
Employment numbers steady in July for Saint John

The latest Monthly Labour Force Survey from Statistics Canada, released August 7th, indicate the following:

1. Employment remained stable, with no change over June.
2. This is following an upward trend of three month of gains after a soft start to the year.
3. The soft start to the year was replicated in communities across the country – with Canada seeing a decrease in GDP for the first five months of the year. This is predominantly due to the slowdown in natural resource extraction in Alberta.
4. The number of people actively seeking employment in the community rose – increasing the size of the workforce, but also increasing the unemployment rate

Economic activity over the past couple of months include:

- The provincial government announced \$68.3m of funding for the modernization of Port Saint John's west side terminals. The project will boost the provincial GDP by \$152m over the construction period and create more than 1000 long-term direct and indirect jobs once completed. The federal government committed \$68.3m last month, and the Port are contributing another \$68.3m
- Pita Pit and Papa John's Pizza will open restaurants in Rothesay in the near future.
- Construction continues on the \$9m barge terminal located in Spruce Lake Industrial Park. Construction will generate 75 full-time equivalents averaged over the construction period. Conservatively the barge terminal is estimated to create 180 jobs by the time it is up and running.
- Work has been continuing on the Historica Developments property on Canterbury Street that will house Picaroons, Real Food Connections and the Buckland Merrifield gallery. The restoration and renovation of this historic property is important for the Uptown, as a strong urban core drives regional development opportunities.

There has been recent media coverage of three businesses closing in the Saint John region in the last month. These demonstrate some of the challenges we still face in the region, but also need to be put into context of provincial and national trends. A combination of the slowdown in the natural resource sector in Alberta impacting the national economy, and the record breaking winter locally from January to March was very challenging for businesses, especially in retail and restaurant. The retail industry as a whole is undergoing transition and flux due to the impact of e-commerce which has been seeing double digit growth in the last few years.

This must be balanced with new investments in the retail sector in the region. Sobeys and NB Liquor are both making significant investments at East Point for new space. Uptown has welcomed Pristine's move to King Street, Lolè opening in Brunswick Square, and we will be seeing three new businesses opening soon on Canterbury Street.

The Conference Board of Canada recently identified Saint John as one of the top five mid-size cities in Canada for economic growth, predicting that we will see a recovery in manufacturing and resources/utilities, helping our economy expand by 2.3 percent this year.

One of the goals of True Growth 2.0 is net new job growth. Enterprise Saint John measures job growth according to the monthly Labour Force Survey, with a focus on long-term, sustainable increases in employment. Our target for 2015 is a net increase of 750 jobs over a twelve month average, compared to 2014. We follow the survey results closely along with our day-to-day work in the business community. Together, we are creating long-term sustainable employment and stimulating investments in our region.

For more information, contact: David Thomas, Investment Attraction Officer, Enterprise Saint John, 506-632-6110, dthomas@enterprisesj.com