



Matthew Elliott, chef owner of Ethel & Mary's, said that initiatives like Takeaway Wednesday can be helpful to small local businesses.

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**Emma McPhee | Telegraph-Journal**

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**SAINT JOHN • Set your lunch plans: a campaign by the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce and Uptown Saint John has marked Wednesdays as the day to buy local.**

#TakeAwayWednesday is a new initiative launching this week by the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce and Uptown Saint John in partnership with Discover Saint John, the Town of Rothesay, the Town of Quispamsis and the Town of Grand Bay-Westfield. It's a reminder for people to support local businesses that have been hard-hit by the pandemic.

"We always encourage all of our members and consumers and businesses to support one another every day of the week," said Chamber CEO David Duplisea. "But sometimes we get caught up in things and it becomes easy to forget about it. And so this is just a reminder every week to support local."

The initiative is not just for ordering takeout – Duplisea said the campaign is aimed at all forms of buying local, from health and wellness services to shopping and retail.

Matthew Elliott, the chef-owner of Ethel & Mary's, a small restaurant and bakery that opened in February, said that any effort that encourages people to buy from local businesses is worthwhile.

"The businesses that are being hit by this the worst are the small, locally owned businesses," Elliott said. "It's particularly hard for us; we're not a huge corporation. We don't have money in reserve that we can float on."

Nancy Tissington, executive director of Uptown Saint John, said that COVID-19 has made supporting local businesses more important than ever.

"They've had such huge losses," Tissington said. "It's been challenging times, so I think it'll be really good for them to see some familiar faces come back in to their establishment to show their support and love for local."

In effort to attract more people to uptown businesses, Tissington said that Uptown Saint John will be offering one hour of free parking through the HotSpot Parking app on

Wednesdays through June.

Two restaurants in the uptown area – Taco Pica and the Social Bar Steakhouse – have already closed permanently due to financial pressures of COVID-19. Tissington said it's sad to see businesses closing, but pointed to four new uptown businesses that have recently opened or are opening soon, including Riff Raff Skate Shop and Hats on The Square.

Elliott said he's had to reconfigure his business into being takeout only soon after opening its doors – something that he said was a "pretty drastic change."

"It should be enough, hopefully to see us through this situation, particularly if we're able to get a little bit of help from the government," Elliott said.

"If you can go to a small business, or if you could go to the City Market, rather than Walmart and Costco, please do it. Just in general, as a rule, that's a good rule, but it's especially important right now."

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