

29 November 2022

Hon. Blaine Higgs, Premier
Province of New Brunswick
Chancery Place, P. O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB
E3B 5H1

Via email: blaine.higgs@gnb.ca

Dear Premier Higgs:

We are writing today on an urgent and growing matter of importance in our communities – the need for coordination amongst our municipal and provincial governments through individualized urban mental health strategies – tailored to each of our communities’ needs.

Mental health issues are sometimes referred to as “invisible illnesses” due to their personal and internal nature. However, it is becoming increasingly easy to see the effects of the growing mental health crisis manifesting in our communities through the effects of addiction, crime and homelessness.

Municipal governments are often on the frontlines of these issues in communities, primarily through local police forces, but they lack the capacity, resources and infrastructure to effectively help individuals with mental health needs or to protect individuals, businesses and organizations from the downstream effects – vandalism, theft and violence. In fact, addiction has come to the forefront of national business issues, with delegates of the 2022 Canadian Chamber of Commerce conference passing a policy resolution titled “The Economics of Addiction”. Recommendations include:

“That the Government of Canada:

1. Undertake an evidence-based coordinated approach to intoxic, detox and supportive housing that supports access and has limited barriers to entry.
2. Seek national business support in providing access to employment opportunities that will help both prevention and recovery/reintegration efforts.
3. Identify how the federal government can prevent overdose related deaths, substance abuse and ameliorate its impacts.
4. Work with all three levels of government, Indigenous peoples, the business community, and the not-for-profit sector to maintain an active network that works together to advance these recommendations.”

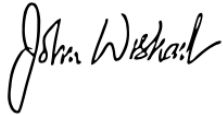
While municipal governments (and related entities) in our communities have tried to take the lead on mental health and related issues, it has become increasingly clear that a coordinated effort between municipal and provincial governments is required. In our opinion, this must start with the provincial government creating mental health strategies with each of our municipal governments. As you know – New Brunswick’s urban centres are the province’s economic engines and the current

addictions/homelessness situations in the cities are having a significant negative effect on local businesses and our overall economy.

While the recent population growth over the past five years has been a boon in many ways – we have been collectively unprepared for this growth on several fronts (housing being another) and the public safety issue has grown in each of our cities and spiraled from our downtowns to become city-wide issues and has made our communities less “livable” - one of our major advantages.

We are requesting that your government immediately engage with representatives from our municipal governments to create strategies and action plans that can deliver the resources, infrastructure and policy needed to make our communities safe and provide individuals and organizations with the help they need to address this growing problem.

Sincerely,



John Wishart, CEO
Chamber of Commerce
For Greater Moncton



Krista Ross, CEO
Fredericton
Chamber of Commerce



David Duplisea, CEO
Saint John Region
Chamber of Commerce

cc: Hon. Bruce Fitch, New Brunswick Minister of Health

cc: Hon. Kris Austin, New Brunswick Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General