



August 19, 2019

Mayor Don Darling & Councillors
City of Saint John
15 Market Square
PO Box 1971
Saint John, NB E2L 4L1

Mayor and Councillors:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with your entire Council along with my legislative colleagues on August 14. I believe the opportunity was a worthwhile exercise that allowed us to better understand some of the concerns of individual councillors, as well as give us an opportunity to explain our perspective on the Actions within the Plan.

We have taken the opportunity to refine the Action Plan based on some of the feedback we heard from Councillors during our session:

1. As we discussed during the session, if Council can provide clear requests regarding the changes they recommend to binding arbitration we will take that feedback into consideration and bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity. We request that you pass a resolution with clear requests to ensure we understand clearly what is being proposed.
2. We commit to utilizing the valuation of Saint John Energy to determine what legislative change would be appropriate given the New Brunswick context, and to bringing that legislation forward if the due diligence deems legislative change to be appropriate. In addition, we will work with the City if requested to permit Saint John Energy to return surpluses to the City of Saint John.
3. We have already begun the process at the Regional Task Force to bring in expertise, as well as to move to a working committee model that will report back to the Task Force to ensure decision-makers get the data, information and advice they will require to put in place regional initiatives, service sharing and cost sharing. We have also added a requirement to have an interim report due Jan. 31, 2020, that will summarize the work up until that point and the opportunities being focused on going forward. This information will be important as we review Saint John's status in 2020.
4. We also commit to reviewing the progress of the Actions within the Plan, the progress of the Task Force and the City's financial status on an ongoing basis.



Another concern of some on Council was the lack of detailed work plans for the Actions within the Plan; I want to assure Councillors that work is well underway and, in many cases, complete on those workplans as it pertains to the provincial initiatives. In fact, one action has seen legislation passed, enabling local governments to pass a by-law to establish a Tourism Levy.

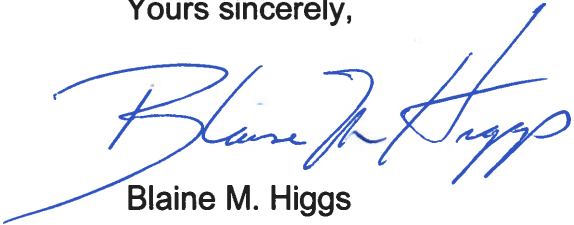
I think with these clarifications, it is time for us all to continue the hard work that was done by the Working Committee and make the changes that are necessary to ensure Saint John, the Greater Saint John Region and the province as a whole, is put on the best platform possible for success.

I said it Wednesday night and I want to reiterate, the City is not in this alone, the region needs to step up and we are stepping up as a province to work with you.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to meet and discuss with some of you individually in the past weeks and months, as well as the opportunity for myself and my colleagues to come to Council and have the open and frank discuss on August 14. The presence of so many Ministers and MLAs is just another example of our commitment to this process.

I look forward to watching Monday night's deliberations and I trust we will continue to work in partnership to make these necessary improvements to the local governance system in our province.

Yours sincerely,



Blaine M. Higgs