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greaterSaintJohn

Premier says he recognizes impact

Premier Brian Gallant emphasizes education as pillar in growth of economy, job creation

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SAINT JOHN • Court battles aimed to keep Lorne Middle School and Browns Flat School open are indicative of the passion New Brunswickers have for education, emphasizing the need to improve spending efficiencies and reinvest savings in the school system, Premier Brian Gallant says.

"It's important for us as a government and as a province to recognize that these tough decisions have an impact on people and we recognize that," Gallant told media after giving a speech at a luncheon for The Chamber, the Saint John area's chamber of commerce, on Tuesday.

"We recognize how important education is to New Brunswickers and that's exactly why we want to be the government who invests the most in education the province has ever seen."

Gallant spoke to the business crowd of around 150 about the provincial investments made in the Saint John region that will boost job numbers over the coming years. He emphasized projects such as the proposed Energy East pipeline, the Lorneville Barge Terminal and the modernization of the Port of Saint John.

He said education is an important part of ensuring the province has a trained workforce with a good quality of life – as well as growing the economy and creating jobs.

"Therefore, we have to empathize, and recognize that many New Brunswickers are going to want to chime in because education is incredibly important to them and we share that priority as well."

Gallant's comment come as the Liberals' strategic program review secretariat aims to find up to \$600 million in savings or tax hikes by next year. Any savings are to be reinvested in the sector. New rules state a school must be considered for closure if fewer than 100 students are enrolled or it's operating at less than 30 per cent capacity.

So far, district education councils have agreed to review 28 of the province's more than 300 schools.

The closure of Browns Flat Middle School and Lorne Middle School in the Saint John area, have been met with court challenges, pending.

Gallant said the province's best way forward is to ensure every dollar goes as far as possible.

"It's making sure we're not wasting money and being efficient in our services, but also investing in delivering a high quality of life with strategies developed by experts and ensuring we grow the economy in the long term."

Gallant said his budget has already increased the provincial treasury by \$33 million or 3 per cent.

In his speech to the public at the Saint John Convention Centre, Gallant outlined an education plan aimed at growing the economy and creating jobs.

He said Saint John is one of the best places to do business in the province.

"We also have to ensure that the whole country is growing and that the Energy East Project is a success that the Irving

Ex-mechanic sentenced for threaten

Lee Scott Burgess

the dealership was locked down for between two and three hours

"We all express frustration with the court system