



Saint John  
Board of Trade  
Making It Happen For Business

Presentation to the UNB Commission on Inter-Campus Relations, Funding and  
Governance

Thursday, August 21, 2008

The Saint John Board of Trade is the voice of business for the Greater Saint John area. With more than 1,000 members, representing 600 small, medium, and large businesses and organizations, and therefore, the interests of more than 30,000 citizens, the Board is a dynamic advocate. Over the past 189 years, the Board of Trade has played a role in the creation of various organizations and groups in this City, including the United Way, Saint John Port Authority, Saint John Airport Authority, and the University of New Brunswick Saint John (UNBSJ).

Earlier this year, we conducted a survey of our membership. In their responses, our members told us that “attracting and retaining a skilled workforce” is the number one concern facing their businesses today. It is for this reason the Saint John Board of Trade’s primary concern with the reform of post-secondary education in New Brunswick is the continued access to a skilled workforce for our members. And this is why we are here today. The Board of Trade has publicly supported the need for Saint John to maintain high-quality, accessible institutions with direct provincial funding in a common area offering a full range of degrees and diploma programs, while maintaining the UNB brand resulting in a centre of excellence for Saint John.

In order for UNBSJ to expand and grow, there needs to be legislation and a governance structure that not only permits this, but encourages it. At present, we see that it is important that the UNB Act be revisited and updated in order to give UNBSJ the ability to adapt and respond quickly to the ever changing environment. What we are looking for is a modernization of the existing model in Saint John, designed to improve access to post-secondary education and meet our existing need for a well-trained workforce. The UNB Act needs to modernize to

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members. We feel that we are moving in the right direction to ensure the business community is prepared for the anticipated economic growth in our region.

We would like to see the University of New Brunswick – Saint John campus become its own “Centre of Excellence,” offering specialized programs of study and areas of research that are unique to this campus. With the creation of the new Anglophone medical teaching centre and the recognition of Saint John as the “Energy Hub” of the Maritime Provinces and the “Canadian Gateway” to Atlantica, our region is a natural location to set up new programs and research. Saint John could be the destination for the study of areas critical to the growth of the community, namely Energy, Information Technology, Health Sciences, and Business Administration at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We feel this would be a positive step in making the post-secondary sector more responsive to the community’s needs. The Board of Trade also feels that the creation of centres of excellence would enable the achievement of the critical mass necessary to attract research funding and grants.

To further ensure and encourage the growth of the Saint John campus, the Board of Trade also supports a new funding model for UNBSJ. We believe the current funding model is not working; it is not responsive to the changes that have occurred, are occurring and will occur. As you are aware, at present universities receive funding directly from the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission on a fair and equitable basis relative to other universities in the province. We are asking for the same fair and equitable funding for UNBSJ directly, not as a subset of the UNB Fredericton’s budget.

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Saint John needs an accessible, innovative, quality post-secondary framework to reinforce and retain workforce development right here in our City. We are respectfully asking you to help us fully achieve this goal by taking our recommendations into consideration when composing your report.

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael Barry  
Chair