
Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and fellow New Brunswickers. Welcome to the opening of the Third Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Speaker and Deputy Speakers for the order and decorum they bring to the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

New appointments have been made to the Executive Council and new responsibilities assumed and to all Cabinet members, I wish wisdom and courage as New Brunswick enters this period of global economic uncertainty.

We congratulate the new member for New Maryland-Sunbury West on the privilege of representing the people of his riding and we trust he will carry out his duties with great dedication.

We also congratulate the new leader of the Official Opposition, the member from Woodstock. We look forward to his constructive input on how to make New Brunswick better for all our residents.

I welcome all members of the Legislature and urge you to carry out the business of this House with great diligence and integrity, remembering the great responsibility that has been placed upon you to act in the best interests of your constituents and our province.



Since the last Speech from the Throne, the Province has lost four former members of this Legislature:

Harold Fanjoy, former MLA for Kings Centre, minister of Supply and Services, and chairman of the Treasury Board.

Dr. Kal Seaman, former MLA for Kings Centre.

Joseph Robert Martin, who represented Northumberland County.

And Jean Clarence Bourque of Madawaska County.

We also send our thoughts to former cabinet minister and MLA Reg MacDonald, who is recovering after a serious motorcycle accident earlier this year.



Over the past year, New Brunswickers continued their dedicated and self-less military service around the world, particularly in Afghanistan. Today we remember Pte. Colin Wilmot, a medic serving with the Health Services Support Unit in Afghanistan, who was killed in July.



At this time we remember other prominent New Brunswickers who passed away this year.

We remember those who left us after a lifetime of service:

- John Meagher, a member of the Order of New Brunswick, who challenged his students to look beyond themselves to a larger world.
- Ronald Piper, a strong advocate for New Brunswick's potato industry.
- Ovila Daigle, a pioneer in the development of the shellfish sector and mussel aquaculture.

- Robin Carter, career fishermen and president of the Fundy Weir Fishermen Association.
- Judge H. Hazen Strange, a judge of the Provincial Court, a former Chief Judge and a former Director of Public Prosecutions.
- The Honourable William L. Creaghan, former MP and long-serving New Brunswick judge.
- Senator Joseph Landry, a true pioneer in the province's fishing and seafood industry.
- Leonard Tomah, Sr., Assembly of First Nations Regional Vice Chief and former chief of Woodstock First Nation.

And we remember those whose potential was not fully realized but whose dreams live on in those they left behind.

We remember young Vancouver Canucks defenceman Luc Bourdon, a rising star, world junior champion, loving son, devoted friend, proud Acadian and great inspiration for so many young New Brunswickers.

And we remember Bathurst's Boys in Red - Javier Acevedo, Codey Branch, Nathan Cleland, Justin Cormier, Daniel Hains, Nick Kelly, Nick Quinn - and teacher Elizabeth Lord.



This year has called upon New Brunswickers to draw on their greatest strengths and their best natures. Out of our grieving came unity and generosity and in the face of nature's power, we found strength and selflessness.

In May, as the waters of the St. John River rose to near record levels and spilled over the river banks, officials and volunteers from around the province responded in great numbers. The response and recovery was a remarkable operation. Your government thanks the government officials, the local governments and local authorities, police, firefighters, the military, the Red Cross and the hundreds of volunteers who worked around the clock so that New Brunswickers could be safe during the flood and throughout the recovery period.



In 2008, we wept together, withstood flood waters together and celebrated together. In sports and in arts, in business and in communities, at home and abroad, New Brunswickers have been recognized for their accomplishments. They have made us all proud.

On October 29, the Order of New Brunswick welcomed 10 new members: Marshall Button, Dalhousie; Bernard Imbeault, Moncton; James K. Irving, Saint John; George MacBeath, Fredericton; Peter MacDonald, Eel Ground; Marguerite Maillet, Moncton; Dorothy Rosevear, Jacksontown; Fred Ross, Saint John; Eldred Savoie, Moncton; and, Marianna Stack, Saint John.

As well, former lieutenant-governor, Senator Marilyn Trenholme Counsell, on her recent retirement from the Senate became the newest member of the Order of New Brunswick.

Since the last Speech from the Throne, four New Brunswickers - John E. (Jack) Irving, Antoine Landry, Thea Borlase and Reverend Sister Margaret Vickers – were made members of the Order of Canada.

Five New Brunswickers were appointed as officers of the Order of Canada: Donat Lacroix, Frank McKenna, Judith Chernin Budovitch, Senator Brenda Robertson and Bernard Savoie.

For his business leadership and his widespread philanthropy, G. Wallace F. McCain was promoted to companion of the Order of Canada.



New Brunswickers proudly represented our province in the sports world as well.

Just last month, New Brunswick native Matt Stairs and his team the Philadelphia Phillies won the 2008 World Series. Matt Stairs' road to the World Series demonstrated what is possible when talent is combined with patience and determination.

A total of nine medals were won by Aboriginal Team New Brunswick at the 2008 North American Indigenous Games. The team won four gold, one silver and four bronze. Their success, passion and commitment will inspire other young Aboriginal New Brunswickers.

During the Olympics and Paralympic games in Beijing, New Brunswick was represented within Team Canada by five athletes, one team leader, two coaches, three officials and four mission staff, along with one Olympic Youth Academy participant.



We also recognize this year's Excellence Award in the Arts recipients: Dr. Anne Compton, Alexandra Flood, Roger Lord, Paulette Thériault and Jack Bishop. Carleton North High School and le Centre d'apprentissage du Haut-Madawaska were recipients of the School of the Arts award.

The Lieutenant-Governor's Dialogue Awards to recognize outstanding efforts to promote understanding and respect between our province's two official linguistic communities were presented to the Northrop Frye International Literary Festival, Alex Fancy and Bernard Imbeault.



Over the past year, your government, too, has had the opportunity to promote our province on the national and international stage.

This spring, Caraquet hosted two important international francophone conferences for non-governmental organizations and for education. In October, the Premier led a New Brunswick delegation to Quebec City for the 12th Francophonie Summit.

In July, the Premier met with his colleagues for the annual meeting of the Council of the Federation in Quebec City. This meeting concluded our New Brunswick Premier's term as Chair of the Council of the Federation. In early November, the Premier joined four other provincial delegations in the Council's first international mission to China. He was accompanied by 13 New Brunswick businesses. Agreements worth more than \$85 million were signed over the course of the five-day mission.

The coming year offers new opportunities to welcome the world to New Brunswick. All New Brunswickers will have the opportunity to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the founding of our great province. It is with great honour that New Brunswick has accepted the invitation of the National Capital Commission to be showcased during the 31st edition of Winterlude, Canada's capital winter celebration.

In 2009, New Brunswick will further New Brunswick's much valued relationships with our closest neighbours and partners by hosting the 33rd Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers in Saint John.

In August, the Acadian Peninsula hosts the 2009 Congrès mondial acadien. The eyes of the Acadian and francophone community world-wide will be focused on New Brunswick and your government is confident that communities throughout the Peninsula will make us proud.



Hosting the Congrès mondial is an important part of your government's commitment to the promotion of the francophone community. Your government is very proud of New Brunswick's unique role as Canada's only officially bilingual province and your government affirms its commitment to the preservation and the protection of the rights of the francophone and Acadian community. In the coming year, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the *Official Languages Act* and your government remains committed to this important Act and to Bill 88, the provision affirming the equality of our two linguistic communities as outlined in the Canadian Constitution.

This session, your government will appoint the Premier's Advisory Committee on Francophone Matters and will hold a first meeting by year's end. This committee, made up of Francophones from all sectors and regions of the province, will hold its first meeting before the end of the year. We must ensure that the Francophone community's expectations are fully incorporated into the principles for transforming our province.

To support your government's commitment to an environment where employees in government departments can work in either English or French, a renewed Language of Work policy will be launched on April 1, 2009. Employees will know that when they choose a career in government, they will be able to use the language of their choice. This policy complements the Language of Service obligation prescribed by the *Official Languages Act* to provide New Brunswickers with service in their choice of French or English.



Your government is committed to the transformation of government. Under the leadership of the Department of Supply and Services, the Internal Services Alignment Initiative will seek to ensure your government is working in the most efficient and effective manner possible, seeking better ways to provide support services essential to the functioning of government. It will do this by implementing a shared services model to provide internal common services within government.

Amendments to the *Civil Service Act* will be proposed to modernize the recruitment and selection processes to be more responsive to today's labour market, more efficient, and less costly.

Executive leadership talent is continuously being developed as part of your government's succession plan. This autumn the first Senior Leader's Study Tour was held; the first of a unique five-year initiative. Ten senior public servants traveled the province, meeting with top leaders and organizations across New Brunswick in the private, public and not-for-profit sectors and First Nation communities. The tour allowed senior leaders to gain insight, to hear the success stories and to examine best practices across our province.



The 2007 signing of an historical bilateral agreement with the province's 15 First Nation Communities marked a new era of cooperation. Your government will continue to engage First Nation communities in the development of policies and services and in the promotion and preservation of New Brunswick First Nations' language and culture.



Your government is pleased to report that, half way through its mandate, it has completed 70 per cent of its *Charter for Change* commitments, exceeding the commitment made in last year's Speech from the Throne.

Your government has kept its commitment to make New Brunswick a leader in economic development. This year, New Brunswick ranked second only to Alberta in *Site Selection* magazine's Canadian Competitiveness Awards. There are 18,400 more New Brunswickers working today than in September 2006.

Your government has kept its commitment to build the best education system in the country through our bold education plan, *When Kids Come First*. Recent results of reading assessments showed, among other encouraging results, a seven percentage point increase among Grade 2 students across the province since 2006. This year, 76 per cent of students met or exceeded the standard for literacy proficiency, compared to 69 per cent in 2006.

The post-secondary education plan is student-focused and ensures our students will get the quality education and training they need to build careers in the growing New Brunswick economy.

Your government has kept its commitment to create a New Brunswick energy hub with billions of dollars in energy projects underway and on the horizon.

With its new health plan, your government is putting the needs of patients first today and in the future. There are 95 more doctors working in New Brunswick than in October 2006 - the largest two-year increase in almost a decade. Your government continues to recruit more doctors, some of whom we'll train right here in New Brunswick through the new medical education program offered by Dalhousie University in collaboration with UNBSJ; and the Université de Sherbrooke program offered in collaboration with Université de Moncton.

In order to enhance the mental well-being of New Brunswickers, your government established a task force led by Judge Michael McKee. The extensive consultation process continues and recommendations for a new mental health strategy will be tabled in the new year.

In the interest of enhancing existing addiction services, your government will establish a satellite methadone site in the St. Stephen area. Counselling support will be provided as part of comprehensive treatment to ensure the best possible outcomes for individuals facing opiate addiction.



Your government's renewed long-term care strategy, *Be Independent. Longer.*, focuses on prevention and healthy aging to ensure seniors can continue to live healthy and independent lives. Significant investments are being made in new nursing home beds throughout the province.



Your government has kept commitments to low-income New Brunswickers, increasing the minimum wage by \$1.05, investing in 590 affordable housing units and improving dental coverage for social assistance clients. Reducing poverty requires the collective efforts of New Brunswickers and your government is sponsoring a comprehensive public engagement initiative, *Bringing the Pieces Together*. With the full participation of individuals, community non-profit organizations and the business sector, your government will develop a Poverty Reduction Plan.

The Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat is hosting regional conferences as an opportunity for the non-profit sector to meet government officials, receive updates on the

Secretariat's work and provide feedback. The Secretariat recently announced its strategic plan and outlined the timeline for addressing the recommendations of *Delivering on the Blueprint*. The Secretariat will continue to build this important relationship with the volunteer and non-profit sector.

Last year the *Disability Action Plan Strategy – The Path to Self-Sufficiency and Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick* was released and your government will soon release a status report on its progress towards fulfilling the recommendations of this important plan.



Your government is keeping its commitment to build better roads. The 2008-2009 capital budget was the largest in New Brunswick history and introduced an award-winning asset management system to ensure the right investments are made at the right time on New Brunswick roads. Your government was pleased to secure an agreement with the Government of Canada to ensure that Route 1 will be upgraded entirely to a four-lane highway by 2014.



Your government is committed to the restoration of the Petitcodiac River and has committed \$20 million in Phase 1 of the project. Your government continues to cooperate with stakeholders on preparatory work required by the Environmental Impact Assessment to open the causeway gates in the spring of 2010.



Your government is pleased that so much progress has been made in the first half of its mandate. Today, however, your government realizes that 2008 is ending on a sombre economic note. Current economic challenges have raised great uncertainty around the world and here at home.

In order that all New Brunswickers can have a full appreciation of the impacts of the economic downturn on the province, your government will soon table a thorough fiscal and economic update as well as a capital budget including numerous important infrastructure investments.

While the New Brunswick economy performed much as expected in the first half of 2008, with many indicators showing solid growth, unprecedented global developments affecting financial markets and the economy will result in lower overall growth this year. Looking ahead to 2009, the fallout from turmoil in financial markets, weakness in the US economy and the winding down of major investment projects in New Brunswick will hamper revenue growth while spending pressures continue to mount. This combination of reduced revenue growth and increased spending clearly represents a serious challenge for your government. This reality will require, more than ever, that your government remains focused on the most important priorities for all New Brunswickers. There is no question that difficult decisions will be required going forward to keep expenditures under control and to focus on results that support government's self-sufficiency agenda. All programs will be reviewed in the context of responsible spending.

New Brunswickers – families, businesses and individuals – are legitimately concerned about the impact of market volatility and economic uncertainty on their own finances. It's required all of us to take a serious look at our financial situation and how we can be most careful with our money through this difficult economic period.

Governments across the country are taking the current global economic and financial situation very seriously and it is important we work together. Your government has been actively involved with provincial premiers and ministers and with the federal government to discuss what can be done to mitigate the potential impacts on our economies and our fiscal situations.

On November 10, the First Ministers met in Ottawa. During this meeting they agreed that work will be undertaken in four areas:

- Enhancing infrastructure
- Strengthening financial markets
- Enhancing competitiveness
- Labour market issues

These four areas are consistent with the self-sufficiency agenda and your government looks forward to working with federal and provincial colleagues when the finance ministers meet in mid-December and the First Ministers meet early in the New Year.

While not underestimating the impacts of the economic downturn here at home or the uncertainty that this downturn has caused, your government assures New Brunswickers that the foundation beneath our fiscal and economic house is strong.

Never before has the case been so compelling for increasing New Brunswick's ability to be in control of our own destiny. To ensure that even in tough economic times the self-sufficiency agenda moves forward, your government, through the work of its capable and dedicated public service, continues to focus on three priorities that are the foundation of the self-sufficiency agenda: economic development, energy and education.



Economic Development

A strong economy requires strong infrastructure. During the First Ministers meeting on November 10, it was agreed that accelerating infrastructure funding and investment would provide stimulus for the economy. The province's commitment to this key priority will be outlined in the upcoming capital budget.

Your government recently released a provincial multi-modal transportation strategy, fulfilling a *Charter for Change* commitment. This strategy for the development and rehabilitation of New Brunswick's transportation infrastructure supports your government's plan to continue its asset management approach to maintaining New Brunswick's highways and bridges.

Your government will soon release a 10-year plan for intelligent transportation systems, fulfilling a further commitment in the *Charter for Change*. Ten new projects will be initiated over the next five years to encourage smarter, safer travel at home and allow New Brunswick to market its technology abroad.

Early action is needed on the Atlantic Gateway initiative and your government will continue to work with the other Atlantic Provinces, the federal government, key stakeholders and the private sector to establish this corridor as the gateway of choice to markets in central Canada, the United States and elsewhere.

All regions of the province have a part to play to ensure New Brunswick is positioned for growth and that is why your government established the \$100-million Northern New Brunswick Infrastructure Initiative to invest in infrastructure in the Restigouche, Chaleur, Acadian Peninsula and Miramichi regions.

Infrastructure is more than roads and ports – it is also communications infrastructure like high-speed internet. Your government is currently finalizing plans to fulfill its commitment to provide 100 per

cent coverage across the province. By year-end, a strategy to fulfill this important commitment will be released. Your government will work with partners to ensure the chosen option provides reliable, cost-effective service for New Brunswickers.



Your government remains committed to removing barriers to labour mobility, another priority area identified by Canada's First Ministers. A significant step forward was made in October when, after much collaboration, New Brunswick and Quebec signed a bilateral agreement to remove some of the barriers facing New Brunswick contractors and to help each jurisdiction recognize the skills and abilities that the other has to offer.

Your government is also working collaboratively with regulatory bodies and other governments to ensure compliance with the labour mobility provisions of the Agreement on Internal Trade. Your government is committed to making sure that all regulatory authorities in New Brunswick are aware of the requirement for mutual recognition of qualifications by April 2009.



Now more than ever, New Brunswick must be competitive in demonstrating that New Brunswick is a great place to be in business. Business New Brunswick has launched an aggressive investment attraction strategy. Your government remains committed to fostering innovation and exploring the potential of promising technology clusters such as advanced learning, health and biosciences.

New Brunswick continues to receive recognition for its capabilities in advanced learning technologies. Your government is working with DND at Base Gagetown, ACOA, and NRC to develop a Centre of Excellence in Advanced Learning Technologies. In addition to supporting New Brunswick's domestic assets, the Centre of Excellence will help attract outside investment to further strengthen this emerging cluster and take advantage of opportunities in the Aerospace and Defence Cluster.

Your government is establishing the New Brunswick Health Research and Innovation Council to fulfill its *Charter for Change* commitments concerning health research investment, clinical trials and the rural health institute.

Your government will engage New Brunswick's business, labour and other sectors in an ongoing manner to move our province forward towards the shared goal of self-sufficiency.



New Brunswickers across the province are saddened when their sons and daughters, their friends and neighbours have to leave New Brunswick to seek out opportunities elsewhere. In two consecutive budgets, your government demonstrated its commitment to bringing New Brunswickers home by doubling funding for the Population Growth Secretariat last year and increasing it by a further 63 per cent in the current year. New Brunswick's population has increased for six straight quarters and your government is on track to achieving its goal of boosting the province's population by 6,000 by the end of 2009.



While new sectors present significant opportunities and benefits for New Brunswick, your government also recognizes many thousands of New Brunswickers make their living in more traditional sectors. Your government is committed to working with these sectors as economic drivers in a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

Your government recognizes the communities that depend on the forestry sector have faced many challenges in recent years. Your government will implement a series of measures, including a response to the Report of the New Brunswick Task Force on Forest Diversity and Wood Supply, to help put in place a stronger foundation for the forest industry to build upon when the North American forest sector rebounds.

In those communities affected by resource industry closures and down-sizing, your government continues to help resource-based firms diversify and reposition themselves to take advantage of market opportunities.

Development of our rural economy is essential as New Brunswick continues on the course to achieving self-sufficiency.

In response to industry feedback, financial support programs for the agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors will be transferred from Business New Brunswick to the departments that are most directly involved in development activities in these sectors.

To continue the momentum following last April's Agriculture Summit, an Agriculture Roundtable will be appointed to receive the reports from the industry consultation process and to develop a long-term plan for the sector.

A new five-year bilateral agreement will be signed with the federal government to facilitate new programming under Business Risk Management and other cost-shared development programs. This new agreement will fall under the *Growing Forward* framework agreement signed in July.

The aquaculture industry is an excellent example of government and industry working together to foster sustainable economic development. To continue to enhance this industry and its strong position in the global marketplace, your government will hold an Aquaculture Summit to discuss the opportunities ahead for the sector.

Your government is pleased with progress in implementing the Action Plan for 2008-2009 under the Fisheries Renewal Framework. A second Action Plan will be released early next year to continue the renewal of this sector. Your government will also proclaim and implement the *Seafood Processing Act* and Regulations on April 1, 2009, to improve the functioning of the processing sector.



As one of the fastest growing industries worldwide, tourism plays a vital role in our province achieving self-sufficiency. Your government has made significant investments in tourism infrastructure over the past year and is committed to continued strategic investment in provincially owned assets in 2009-2010.

In partnership with industry, your government is developing a New Brunswick Tourism Strategy. Targeted for completion in 2009, the strategy will articulate a collective vision and course of action that will ensure that tourism continues to realize its full economic potential.

In October, fire damaged the restaurant and theatre at Le Pays de la Sagouine, our landmark Acadian tourist treasure in Bouctouche. Your government is committed to providing the support to ensure this facility welcomes visitors and residents in the 2009 tourism season.



Small- and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy, and your government is committed to streamlining how businesses interact with government. Service New Brunswick will

soon expand the use of BizPal - an online service that guides a business through the permit and licence approval process for all three levels of government and selects the documents a business needs to start or grow.



Your government is committed to improving New Brunswick's tax structure and in June, "A Discussion Paper on New Brunswick's Tax System" was released. In addition, an all-party Select Committee on Tax Review was appointed and conducted public consultations over the summer.

Your government is currently awaiting the release of the final report of the Select Committee and will carefully consider the views expressed during these public consultations. Tax reform would be implemented in a manner that helps create the economic opportunities necessary to bring New Brunswickers home, and stimulates greater economic activity across the province, thereby contributing to New Brunswick's goal of self-sufficiency by 2026.



Energy

One of the most promising sectors for future economic growth is the energy sector. Your government is focused on using the energy sector to spur economic growth while at the same time ensuring reliable energy to New Brunswickers.

Progress continues on the refurbishment of the Point Lepreau generating station. Last year, Team CANDU concluded that there is a market and a solid business case for building a new Advanced CANDU ACR-1000 plant. Your government hopes to proceed to the next phase of this project in the near future.

With the announcement of four wind farms totalling 309 MW of wind energy capacity, your government has shown a strong commitment to green energy. The first of these projects will be fully operational by the end of this year.

Your government has also permitted private investors to explore the potential for tidal power in the Bay of Fundy; a significant step in harnessing the tides of the Bay of Fundy. A comprehensive policy to make submerged Crown land available for tidal in-stream energy conversion projects will be developed.

In partnership with the forestry sector, your government is pursuing biomass energy opportunities around the province and identifying diversified economic opportunities in the energy sector. A comprehensive Embedded Generation Policy is being pursued to spur investment in small-scale renewable energy projects by private investors.

The New Brunswick Energy Hub presents tremendous potential for New Brunswick firms. Your government continues to work with partners to identify opportunities and ensure these firms take full advantage of the opportunity to strengthen their capabilities and build alliances to pursue global opportunities in the energy field.

Your government understands that electricity prices affect each and every resident and business in our province. Your government affirms the commitment made by the Premier in January 2008 that the maximum average power rate increase for each of the next three years through 2010 will not surpass three per cent.

There is continent-wide volatility in petroleum prices and during this session, your government will present the results of a review of the portion of the *Petroleum Products Pricing Act* which allows for interruptions of the normal regulatory cycle.

Wise and efficient use of energy saves money for homeowners and businesses alike, and will help New Brunswick achieve the emission reduction targets set out in New Brunswick's Climate Change Action Plan. In partnership with stakeholders, energy efficiency standards for both new and renovated commercial and residential construction are being developed. Your government is committed to creating new energy efficiency codes for buildings as well as a new Green Building Policy to ensure new and existing government buildings are constructed and operated consistent with sustainable design and green principles.

With climate change objectives in mind, your government will work with the federal government to define a greenhouse gas regulatory framework that reduces emissions while at the same time does not place any undue burden on NB Power and industries in the province.

Given the dynamic nature of the energy environment and the substantial opportunities associated with the New Brunswick Energy Hub, regular policy review and renewal is important. It is anticipated that a new energy policy for New Brunswick will be ready for release mid-2009.



Education

The greatest commitment we can make to the future of our province is to provide New Brunswickers with the highest-quality education. Your government is committed to giving young New Brunswickers the best start in life.

This year, your government consulted with parents, educators and early childhood development experts to develop a 10-year early childhood strategy for New Brunswick entitled *Be Ready for Success*. New investments detailed in the *Early Childhood Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009* are being made and your government has recently issued a request for proposals for four new early childhood development centres.

Quality, integrated early childhood programs form the lifelong foundations for success for all New Brunswick children.



Today, more New Brunswick children than ever are meeting their goals in reading and writing. Your government continues to invest in its education plan, *When Kids Come First*. Building on the success we have seen in the recent education results, we will continue our focus to ensure greater achievement in literacy, numeracy and science.

Since 2006, dozens of schools and teachers have benefited from the Innovative Learning Fund. Your government continues this innovation agenda by sharing the best ideas of our most creative teachers with all schools.

Your government has helped change the way children learn through community schools; places where the community works with teachers to provide hands-on, creative learning experiences. Since the release of *When Kids Come First*, 51 schools have been designated as community schools. Your government continues to cultivate stronger community partnerships in building strong innovative schools in our communities.

Last year, new specialists were added in the area of physical education, music and art, and new trades programs were introduced. Your government continues to build upon these programs to provide a full range of learning opportunities in every school. To help young New Brunswickers be healthy and more active, a model for 150 minutes a week of physical education and activity for all students continues to be developed.

Your government will implement a Student Code of Conduct to ensure our schools provide a feeling of security, respect for diversity and freedom from bullying and intimidation.

The Commission on Francophone Schools, chaired by Gino LeBlanc, recently concluded public consultations in all francophone school districts. The results of these consultations will be presented at a Summit on Francophone Schools in December 2008 and a report will be submitted to the Minister of Education.

Your government will respond to two recent reports of the Ombudsman, to ensure that government services are fully integrated, that government agencies are accountable for responding to the best interests of the child and that young New Brunswickers receive the supports they need.

Last year, your government signed an agreement with fourteen First Nation communities and the federal government to direct \$40 million in funding towards First Nation students and to ensure collaboration between First Nations and district council leadership. The New Brunswick First Nations Enhanced Education Programs and Services agreements, designed to eliminate the student achievement gap, will be rolled out this year.



For New Brunswickers pursuing higher learning, post-secondary education must be accessible and affordable. That's the goal of the action plan for post-secondary education, *Be Inspired. Be Ready. Be Better.* - students getting the quality education and training they need to build careers in the growing New Brunswick economy.

With 33 recommendations, the Action Plan represents the most comprehensive commitment to post-secondary education in New Brunswick in decades. It is an ambitious and essential investment in the future of New Brunswick and in its most important resource, its people.

Despite challenging financial times, your government remains committed to investing in post-secondary education. During this session, we will move forward on various key initiatives as outlined in our action plan for post-secondary education.

First and foremost, your government's vision for post-secondary education is student-focused and this will be reflected in many of the action items initiated in the coming year. The cost of education and the long-term debt incurred by graduates are limiting post-secondary opportunities for too many New Brunswickers. Your government has assessed recent federal decisions to replace the successful Millennium Scholarships with more broadly-based financial assistance and will be responding with measures helping those students most in need of assistance.

Your government remains committed to the role played by universities in the economic, social and cultural life of our province. Working with post secondary partners, a number of important activities will be launched to ensure greater collaboration and effectiveness including boosting New Brunswick's research and innovation capacity, increasing applied and articulated programs and creating stronger links between local communities and post-secondary institutions.

Your government will announce concrete steps to allow the New Brunswick Community College to reach its potential as a full partner with universities in the post-secondary education system. The

creation of a modern autonomous college system will be initiated. At the same time, government will launch a substantial increase in college course offerings to provide New Brunswickers with more availability and more choice.

Apprenticeship Training is a tried-and-true method of preparing workers to meet the critical skill shortages of the coming years. Your government will take steps to create a more flexible and responsive apprenticeship system resulting in a substantial increase in apprenticeship registrations. In light of the Skills Summit held recently in Saint John, your government will establish a Standing Forum on Skills Development to advise the government on additional needs.

As post-secondary education is transformed, your government affirms its commitment to work towards preserving and promoting the language and culture of its two linguistic communities, the principles of linguistic duality and the legal framework regarding official languages in New Brunswick.



While your government remains focused on economic development, energy and education to move New Brunswick toward self-sufficiency, work continues on numerous legislative items. During the upcoming session, your government will bring forward legislation to ensure New Brunswick remains a place where you can be secure and safe, where New Brunswickers are treated with fairness and equality.

The global economic situation demonstrates the importance of the security of our financial institutions. Your government continues to review legislation and regulations and examine options to protect the stability of our provincially-regulated financial institutions and private pension plans.

Your government will also introduce a new *Securities Transfer Act* to provide a modern framework for the transfer of shares, bonds and other securities and promote inter-provincial and international harmonization of rules.

Over the course of its mandate, your government has undertaken significant steps to reduce impaired driving by introducing new programs under the *Motor Vehicle Act* and it will continue this battle against drinking and driving.

Your government will also introduce a *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* to empower New Brunswickers to aid authorities through a confidential complaint process. New Brunswick will host a national conference, entitled "Reducing Crime: Bridging the Gaps," in April 2009. This is an important part of developing a new crime prevention and reduction strategy for New Brunswick.

New Brunswickers should feel secure about the protection of their personal information. While your government has already introduced legislation regarding access to information, specialized legislation is needed to protect personal health information. To this end, Personal Health Information Access and Privacy legislation will be introduced to balance the individual's right to confidentiality with the need to access information for legitimate health purposes.

Timely access to justice is important and your government will receive the report of the Task Force on Access to Family Justice. It is expected that the report will provide recommendations for improved access to justice, expanded use of alternatives to family court, and increased access to legal information and legal assistance in family law matters. Your government will provide its response to these recommendations accordingly.

A New Brunswick *Building Code Act* will promote consumer safety regarding housing renovations and other housing-related issues. The Act establishes a Chief Building Inspector position, provides

for province-wide adoption of the National Building Code and mandatory inspections by qualified inspectors.

With condominiums becoming a more popular housing choice each year, the *Condominium Property Act* will be modernized to improve the approval, purchase and sale processes associated with condominium development.

In response to the Ombudsman's review of the Property Assessment Appeal process, your government will introduce improvements to the assessment appeal process that go beyond those recommendations in making the process more balanced, fair and transparent.

Our built heritage is shared by all New Brunswickers, and your government has a responsibility to ensure this heritage is preserved today for future generations. A new *Heritage Conservation Act* will be introduced to improve heritage stewardship throughout New Brunswick.



New Brunswickers are committed to strong communities and the respect of our natural resources.

Your government will move forward with legislative changes to reflect the recent consultation regarding lawn care and landscape pesticide use.

A new reporting requirement for municipalities and water and wastewater commissions will be implemented. Owners and operators of these systems will be required to report annually on how well they are operating their water and wastewater management systems.

Over the course of the session, your government will release the report of the Commissioner on the Future of Local Governance and will respond accordingly.

Your government will also introduce amendments to modernize the *Crown Lands and Forests Act* to provide the Minister of Natural Resources with more effective tools to manage Crown land and to protect public land from trespass and inappropriate use.



New Brunswickers possess an inherent sense of fairness and equality. Your government will introduce amendments to extend benefits and obligations to ensure equal treatment for all people in common law relationships, as required by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Significant progress continues to be made in achieving pay equity. Your government is leading by example by implementing job evaluations resulting in pay equity with agencies contracted by government, such as child care, home support and transition houses. A new *Pay Equity Act* will be introduced to ensure pay equity legislation applies to all parts of the public service.



Over the course of this session, ministers will provide details regarding the initiatives contained in this Speech from the Throne.

Amendments to a variety of Acts of the Legislative Assembly will be introduced and debated in order to ensure your government continues to improve services offered to the public.



Overcoming the challenges facing New Brunswickers requires more than changing legislation. Creating the future we want for this province will happen beyond this Chamber. It will happen in our factories and on our farms; in community centres and council meetings; in our schools and in the non-profit sector; and at boardroom tables and at kitchen tables. Your government will play its part in this transformation.

While global economic conditions mean the path has grown more rugged, the journey towards self-sufficiency continues. Your government remains confident that we will reach our goal. By working with the business community, academia, community groups, municipal governments and the federal government; by working with New Brunswickers, we will build a better, more self-sufficient New Brunswick.

May divine Providence continue to bless New Brunswick and its residents, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.