoache

CORNELIUS – Because of the recession, states and cities are fighting even more fiercely to capture new businesses and jobs, the state's chief business recruiter told a group of north Mecklenburg business people and town officials Thursday, Aug. 19.

For that reason, towns in the Lake Norman and greater Charlotte region can't afford to compete with each other, N.C. Secretary of Commerce J. Keith Crisco told a gathering at the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce.

"Don't be parochial," he advised the group. "Regionally, you've got to work together. If it comes to this area, you all win. If Huntersville gets five in a row, it will work out, and in the end, you all benefit."

Those likely to win new jobs are those that compete and spend "a little bit of money and time" making contacts with attractive businesses and industries, Crisco said.



Crisco

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At a recent biotech conference in Chicago, Crisco said five N.C. counties had representatives there meeting people and making contacts. Likewise, officials in Cleveland

County and Shelby, a hotbed for American Legion baseball, decided they wanted to host the American Legion World Series. They finally got their wish but not before they sent delegations to every major American Legion tournament in the country for several years, Crisco said.

Earlier in the meeting, N.C. Rep. Thom Tillis, praised the Visit Lake Norman visitors bureau for its success in recruiting a number of world-class fishing tournaments to the lake. Crisco noted that tourism is the third most important type of business to North Carolina, trailing only agriculture and forestry and still ahead of the medical industry.

North Carolina remains at the top of the national rankings as a place where businesses want to operate, Crisco said. The weakness of organized labor has drawn a number of aerospace jobs here, and the state's strong community college system is "a secret weapon," he said.

But he warned the state faces a huge budget dilemma in the coming year, when revenues are expected to fall 20 percent short of the existing budget. That's means finding revenue or cutting programs by a fifth.

"My father, who didn't curse, would say, 'We're in a well of a hess,'" Crisco said. "... I don't know how you do it."