



David Duplisea is the executive director of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber launched a survey with other business associations this week to gather data on the economic realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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SAINT JOHN • A group of business associations launched a survey on Monday to gather data on how to best help businesses cope with the harsh economic realities of the COVID-19 pandemic.

David Duplisea, CEO for the Saint John Region Chamber, said the survey is designed to get a pulse on the business community's health after more than a month of limited activity and social distancing caused by coronavirus.

"“We really need to map the lay of the land before we can chart a path forward," he said. "We need to know what the landscape looks like."

Duplisea and the Chamber worked with Develop SJ, Economic Development Greater Saint John, Uptown SJ, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Opportunities New Brunswick, National Research Council of Canada, and the City of Saint John, to develop the survey.

The group has been working together since early March to discuss how the pandemic could negatively impact the economy and businesses. Duplisea said they're working together to provide a "common voice" for the business community.

"It's great to see the collaboration in the business community," he said. "We're talking about gaps in funding [and] we've been very effective in doing that."

The survey presents 23 questions for business owners ranging from how many employees they have to what measures they've taken in response to the pandemic to their concerns about the long-term financial costs of COVID-19. The survey also asks business operators if they see any potential opportunities coming out of the pandemic, a question Duplisea thinks is particularly important as stores are forced to change their habits.

"We're hearing all kinds of evolving business models and collaborations," he said. "We're in a new world. Old ways are changing. Out of scary times will come those opportunities."

Duplisea said the survey data will be used to determine what kind of recovery programs are needed when the world starts to rebound from the pandemic.

"We'll get through this," he said.

The survey is being released to several businesses and can be accessed online (<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07eh1gh8kww93dxy1k/a01i1k98nfnad>) many of the group members' websites. The deadline to complete the survey is April 27.