



December 23, 2014

Hon. Brian Gallant, Premier
Province of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, N.B.
Canada E3B 5H1

Re: 2014 Speech from the Throne

Dear Premier Gallant:

We are writing today as lead representatives of New Brunswick's three largest chambers of commerce. Collectively the Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce, the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce and the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce have almost 3,000 member businesses and organizations which employ tens of thousands of New Brunswickers. As it was the first in your government's mandate, we watched the 2014 Speech from the Throne intently and believe there to be some value in providing the business community's perspective in our three cities.

First, congratulations on winning the September 22, 2014 election and forming the current government. Reducing the size of cabinet was a deft decision, both in terms of actually reducing costs and perhaps more importantly, in setting the right tone of fiscal responsibility.

We are encouraged that the speech and the party's 2014 election platform was heavily focused on the economic ecosystem and job creation. As such we are keen to get further details on the operations of the New Brunswick Jobs Board and Opportunities NB in the coming months. We would encourage the government to strongly consider individuals with experience operating a business as candidates for the CEO position at Opportunities NB as they would have knowledge from this experience that is otherwise unattainable.

With the formation of a new government and flurry of announcements very early in the mandate, the business community is concerned with the costs of doing business in New Brunswick. With cost going up due to the increase in the minimum wage and commercial property tax rates, as well as seeing some costs going down with the reduction in the small business tax and drug plan contributions being off the table - we ask that the government is mindful of the overall fiscal burden placed on business in the province. Your government has described small business as the engine of the economy, consequently, careful thought must be put into how this engine can maximize its performance.

One of the more contentious pieces in your 2014 platform was the \$900 million infrastructure pledge. We agree that properly maintaining the province's infrastructure makes long-term fiscal sense, as outlined by the auditor general in her 2013 report. However, we think there should be some recognition that there may be too much infrastructure in the province to sustainability maintain. Priorities will have to be set and

we submit that infrastructure assets which help grow the economy, support the development of natural resources and may increase productivity should be a top priority.

You have been clear throughout your campaign and in your first few months of governing that the natural resources file is a priority. We encourage the government to explore all avenues to responsibly develop our natural resources. However, one sector in particular appears to remain a source of division in the province - shale gas development. We are not in a position to judge the risk/reward analysis with the sector, but we believe that more weight should be placed on the experience of other Canadian provinces developing this industry than with other countries - particularly the United States. It appears with strong regulations and enforcement capabilities, the incidents of environment issues in Canada are very limited. We are concerned that the development of our shale resources has become a purely political issue, rather than a fact-based economic and environmental issue.

We encourage this government to reach out to the business community to bring perspective to some of these issues. The province's chambers of commerce have an extensive network that we can leverage to communicate new opportunities, get the pulse of the business community throughout the province and support decisions that we think are in the best interests of business and the province.

Yours truly,



Carol O'Reilly
CEO, Greater Moncton Chamber of
Commerce



Krista Ross
CEO, Fredericton Chamber of
Commerce



David Duplisea
CEO, Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce