



NEWS RELEASE
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MONCTON, N.B. – April 27, 2015 – In response to Premier Brian Gallant’s letter printed in the Times & Transcript on Saturday, April 25, entitled “Provincial support for an events centre hangs on supporting facts”:

The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce (GMCC) is one of about 50 stakeholders who came to the table last week to discuss a strategy to gain provincial support for the proposed downtown events centre.

Our commitment to our members is to be **the voice of the business community** and we are dedicated to our mandate of supporting our members on this issue. As an organisation representing the business community, we have a responsibility to be part of this strategy, however our involvement is not a political move as we are not a political organization. We advocate on the issues that are important to our members. Through our member surveys, we have received feedback about the proposed centre. Based on that, we know that there is overwhelming support to have this project go ahead. The recent closures of a number of businesses in the downtown core and the number of vacant buildings speak volumes about the need for revitalization. While we understand the province has tough decisions to make in terms of the best allocation of limited resources, we feel strongly that this project should be viewed as a priority investment, in the province’s priority market, rather than simply an expense. This is an investment to increase the tax base, increase downtown activity, and spur additional new investment.

GMCC members have been in favour of the downtown centre and have recognized the need to revitalize the area from the very beginning. The GMCC message was the same to the previous government as it is now. A centre such as this would be a game-changer for the tri-community and the South-East region of the province. The business community has come together on this as there is great concern about the delay the provincial government has taken in reviewing the city’s request for support.

Premier Gallant’s letter published in the Times & Transcript on April 25th suggests that his government is being unfairly targeted and that pressure is not being put on the federal government, as well. For complete clarity, our members do not see this as a Liberal vs. Conservative issue nor a federal vs. provincial issue, it is a Greater Moncton economic development issue.

On April 11th, Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe MP Robert Goguen was quoted in the Times & Transcript concerning the federal government’s commitment to the downtown events centre.

“The way funding agreements work for infrastructure projects, the federal government will only put money in once the provincial and municipal governments are committed.

The tri-community's member of parliament told the Times & Transcript that he wanted to ‘set the record straight,’ as some media reports seemed to suggest that the city was waiting for federal help as well.

‘Our commitment has not wavered. Now it's hurry up and wait for the province,’ Goguen said.”

The Chamber and its members are painfully aware that a project of this size will not happen without funding from both levels of government. We feel that the ball is in the Province of New Brunswick's court and we believe the province already has all of the relevant information it needs to make an informed and positive decision.

The reality is that the community needs to get moving on this project and the current sense of endless idling is of great concern. There is a lot of development that has been planned around the downtown events centre that is now hanging somewhat precariously in the balance. If the project is delayed too much longer it may compromise a great deal of this economic development.

Premier Gallant suggests that “his government needs a clear set of criteria to guide these types of decisions as many communities are seeking provincial support.” The GMCC and the rest of the community stakeholders can only hope Premier Gallant's government will quickly finalize their policy and make a decision to support the centre. Ongoing delays will put the project at risk while increasing costs.

It is well known and understood that Greater Moncton is the economic engine of this province – the impressive stats of the past 10 – 20 years make that exceedingly clear. The key to continuing this success requires an investment in the future. It is our hope that the Province of New Brunswick will recognize this and choose to partner with Moncton on this important and much needed project. The GMCC and its 800+ members will not back down from energetically advocating for a project. We truly believe the events centre project and its many spinoffs will benefit our tri-community region and our province. As well, we encourage our members to openly voice their concerns.

Scott Lewis

Chair

Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce

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The Greater Moncton Chamber of Commerce is the voice of the business community for more than 825 businesses representing more than 35, 000 members in Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview and the vicinity.

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