

# THE CITY

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## At \$1.5B, retail sales way up

**Report** Pre-recession at least, study shows that economic indicators remain positive for the City

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SAINT JOHN – Saint John Board of Trade president Imelda Gilman sees nothing but good news in the latest Vital Signs report that shows retail sales and the employment growth rate both on the way up.

“With what we’ve got planned for projects in the region, I’m thinking positively that this should continue,” Gilman said, adding that some of her optimism is dependent on how the economic downturn plays out on the national stage.

“Hopefully, the federal government can instill some consumer confidence. In our region of the country – particularly in New Brunswick – we’re not hearing proj-



Imelda Gilman of the Saint John Board of Trade is hoping employment growth and retail sales will continue to climb.

ects are being stopped and I’m encouraged by that.”

In the “work” category of Vital Signs, statistics show that, in 2006-2007, the Saint John Census Metropolitan Area employment growth rate of 6.6 per cent

– or 4,100 jobs – is up from 1.6 per cent per year between 2000 and 2006, compared to Canada’s 2006-2007 growth rate of 2.3 per cent and New Brunswick’s 2.1 per cent.

Vital Signs is an annual community

### VitalSigns®

Community foundations taking the pulse of Canadian communities.

Residents were invited to participate in the 2008 Vital Signs survey to help measure the progress being made in 10 areas

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To read the Vital Signs 2008 report, visit [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)

## First survey was done in Saint John in 2006

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eas critical to quality of life.

The local survey is a project of the Greater Saint John Community Foundation.

The first survey was done in Saint John in 2006 and the foundation plans to continue taking part for at least a decade.

The report uses a one- to five-star rating system, with one star indicating a situation in dire need of corrective action and five stars being a top grade. The city did not get any five-star ratings but did receive four stars in six areas.

According to the report, Saint John CMA’s 2007 employment rate was 63.5 per cent, up from 60.4 per cent in 2000,

compared to Canada’s 2007 rate of 63.5 per cent and New Brunswick’s 59.2 per cent.

Retail sales were also up 37 per cent to \$1.5 billion in the Saint John CMA in 2007, compared to \$1.1 billion in 2000.

“I was pleased to see there’s positive news on all fronts on the work side,” Gilman said.

“I’m not surprised at the retail growth with what we’ve seen being built in east Saint John over the last couple of years. Those retail outlets wouldn’t be going up as fast as they are if the retailers weren’t encouraged.”

Although incomes remain behind the national average, Gilman notes that they are up considerably from 2000 and high-

er than the average for New Brunswick.

The Saint John CMA’s 2007 average and median hourly earnings were \$18.31 and \$15.90, up from \$14.85 and \$13 in 2000, compared to Canada’s 2007 hourly earnings of \$20.41 and \$18.09 and New Brunswick’s \$16.93 and \$14.98.

“We’re trying to get more people into the workforce and out of poverty to earn a good wage,” she said.

“I found that very encouraging to see.

“We’ve put so much time and effort into this with the Benefits Blueprint and so many good organizations like Vibrant Communities and BICAPI (the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative) that I think these numbers will continue to improve over the next few years.”

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