



Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce – Pre-Budget Submission

August 25th, 2025

Department of Finance Canada
90 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G5

Dear Honorable Francois-Philippe Champagne:

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce is providing this pre-budget submission to support and prepare our region for long-term competitiveness, prosperity, and integration within a more resilient Canadian economy. We recognize that the federal government is facing growing fiscal pressures and geopolitical uncertainty and have therefore focused our recommendations on four actionable priorities, aligned both with the Prime Minister's mandate and with Premier Holt's letter to Prime Minister Carney outlining the provincial government's priorities.

This submission reflects a collaborative working group that was established through our Government Relations Committee and builds on ongoing SWOT and policy conversations with the Chamber's membership.

Invest in Trade Infrastructure that Enables Economic Growth

The Chamber recommends accelerated federal support for catalytic trade infrastructure projects in Southern New Brunswick. We call for federal investment in the redevelopment of Simms Corner, continued expansion of Port Saint John, and strategic improvements to regional rail and road systems that support the efficient movement of goods across the province and beyond.

As Canada's most trade-oriented province, New Brunswick plays an outsized role in supporting national export growth. Port Saint John and Belledune are well-positioned to be gateways for expanded international trade, but bottlenecks—both logistical and structural—are holding back their full potential. The ongoing challenges associated with Simms Corner in particular continue to prevent the Saint John region from reaching its full economic potential.

We urge the government to commit to clear timelines and dedicated infrastructure envelopes for regional projects that drive trade and improve national logistics resilience. We also encourage the government to promote the use of additive manufacturing, a process that continues to grow in popularity and importance in Canadian industries.

Develop a Future-Ready Workforce Through Skills and Immigration Reform

To address chronic labour shortages and demographic pressures, the Chamber encourages targeted federal investment in workforce development. That includes support for reskilling workers in AI, digital infrastructure, green energy, and skilled trades. These investments should be paired with modernized immigration tools that enable Atlantic Canada to attract and retain the talent needed to drive growth.

The Atlantic Immigration Program and Provincial Nominee Program must be protected and scaled. Credential recognition needs to be more responsive to labour market needs, and Francophone immigration outside Quebec should be supported through dedicated initiatives. Without these steps, our businesses will remain constrained in meeting demand and will struggle to employ the labour force they need to be successful in a twenty-first century economy.

Additionally, the Chamber urges the federal government to continue to support innovations in housing, including by providing support for offsite construction techniques such as modular housing or prefabricated construction. There is an accelerating shift in the construction sector towards offsite construction techniques, and New Brunswick is home to many companies in this space. In fact, our province has the largest manufactured/modular housing industry in Canada, as a share of GDP. The Chamber sees the Saint John region as a logical hub for offsite construction, because we are already the industrial engine of New Brunswick. Our region already has the experience, expertise, and resources to be a leader in housing - we simply need more support to reach our full potential.

Position New Brunswick as a National Leader in Clean Energy and Healthcare Innovation

New Brunswick is uniquely positioned to help Canada meet its clean energy and sustainability goals. The Chamber supports federal investment in Small Modular Reactor (SMR) development and full integration of New Brunswick's grid into the national energy system. Doing so would unlock low-carbon competitiveness for the Atlantic region and contribute to national energy security.

The evidence is clear: Canada's productivity as a country depends on building up our energy capacity. Here in New Brunswick, the Point Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station plays an important role in providing our province with the energy that businesses, homes, and community organizations need to thrive. Continued support and investment in our province's nuclear sector will be paramount in the years and decades to come.

We also recommend sustained investment in healthcare innovation and infrastructure, with a focus on community-based primary care teams. As Premier Holt has noted, recent progress in Fredericton, Lameque, and Tantramar shows that team-based models can improve access and efficiency. The Chamber sees health as an economic issue — a healthy workforce is a productive workforce. Investing in healthcare will allow the federal government to create better outcomes for patients and their families, build a more resilient and adaptable healthcare system, and over time make the system itself more sustainable and less of a burden on taxpayers.

Emerging Concern: Access to Early-Stage Capital

We flag the decline in early-stage venture funding in Atlantic Canada as an issue of growing concern. Between declining startup formation and disproportionate founder-funded growth, the region risks losing momentum. We urge the federal government to explore solutions in partnership with BDC, NRC IRAP, ACOA, and regional innovation stakeholders to restore equitable access to capital for underrepresented founders and rural entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this important national conversation. Our recommendations reflect what we believe are pragmatic, regionally-grounded opportunities to help New Brunswick—and Canada—emerge stronger, more competitive, and better prepared for the challenges of the coming decade.

Submitted on behalf of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce Working Group on Federal Budget Advocacy.

The Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce | 78 Prince William Street | Saint John, NB E2L 2B3
www.TheChamberSJ.com | 506-634-8111 | email info@TheChamberSJ.com