

Consumer confidence the highest in seven years in city: CRA

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David Duplisea, CEO of Saint John's Chamber of Commerce, credits the recent boost of consumer confidence to a rising number of events and commercial growth in the city.

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SAINT JOHN • Good news for businesses in Saint John: consumer confidence in the city has reached its highest level in seven years, according to a poll conducted by Corporate Research Associates Inc.

The quarterly CRA Urban Report survey polled 401 Saint John residents by telephone, and found consumer confidence rests at 103.4, up from 99.5 three months ago.

For David Duplisea, CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce, the rise in consumer confidence echoes what the chamber has seen with its membership over the years through a yearly survey conducted internally.

“The consumer confidence from the membership of the chamber has always been positive,” Duplisea said. “This latest poll by CRA just sort of echoes what we’ve been saying for a while.”

Duplisea said 80 per cent of chamber businesses have said they expect their businesses will do better this year, up from 75 per cent last year. He added 88 per cent of businesses will maintain or add more jobs, up from a low 80 percentile last year.

Saint John has experienced a lot of growth recently, Duplisea said, from the West Side Modernization project at the port to Porter Airlines announcing its expansion to the Saint John Airport, all of which “boost confidence” in the region.

He added the addition of cultural events like the Area 506 festival, the East Coast Music Awards held earlier this year and the Tall Ships Festival signifies that growth as well.

“All of that is fuelling the dialogue about an excitement that’s going on in Saint John, and that is being reflected in the consumer confidence,” Duplisea said.

Fredericton and Moncton has also seen an increase in their consumer confidence rates, according to the poll. Moncton’s rests at 106.9, slightly up from 106.8 three months ago. Fredericton’s rate has improved for the second consecutive quarter, with 109.4, up from 105.1 in May.

The survey also measured council satisfaction among residents in the three cities. Saint John reported a 65 per cent satisfaction rate under Mayor Don Darling’s leadership, and under the leadership of Mayor Mike O’Brien, Fredericton’s satisfaction rate is 71 per cent, according to a release by the CRA.

Council satisfaction in Moncton, however, is at its lowest since tracking began in 2013, with a 57 per cent satisfaction rate of Mayor Dawn Arnold and company, the release said.

Four hundred Moncton residents and 400 Fredericton residents were polled for the consumer confidence survey, with a 4.9 per cent margin of error, 95 times out of a hundred. The government satisfaction survey is based on 218 Saint John residents (± 6.6 per cent), 192 Moncton residents (± 7.1 per cent) and 291 Fredericton residents (± 5.7 per cent).