

**Kathryn Craig, Chair, Saint John Board of Trade
Remarks to Saint John Rotary – March 8, 2010
Location: Saint John Boys & Girls Club**

Saint John: Building Now for the Future

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for the invitation to speak today. I would like to take the next few minutes to tell you why I am excited for the future of our City and share with you some of the projects taking place right now.

Our City has undergone a tremendous amount of change over the past 10 to 20 years. The great news is that we are no longer dependent upon one primary industry for our economy. We have diversified and continue to diversify, as was the goal of the True Growth Strategy put in place by the 5 Regional Mayors several years ago. Our Tourism & Retail, Information and Communications Technology and Health sectors are booming! And yes, even our energy sector is doing well.

It has been 10 months since I took over as Chair of the Saint John Board of Trade. During that time we have had several announcements that have dampened the feelings of the business community and the community in general regarding our City's growth. The first being the Eider Rock project and most recently the cancellation of the new building on Long Wharf to house the world headquarters of Irving Oil.

These announcements were disappointing, but we can NOT let them overshadow all of the positive developments that are occurring and will continue to occur in our City! First, we need to put these announcements in context: we are coming out of a major, global economic downturn. We would be foolhardy to think we would be isolated from its impact; some of our members were hit very hard by the recession. However, we still have so many opportunities facing our City right now, we have to recognize them and develop the synergies that are possible!

Our Tourism and Retail sectors continue to grow. This year Saint John is celebrating our 225th Anniversary as the oldest incorporated city in Canada and has been chosen as a Cultural Capital of Canada! In addition, last year was a record year for the Saint John cruise ship numbers and we are expecting even more cruise ship passengers this year over last year. We now have a Destination Marketing Organization that will consolidate our City's resources and marketing abilities to provide us with a strong campaign to attract tourists and conferences. With the Trade and Convention Centre's planned renovations, we can continue to host national conferences that bring in participants who return as tourists. The cruise ship industry contributes approximately \$26-30 million and conventions contribute approximately \$24 million in economic spin-offs to our economy each year. That's a minimum total of \$50 million per year of money coming into our City that is invested in our economy! *

The development of our waterfront has had a positive impact on our Tourism sector. The Waterfront Plan is being implemented step-by-step. This past year we have seen the creation of the Split Rock Lookout at Reversing Falls, the Marco Polo Cruise Terminal and the unveiling of the concept to develop the rest of the waterfront including Partridge Island. Our community has also recently applied to have our coastline be designated as the first GeoPark in North America by UNESCO. The development of the Rocca Condos on Water St, the development of the Coast Guard site, and the renewal of Reversing Falls are yet to come. The potential that comes from developing and maintaining a world class waterfront is endless.

On the retail side, where do I begin? We have Costco opening on May 27th, McAllister Place has just undergone a huge renovation, Market Square (which has expanded) and Brunswick Square both have new shops opening, and that's not to mention the development of Retail on the West Side of Saint John. Retail in our city is undergoing a renaissance! A few years ago, our Retail Forum commissioned a survey of local

* Numbers provided by the Saint John Trade and Convention Centre.

shopping habits and found that 50% of those who choose to shop in Moncton do so because of Costco. Now that we have a Costco opening in Saint John, one has to wonder what synergies will come from that! (Not to mention the 100 new jobs!)

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector is really starting to grow in Saint John. Ambir and Mariner Partners have recently received government funding to grow their operations while Genesys has moved into its newly expanded office space in Market Square. Organizations like Propel ICT are working with businesses in the sector to ensure they continue their growth and development in our city. There is no question regarding the importance of this sector to the future of any economy as our world becomes more 'tech' dependent.

The Health Sector is growing at a rapid rate in Saint John. Not only do we have the expansion of the Regional Hospital's Emergency Department well underway, but the medical education program at Tucker Park begins this September. We are creating a Centre of Excellence in Health Sciences and the synergies surrounding this development are incredible. We are working with other organizations to attract a Research Chair in Occupational Medicine which will not only strengthen our program, but encourage research and development from and for industry.

The Energy sector has also experienced a strong year. Irving Oil undertook a \$200 million dollar upgrade of its refinery, the largest in its history; Canaport LNG, the first re-gasification plant in Canada, began operations and had their grand opening; from that, gas started flowing through Brunswick Pipeline. Even though the proposed second refinery has been temporarily shelved, Irving Oil is going through the Environmental Impact Assessment of the Eider Rock site, which is promising.

As a Board of Trade, this past year we have supported and encouraged our members in each of these sectors. Our mandate is "To contribute to a productive economic environment for business in Saint John. To provide encouragement, assistance and

guidance for established enterprises, or those aspiring to become established in business." We have used our mandate as our guiding principle when discussing and supporting issues. In the past year, we have supported:

- The creation of the Destination Marketing Organization;
- The funding for the Trade & Convention Centre's renovations;
- Access to wireless internet in the City through our re-launch of Freespots;
- Supported funding for Hospice Saint John;
- Supported Saint John Medical Society in its negotiations with the Province;
- Supported the continuation of current level of service at the Canadian Blood Services Distribution Centre in Saint John;
- Supported the research synergies surrounding the medical education programs at Tucker Park;
- Supported the continuation of the Environmental Impact Assessment of Eider Rock;

And in November, we established a Task Force to examine the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec on October 29, 2009 outlining the proposed sale of N.B. Power to Hydro-Quebec. This Task Force met with subject matter experts and stakeholders. After discussion, debate, further meetings and the release of the revised agreement, our Board supported the revised agreement as it substantially addressed some of the concerns surrounding the initial M.O.U.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I can say supporting the creation of the new Municipal Plan will be high on our list. It has been 4 decades since the current municipal plan for the City of Saint John was written. To put that into perspective, when the plan was written, the Harbour Bridge had just been officially opened a few years before, and Market Square, Brunswick Square, the Trade & Convention Centre, McAllister Place, the Aquatic Centre, the Tucker Park Campus of the University of New Brunswick Saint John, or the Regional Hospital did not exist, to name a few! Our City, its citizens and our way

of life have changed since then. A new municipal plan has been sorely needed for a number of years.

We have seen too many development opportunities take too long to transition from idea to building. A new Municipal Plan has the ability to help reduce the time and red tape required for these transitions. The City is looking for feedback from community organizations and citizens, like you. On January 27th, the City launched PlanSJ, the project name given to the two year development process of the plan. A storefront has been opened in Brunswick Square and there is a Facebook fan page to engage citizens. We have and will continue to participate in stakeholder sessions with them during the creation of the new Municipal Plan. At the moment we are in the process of establishing a Municipal Plan Task Force for our organization to ensure our members' ideas and comments are included in discussions with the City.

We are, as previously mentioned, working with other organizations in helping to develop synergies surrounding medical research at the Regional Hospital and Tucker Park. The potential for future program and research development is great. For example, an Occupational Medicine Research Chair in Saint John would be a catalyst for technology and innovation. It would also require over 20 new high-paying positions in our City. The potential impact of this one position, a Research Chair, will further strengthen and diversify our economy.

Currently, the University of New Brunswick Saint John is undertaking a strategic planning exercise and this is our and your opportunity to voice what direction we want our University to go in. With the current building of the Medical Education building, the NBCC Allied Health Building, the new Commons Building, and the renovation of the Canada Games Stadium at UNB Saint John, we have a rare opportunity to seize the synergies created by these developments along with expansion at the Regional Hospital to develop a Knowledge Park.

In closing, I will say that what we are starting to see develop in the Saint John area is not what was originally planned. Rarely do things work out exactly as planned, but what is occurring and will occur is certainly exciting and positive. Think of Saint John as a thriving tourism and retail sector; a leader in information and communications technology; a leader in health care education and research; and a leader in the energy sector. Saint John has all of these and much more and I am proud to say I am from Saint John.

Thank you!