

New direction for Saint John chamber

DICK DAIGLE COMMENTARY



While the uptown area is quiet on an early morning last week, Saint John and region has lots of potential that the Chamber of Commerce wants to highlight
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I love a good challenge. Challenges push us to grow and encourage us to find new ways to work together to reach our goals. Challenges make us

Three years ago, our regional business associations took on a significant challenge and formed the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce. We task was complete, we celebrated because the sum of our new organization is much stronger than the parts were alone.

We are an independent business organization funded by our members and are not affiliated in any way with government or government agencies to our membership and as such, we build solid partnerships between other businesses, economic and community development agencies, and all that but we are not beholden to them. These relationships are essential because when we're all aligned on our community's priority projects, we harness the community to push those priorities forward.

Reaching even further, we're keenly focused on maintaining strong alliances with our fellow southern New Brunswick chambers in Moncton and Fredericton and western Canadian partner chambers in Alberta and British Columbia. We're also setting the stage nationally through our advantageous connection to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. These strong relationships are opening doors for our members – locally, regionally and nationally.

None of this is new, of course. We have a long and successful history in the Canadian Chamber movement. In fact, we've been there right from the the oldest municipal chambers in Canada, we hosted the very first Canadian Chamber annual general meeting in Saint John in 1926. As we celebrate our 91st anniversary in 2019, we're also celebrating our relevant, nimble, more streamlined organization, armed with the right tools and strong relationships to move our mandate forward.

And we're continuously challenging ourselves to do more as your advocates on the issues that impact your ability to make money, save money, reduce costs and grow your business. Through our surveys, conversations with members, and an ongoing relationship with past chairs, we've learned that you want us to be even

advocacy efforts, with an increased visibility within the community. We're actively building on our connections in the community and across the country so your voice is heard on vital regulatory and legislative issues affecting your business.

In previous member surveys, our members have told us loud and clear that they support decreasing our dependence on foreign oil and adding billions to our own economy to be invested where most needed – right here in Canada. We are at a pivotal point on this matter, and to achieve our goal we need the entire community to help keep the momentum moving forward. With the latest announcement that the entire Energy East pipeline hearings process is on, it's critical that we defend this nation-building project, which will move about 1.1 million barrels of Canadian oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan to a marine terminal in New Brunswick, including to Canada's largest refinery, right here in Saint John.

In the coming weeks, we'll issue a highly important and timely challenge when we kick off our national advocacy project focused on affirming support for the pipeline.

As your voice and your advocates on the national stage, we challenge you to join us. Join us as a member. Join us as a member of this community. Join us on other important challenges. Make your voice heard. Join us in declaring that we're ready and open for business in Saint John.

Dick Daigle is the chairman of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce.