



Media Release

The Chamber Releases Election Priorities for Region Driving the Province's Economic Engine

Saint John, NB July 7, 2014 – The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber), today released its four key election priorities leading up to the Provincial election taking place this fall. They were developed through consultations with The Chamber's CEO, their Board of Directors, members representing businesses in key economic sectors, and regional economic development champions. The Chamber is also planning a series of election events in partnership with other organizations, designed to help ensure leaders and candidates are aware of, and focused on the issues that are of the greatest importance to business and Chamber members.

The Chamber has long been an advocate for the business community. "We will hold the Provincial Government accountable to these priorities as they become part of The Chamber's longer-term regional strategic plan," explains Andy Lodge, Chair of The Chamber. "The priorities of our members help to stake our place in ensuring all voices are heard and become part of the election dialogue."

The Saint John region is an economic driver for the Provincial economy. David Duplisea, CEO of The Chamber sums it up by saying, "As Saint John goes, so goes New Brunswick." The four priorities, Duplisea explains, underscore the Saint John region's critical strategic importance. "Our business community and industry are key to driving the provincial economic engine forward."

The Chamber's four key election priorities are:

1. **Improve Transportation and Logistics Infrastructure** – Saint John is a global transportation and logistics hub. With our deep water ice free port and access to world-class rail and road infrastructure, our city connects to over 350 other ports around the world. Our provincial government must continue to invest in the modernization of our essential transportation and logistics infrastructure so that our private sector can increase trade and create new jobs for our province.

Port Saint John saw unprecedented growth in its container sector last year, and strong growth is expected in 2014. Our government must continue to work with key stakeholders in our region to ensure our businesses continue to have cost competitive access to foreign markets. Similarly, the Saint John industrial fabrication industry is a growing and diverse industry that faces significant competitive barriers. Current infrastructure is forcing higher costs or an inability to bring products to the global market. The Chamber is advocating for government to invest in crucial infrastructure to enable significant sector growth.

The proposed Spruce Lake Barge Facility Project is a great example. This infrastructure will enable the growth and expansion of the region's advanced manufacturing sector. Our region needs this facility to compete in this growing global market; it will also create jobs, increase exports and enhance regional revenue.

2. **Avoid Increased Input Costs and Regulatory Barriers for Small and Medium Sized Businesses** – The Chamber represents close to 1000 member companies of which 85% are small to medium sized businesses. Most, if not all, have experienced increased pressure



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from the rise in minimum wage and payroll tax. Small businesses are a key employment sector in our province and they should not be subject to additional regulatory barriers, such as a proposed payroll tax to pay for a portion of the New Brunswick Drug Plan. We support the Drug Plan, but we encourage a made-in-New Brunswick solution that is not paid for on the backs of our small businesses.

3. Support Natural Resource Development – The Chamber has supported the responsible exploration of an indigenous supply of natural gas in New Brunswick since February 2013, and we will continue to do so. Once the amount of recoverable reserves is established and the market conditions are fully understood, industry, government and other stakeholders can consider the environmental, economic and social impacts on the development of oil and gas extraction.
4. Reduce the Deficit – New Brunswick's net debt has grown by 45 per cent since 2009 and 63.3 per cent since 2007. We have the second highest net debt per capita in the country. However, we cannot even begin to reduce our debt until our deficit is eliminated. Our members are expected to adhere to financial principles and we expect the same of our government. Provincial leaders must show a responsible path to eliminating the deficit. The Chamber is advocating that all parties seeking election on September 22nd show a clear plan for eliminating the deficit and reducing debt.

The Chamber supports regional collaboration. This was a major factor in the unification of the Saint John region's four business associations in May of 2014. "Our unified voice better enables us to represent our combined interests to drive progress," explains Lodge. "Regional collaboration is the fuel for our economic engine." To this end, The Chamber will continue to work together with others in the Saint John region who play a role in economic development. That is how regional strengths will be maintained and enhanced.

The Chamber will be asking the province's leaders, its drivers, to address the four priorities. Specifically, The Chamber will be posing direct questions to the major New Brunswick political parties in the coming weeks in order to ensure that the voices of the members are heard. They will be sharing the results with members and other community leaders on their website at <http://www.thechambersj.com/>.

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce is a nationally accredited business organization dedicated to fostering an economic climate that enhances growth, prosperity, and an improved quality of life in the community. With more than 1,000 member businesses, representing the interests of 37,000 people, The Chamber is a dynamic advocate and the principal voice for the business community of Greater Saint John. It offers a variety of programs, activities, services, and networking opportunities designed to enhance the business prospects of members and the overall business climate of the area.

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