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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regional partnership proposes new consolidated economic development agency

Greater Saint John: The communities of Grand Bay-Westfield, Saint John, Rothesay, Quispamsis, St. Martins and Hampton have come together, with the support of an Advisory Council of local leaders, to propose a new model for regional economic development that will be voted on by municipal councils over the next two weeks.

The proposal – which would create a new multi-disciplinary growth-focused organization supported by a fair and equitable regional funding model – came about through what Paulette Hicks, Advisory Council Chairperson, describes as ‘unprecedented regional collaboration’.

“Over the past year we worked very closely with the municipal Chief Administrative Officers and councils in each community to listen, understand their visions for growth, and address their needs over the long term,” says Hicks. “The proposed new model was built by the region, for the region. It is a true partnership, and it is exactly the kind of cooperation and collaboration we need right now.”

If approved, the new organization will be funded by all the municipalities and with the support of the private sector and other levels of government, it will be one of the largest economic development organizations east of Montreal. It will take the lead on people attraction, tourism and other industry development, economic infrastructure development, support for entrepreneurs as well as community promotion.

The region’s existing economic development agencies and departments, including Discover Saint John, Develop Saint John, EDGSJ, and the City of Saint John’s population growth department, will be asked to merge into the new regional entity.

“Our economic development agencies have done great work, laying an important foundation for us,” Hicks explains. “It’s time to see what we can accomplish with one organization, with one leader at the helm, working with one team, one budget, one board, and one vision for growth in Greater Saint John.”

Hicks describes this new approach as an innovative model in Canada. “Few urban centres across Canada have consolidated all of these functions in the same agency,” says Hicks. “We believe there will be significant value from bringing together the expertise in these separate organizations into a single entity.”

The new organization will be funded to compete with larger centres, and it will have the strategic alignment required to rapidly scale-up ideas and initiatives that are working well, and to apply a critical focus to areas of our economy that need extra support or are deemed as strategic opportunities.

“The economic data tells the story: Greater Saint John is absolutely critical to the New Brunswick growth plan, and our growth has been stagnant for too long,” says Hicks. “Now, more than ever, it’s time to be bold – we simply can not afford to do otherwise.”

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