

'DREAM TEAM' TO OFFER ADVICE ON BOOSTING REGION'S ECONOMY

True Growth unveils advisory group of top business leaders

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TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL
February 17, 2014

SAINT JOHN – A group of 12 of the most powerful business leaders from New Brunswick have agreed to act as advisers to help boost the Saint John region's economy.

The True Growth Advisory Group will be called upon from time to time to offer advice to the True Growth Regional Oversight Committee, which consists of the region's mayors, Enterprise Saint John's board of directors and two representatives from the private sector.

The list, released on Friday, includes Mariner chairman and angel investor Gerry Pond, JD Irving, Limited co-CEO Jim Irving and Scott McCain, president and chief operating officer of the Agribusiness Group at Maple Leaf Foods Inc.

"It's sort of a brain trust of the best and brightest leaders available anywhere to provide another level of advice to the mayors and to the board of Enterprise Saint John," Saint John Mayor Mel Norton explained.

"We wanted to identify those people that can literally reach anywhere in the world for perspective and can give us a level of advice that's world class in every way."

The region's economic development plan, True Growth 2.0, is about bringing the community together to develop the economic agenda for the region, and this advisory board is part of that, Enterprise Saint John chairman Bill Teed said.

The group, he added, will provide assistance and advice on "specific job creation opportunities" on an issue-by-issue basis.

"We're in the job creation business and the group of individuals that have agreed to be a member of the True Growth Advisory Group is a credit to our community," Teed said.

"They have extensive business experience, job creation experience. They're successful business people. We're so happy they've agreed to provide their advice and counsel."

They'll be asked, for example, to weigh in on big questions, such as how Saint John can maximize the benefits of the proposed Energy East pipeline project or what kind of role Saint John could play in natural gas development, Norton said.

They'll provide CEO-level advice from a business mindset and an international perspective, something Norton admits he and some of the other mayors are missing.

"All the big opportunities that Saint John is positioned to have, these folks can really ensure that we get the best advice and give us the best shot at making them become reality," Norton said.

"We always know that you need the best and the brightest and we want to surround ourselves with the best and the brightest. This group has agreed to be part of the solution to get the economic engine of New Brunswick going full steam."

Norton and the other regional mayors talked among themselves and with the board of directors at Enterprise Saint John to create a dream list of advisers. Once they had a list, they started making phone calls and visits.

"This is in many ways our dream team," Norton said.

Though these people have always been part of the community, Norton said many of them have never been asked by any level of government, let alone by Saint John, for formal advice.

By doing that, Norton said the region can benefit from the global perspective of someone like **Glenn Cooke, CEO of Cooke Aquaculture Inc.**, or the contacts of Paul Zed, a former Saint John MP and current chairman of the president's advisory board for Cisco Systems Canada.

"We don't always tap into that resource to the greatest extent we can," Norton said.

"We want to make sure we tap into the biggest and best brain power out there. These are the folks that can bring that turbo charge to the city."