



April 21, 2011

Mr. Ken Forrest
Commissioner of Planning & Development
City of Saint John
P.O. Box 1971
15 Market Square
Saint John, NB E2L 4L1

Ms. Jacqueline Hamilton
Deputy Commissioner of Planning & Development
City of Saint John
P.O. Box 1971
15 Market Square
Saint John, NB E2L 4L1

Dear Mr. Forrest and Ms. Hamilton,

Please accept this letter as additional feedback following the recent PlanSJ workshop, "Putting the Plan on Paper", that was held on April 14, 2011.

Clearly, the drafting of policy statements for the City's new Municipal Plan is probably the most important phase of the PlanSJ process since it will define what can and cannot be done from a land use perspective over the next 25 years. These statements should streamline the realization of economic development plans and remove many of the obstacles that exist today. The decisions made regarding these policies will affect a generation and sufficient time must be given to accept community feedback to "get it right". Unfortunately, the compressed timeline for completion has moved the process along at the expense of worthwhile, in-depth debate of key points.

Needless to say, we have concerns about the restricted feedback opportunities, specifically the recent workshop format (e.g. discussion of complex topics limited to 90 minutes with no time to prepare) and the short 5 day window allotted for accepting written feedback from this workshop. Even though a complete draft Municipal Plan is expected sometime in June with a longer review and comment period permitted at that time, we feel it is essential that detailed feedback be given prior to the issuance of this draft in order to improve its comprehensiveness. As a result, we will be submitting a supplemental response once we have had the time to consider some of the key areas that were presented at the April 14th workshop.

In particular, these areas include:

1. The two primary centres (Uptown and UNBSJ Plateau): It is important that policy statements encourage collaboration between these centres and not competition.

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2. Saint John Airport: We will not have a successful and growing City without a vibrant economy, and that won't happen without a sustainable and thriving airport. Policy should be constructed to reflect this importance as well as the City's support. The language needs to be much stronger than what has been communicated to date.
3. "Homegrown" businesses such as Moosehead, JD Irving, and Irving Oil: Any policy wording should not place these organizations at a disadvantage.
4. Implementation: Plans are easy to craft. Follow-through never is. Mandatory reviews are critical and should be no more than 5 years apart. In addition, we must be careful about pressuring previously approved projects that have been on the books for an extended period since it can take many years to actually break ground (e.g. Harbourfront Residences at Three Sisters).
5. Incentives: The tools needed to encourage in-fill development will be tantamount to success since development in the urban core will be costly, and likely more than what our citizens have been accustomed to. Will citizens be willing to pay more for residential living options? The combination of more expensive in-fill residential living options and the City's high property tax rate could work against the City.
6. Energy Transmission Corridors: As the energy sector plays an important role in the Saint John economy and its future growth, we would strongly encourage the incorporation of multi-functional energy transmission corridors to the Plan. We can facilitate that growth by planning for future energy transmission corridors, and also hopefully avoid a repeat of the Rockwood Park pipeline experience of a few years ago.

Devising a new municipal plan is no easy task and the hard work that has gone into this project over the past 15 months speaks for itself. But there is still much to complete. As a Board of Trade, we remain committed to working with you and your team to further the growth and vitality of the City now and in the future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Murphy
Chairman



Imelda Gilman
President



connected!
member of the canadian chamber of commerce network

CC: Mayor Ivan Court, City of Saint John
Mr. Pat Woods, Manager, City of Saint John