



August 29, 2025

The Honourable Premier Susan Holt
Province of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Mayor Donna Noade Reardon
City of Saint John
P.O. Box 1971
Saint John, NB E2L 4L1

RE: Coordinated Action on Housing, Homelessness, and Public Safety

On behalf of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce, I write to convey the urgency and frustration we are hearing from residents and businesses. Our community no longer feel safe walking uptown; small businesses face vandalism and theft, and families hesitate to enjoy public spaces. Pride in our city is eroding, and with it, the stability that our economy depends on. This is not simply a local concern. Saint John is the economic hub of New Brunswick and the province's key trade gateway. When safety, housing, and infrastructure falter here, it undermines investment, workforce attraction, and the province's competitiveness. Our members are asking: where is the vision for tomorrow?

Once, people looked to the future of this city with ambition. Today, that sense of possibility is slipping away.

As someone who has walked in the shoes of a small business owner in this city, I know firsthand the passion, resilience, and determination it takes to keep the doors open. But today, those same business owners are being asked to do the impossible. The challenges of homelessness, addiction, and public safety have reached a tipping point, and our uptown core—the very heartbeat of Saint John—is at risk. Cafés, boutiques, and restaurants are more than businesses; they are the lifeblood of our community, and the reason people choose to live, work, and visit here.

If urgent action is not taken now, we risk losing not just storefronts, but the soul of our city. We need both levels of government to step up with a coordinated plan so that Saint John's future remains vibrant and full of possibility.

Here is a small sample of what we are hearing from our members:

"Arriving to Saint John in 1986, I witnessed the incredible passion that businesses, residents, and government poured into building a place to live and work. Decades of hard work and dedication transformed Saint John into a world-class business hub and tourist destination—a place we were all proud to call home. We cannot let the actions of a few destroy what so many worked tirelessly to create. Just like a broken plate glass window, the cracks are showing. If we don't act proactively, the damage will cost much more to repair. Doing nothing is not an option. That's why we have rules, laws, and authorities—to ensure safety, order, and community well-being." Glen MacLean, Java Moose

"As a store owner on King Street, it feels like we are constantly facing a new demand to pivot every couple of weeks. We are seemingly on our own when it comes to dealing with increased threats of violence and theft. We hear complaints from our local customers about concerns coming uptown due to traffic caused by construction, lack of parking, or just a general feeling of being unsafe. Construction should be done at night, we need a facility dedicated to mental health, and criminals need to have more repercussions than just catch and release. The province and the city need to stop making it hard for people to invest in our local economy." Elizabeth Cook, Handworks Gallery

Housing, health, and addiction are provincial responsibilities. Policing and enforcement are municipal responsibilities. It is therefore the clear responsibility of both levels of government to come to the table immediately, work together, and create a path forward. These challenges demand not only urgent intervention but also a coordinated, resourced plan that restores public confidence and charts a vision beyond 2025.

The Chamber urges the Province of New Brunswick and the City of Saint John to step forward together, take ownership, and bring forward the leadership required. We stand ready to partner with both governments and our community to restore safety, stability, and ambition to this province's largest economic driver.

Sincerely,



Shannon Merrifield

CEO

Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce

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