

John Warrington, In-Coming Chair, Saint John Board of Trade
2011 Annual General Luncheon-In-Coming Chair's Remarks
May 4, 2011
Check Against Delivery

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman,

Thank you all for being with us today to participate in the 192nd annual general meeting of the Saint John Board of Trade.

I would like to take a moment to thank Mike Murphy for his tireless efforts over the past year and commend him for his passion for this organization and the humility and collaboration he displayed during his tenure. Mike is truly a great leader and joins the long list of past chairs of the Board of Trade who have also exemplified these qualities.

I would also like to take a moment to thank our Board Staff, Imelda, Carol, Erinor, Michelle and Kelly. They are consistently raising the bar and accomplishing more each year with a very finite amount of time and resources.

The Saint John Board of Trade is truly a best in class organization recognized throughout the region as a leader in advocating for issues that impact our members and are important to our future. I am honored and humbled to be given the opportunity to chair of the Board of Trade.

Peter Drucker, who some say was the inventor of modern management, once said:

“Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes.”

The results I will be working towards over the coming year are clear: Increase the membership base of the Board of Trade, collaborate with our partners and continue our strong track record as an advocate for the business community of Saint John.

Five years ago the incoming Board chair, Bob Manning, coined a phrase that I thought was very powerful... Bob said that it was time to “raise our voice” and in the years since the Board of Trade and its members have collectively “raised our voice” and have played a major role in many important issues. The Board of Trade has supported many initiatives such as Canaport LNG, the new medical school, Mile One Interchange; the list goes on and on. We have done a great job of raising our voice but to have the greatest impact going forward we need more voices.

The Saint John Board of Trade has always played a strong role in advocating for issues that are important to our members but in order to truly be the voice of business in Saint John we need to have the majority of businesses in our City be a part of our organization. We need your voice in order to raise our voice. While we represent over 30,000 employees of our 560 member companies we want to represent every business in Saint John. When the Board of Trade speaks people listen, government listens, the business community listens and the other chambers in the province and Atlantic region listen, growing our membership will give the Board an even stronger voice.

We have to do a better job of ensuring people understand what the Board of Trade has to offer, our value proposition. We are continually looking at our value proposition to make sure it meets the needs of our members and creates value from their perspective. There are many

aspects of being a member of the Board of Trade that are not in the corporate brochure as they are intangible and until you get involved you may not be aware of them.

Eight years ago when I first became involved in the Board of Trade I didn't know much about it; I got involved because my employer at the time asked me to. Since that time the Board of Trade has become a large factor in my personal and professional development. Companies join the Board of Trade and get involved for different reasons; some join the Board of Trade for the member benefits or exceptional networking opportunities; others join because they feel a sense of obligation to support the organization that is the voice of business in Saint John. It is hard to articulate all of the benefits of being a member in the Board of Trade as the intangibles can be more valuable than the tangibles.

Involvement in the Board of Trade has exposed me to areas of business that I would have otherwise had no experience, I have helped to organize events, developed my public speaking skills, met many interesting people, built an exceptional network and been provided with many other opportunities that I otherwise would not have had. Every business should get their employees involved in the Board of Trade; there is no greater venue for personal and professional development.

While the Board is going to focus on increasing our membership base we will not take our eye off the ball and will continue to strongly advocate for issues that impact the business community in our Region.

The past few years in Saint John have not been without challenges but all you have to do is take a look around our City today to see that we

are moving forward in a big way. Working primarily in the Construction industry I am more tuned in than most to construction activity in our region but it does not take someone from the industry to realize that there is a huge amount of construction activity taking place. We are investing in our education facilities with the construction of the new Commons Building and other capital projects at UNBSJ along with the new Centre of Excellence in Energy and Construction at the New Brunswick Community College. We have residential development taking place in the downtown core with the Harbourfront project and soon development will begin on the Coast Guard site. We have retail development in the east and west side. We are investing in our infrastructure with the Harbour Bridge refurbishment, One Mile Interchange and the Route 1 gateway. We are investing in Health Care with the expansion of our Emergency Department which is being officially opened this Friday. The Peel Plaza project and the new waste water treatment plant are also well underway. We are in the midst of one of the greatest construction booms in recent memory.

Saint John is forging ahead and the future is bright but not without challenges. Regional governance and cooperation, fiscal stability and sustainability, municipal planning and infrastructure; these are the some of the issues that we have to address. There are going to be tough questions asked and the answers to some of these questions will take us outside of our comfort zone but the rewards for doing so will be great and the Board of Trade will be there advocating for our members best interests.

When I received a call two years ago asking if I was interested in moving from the Treasurer role to become the 2nd Vice Chair of the Board of Trade, which is the first rung on the ladder to the chairs

position, I was initially hesitant. I wondered if I had what it took to be the Chair of this great organization. Having sat on the Board of Directors for a number of years I witnessed the talented people who have led the Board of Trade through many tough issues. I reflected back on my career and thought about the times in the past I had put myself outside of my comfort zone, whether it was taking a job that I didn't feel totally ready for, leading an important project or speaking in front of groups. These were the moments, when I was outside of my comfort zone, that I experienced the greatest growth, personally and professionally.

We have our challenges ahead to be sure, but if we are prepared to step outside our comfort zone, ask the tough questions and address them head on we will continue down the path of growth and prosperity in our region.

The Board of Trade is certainly not the only organization helping to move our City forward. I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to travel to Toronto with a group of people including Mayor Court, Ross Jefferson from our new Destination Marketing group, Bernie Leblanc from the Saint John Airport and Steve Carson from Enterprise Saint John in an effort to attract a new business to our City. As I sat round the table with this group and listened to each of them talk about our City and articulate why this business should be in Saint John I was struck by the dynamic that existed. We had a diverse group of people, from different businesses and organizations, who may have differing opinions on some topics but when it came down to promoting our City and the positive business environment and quality of life that exists here, any differences that existed disappeared and the enthusiasm this group of people had for Saint John was contagious.

Many of us have had opportunities to leave Saint John or we have left and come back. We live here by choice because Saint John is a great city and the quality of life that exists in this region is second to none. Participating in this trip reiterated to me that our community leaders all have the best interest of our City as their top priority; they may not always agree on every issue but at the end of the day they are going to do what they feel is best for our City and our region.

We need to set ambitious goals for our City and our Province and not settle for anything less. Dr. Eddy Campbell, the President of The University of New Brunswick, spoke to our group last week and his topic was “Building a Smart New Brunswick” and he described what a “Smart New Brunswick” would look like: Highest numeracy and literacy rates in the country, highest proportion of people with degrees, diplomas and trade certificates, highest proportion of people with two languages and the most innovative and productive economy in the country. We have to set far reaching goals for the Board of Trade, our City and our Province and have a mission, a vision, targets and a plan to get there with key measures to tell us if we are succeeding.

Over the next year we are going to set aggressive targets for the Board of Trade. We will continue to advocate for business and we will grow our membership and ensure that when the Board of Trade speaks with the collective voice of our members it has an impact and people listen. All of you sitting here today support the Board of Trade and we certainly appreciate that. We need all of you, and all of our members to be ambassadors for the Board of Trade and for our City.

We need your voice and the voice of every business in Saint John to continue to deliver on our mission and help take our City to the next

level. We are looking forward to working with all of you to achieve our goals in the year ahead.

Thank you very much for your time and enjoy the rest of your afternoon.