

*For Immediate Release: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

## **The CCGM welcomes budget efforts to stabilize spending and begin repayment of the net debt**

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Moncton welcomes budget measures to stabilize New Brunswick's economy, balance the budget, and pay down our debt.

The CCGM supports measures put forward by the government in its 2019-2020 budget tabled Tuesday in the legislature to balance the budget -- this year and during the duration of this government's mandate. All measures included in the budget will result in a surplus of more than \$23 million in the next year. The Higgs government will also repay \$49.2 million on the provincial debt.

"For our members, we see a government willing to make some tough decision and address one of the main concerns of the business community which is balancing the budget and reducing the debt of the province", said John Wishart, CEO of the Chamber.

The CCGM, representing close to 800 members from the Greater Moncton area, urged the government in the past months to create conditions in which the private sector can lead growth.

"The government seems open to build a partnership with the entrepreneurs of our province to solidify our economy and make New Brunswick prosper via private sector-led growth", said Wishart.

Another aspect important to the business community is transparency and the Chamber sees the budget increase for the Auditor General as a good measure.

"The government is putting aside more money to make sure all spending is transparent and accountable, which is the important oversight role of the auditor-general", said Wishart.

The government will also publish financial reports quarterly, and this measure demonstrates a real commitment to a responsible fiscal management.

We still believe there is still some room to make the economic conditions better for the business community of New Brunswick. We think the government should conduct a full tax reform process, on both the business and personal side.

The Department of Finance and Treasury Board now projects the New Brunswick economy will expand by only 0.6 per cent in the next year.

"With a projection like this, our province will need bolder measures to stimulate our economy", said Wishart.

The government must take a better look at all spending, and, yes, that includes health care and education. The previous Liberal government missed an opportunity when it excused our two largest areas of spending from its strategic program review.

“Health-care and education investments represents for 60% of all our spending. It is 60 cents on every dollar going to these two sectors. We need to review our way of doing things in both sectors, and it doesn’t mean cuts, but simply a better value for money”, said Wishart.

Tourism is one economic sector that we see as a real opportunity for the province to give a boost to our economy, but this budget only maintains spending to a sustainable level.

New Brunswick should introduce a tourism marketing levy on a regional basis. Just in Greater Moncton, the introduction of a tourism marketing levy could generate more than 2.5 million dollars per year.

Some cuts to Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour, mainly in the employment development sector are worrisome. Also, Opportunities New Brunswick kept its funding to help the business community grow the economy, but the budget to administer those programs has been cut by more than \$4 million.

The Chamber will also be looking for more details in the month ahead on a couple of other priorities. The Progressive Conservative government moved quickly at the end of 2018 to address the WorkSafe NB rate hikes and they indicated they were committed to eliminating the Small Business Tax.

“We will continue to urge the government to work closely on the Worksafe NB file, and we look forward to other measures that will help the business community achieve growth for our region and the province” said Wishart.

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**Information**

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