

THE CITY

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John Wheatley, left, with East Point Inc., Gerald Normandeau, with Pacrim Hospitality Services, Troy Northrup with East Point Inc. and Glenda Cook Maclean, general manager of the new Hampton Inn & Suites, all played key roles in bringing the new hotel to East Point.

In Saint John, lots of room at the inn

Hospitality Hampton Inn & Suites is the latest of four new hotels in Greater Saint John

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TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

SAINT JOHN - With four new hotels bringing hundreds of new rooms to the city, those who book and try to lure lucrative conventions to the area believe Greater Saint John has jumped up a notch.

One hotel, the Amsterdam Inn, has already opened at the corners of Concorde and Millennium drives in Quispamsis. Three other hotels - Best Western, the Hampton Inn & Suites, and Microtel Inn are in the works. The Hampton Inn, located on the site of the East Point Shopping complex, will open for its first full day of business today.

"It can only bring positive things to the city," said Hampton Inn & Suites manager Glenda MacLean. "There's definitely a need for it.

The four-storey hotel has 116 rooms, one meeting room for in-house purposes, a breakfast area, swimming pool, whirlpool and water slide.

MacLean said company officials did their homework before deciding on Saint John.

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GLENDACLEAN

"That means the economic indicators are there to support it," she said. "In the past, the city hasn't been able to be a player."

And according to MacLean and others in the industry, every indication is positive one.

Ellen Tucker of Freedom Tours said the opening is great news for her business.

"It opens us up to conventions that we

didn't have the traffic for," Tucker said.

Sally Cummings, conventions manager with Tourism Saint John, said the area has 1,533 rooms when all the hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts are counted up. The new hotels will add more than 300 rooms to that total.

"It's another thing we can use to sell the city," Cummings said.

This year the city attracted 260 meetings and sporting events. Some 46,000 delegates from such events pumped \$34 million into the local economy.

With more rooms available, Cummings said her group can attract bigger and better events.

"All this goes hand-in-hand. It's all good news for us - absolutely."

Peter Asimakos of Uptown Saint John said while he'd like to see a new hotel call the uptown home, he said the location

doesn't matter as long as the city can boast more rooms.

"If you don't have (enough rooms), you're not in the ball game," Asimakos said of the convention and event business.

Getting the people here, regardless of where they stay, is key.

"Then you have the ability to experience the authentic character of Saint John."

Microtel Inns & Suites plans to break ground for new economy hotels in the Saint John and Moncton areas early next year.

The firm says it will build seven new hotels in Canada in 2008. The company will build five of the seven on the East Coast, including Halifax, Dartmouth and Sydney in Nova Scotia along with the two in New Brunswick. The two others will go to London and Woodstock, Ont.