

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

## 'Pointy tip of the spear': New chamber chairperson says businesses will need help to bounce back after pandemic



Dean Mullin is the new board chairperson for the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce.

Photo: Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce

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SAINT JOHN • The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce has welcomed a new board chairperson as its two-term leader stepped down.

Dean Mullin, a partner at the accounting firm Jamieson Mullin in Quispamsis, was sworn in as the chamber's new chairperson Monday. He replaces lawyer Deirdre Wade, who served two terms as chairperson as the board grappled with the unexpected challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic last year.

The chamber held Monday its annual general meeting virtually, running through a past year of unprecedented business shakeups and announcing a new chairperson to lead the group for the next 12 months.

"We're really looking forward to working with you, Dean, in your new capacity," chamber CEO David Duplisea said during the meeting. "Our chamber has survived because of people like Deirdre. She unhesitatingly stayed as our leader."

Duplisea noted Wade was the first chairperson to serve the chamber for more than one term since 1958, noting that she stayed onboard for an extra term due to the unexpected complications of the pandemic.

"Only twice in our whole history (before Wade) has (someone stayed on for another term)," Duplisea said.

Despite the challenges, the chamber welcomed 43 new member businesses in 2020 and experienced a bottom-line gain of \$146,000 despite a \$2484,000 drop in revenue, mostly due to government programs, and a \$349,000 drop in expenses.

"2020 was a fiscal year that none of our membership have ever experienced," said treasurer Mike Corbett. "The financial challenges our members faced were extreme and required tremendous effort and resourcefulness."

Mullin thanked Wade for her work and noted the chamber will spend its time in the coming year advocating for businesses as they continue to recover from the damages of the pandemic.

"We have a lot of work to do," Mullin said. "There will be challenges our members will need help with and we'll need to be the pointy tip of the spear. I'm excited to make this community the best it can be and maybe a little better.

"The Greater Saint John area doesn't play second fiddle to anyone."

Along with Wade stepping down, the board acknowledged outgoing members Paul Gordon, Chris MacDonald, Jim Quinn and Andy Carson.

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