



## **Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick**

### **Reply to the Speech from the Throne by Mr. Bernard Richard, Interim Leader of the Official Opposition**

**November 22, 2001**

#### **Unofficial Excerpt from the *Journal of Debates (Hansard)***

The text of this speech has been made available through the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The electronic version is for informational purposes only. The printed version of the *Journal of Debates (Hansard)* remains the official version.

[Original]

If I had known you would like me that much, I might have run after all.

I begin today by acknowledging Lieutenant-Governor Marilyn Trenholme Counsell for her ongoing work on behalf of the people of New Brunswick. I would particularly acknowledge the excellent work Her Honour does on behalf of the children of the province. She was formerly Minister of State for the Family, and it sometimes seems as though she really never left her portfolio, even today.

I would also like to extend my best wishes to you, Mr. Speaker. If the previous two sessions of the Legislature are any indication of the next few weeks, they are certain to be quite lively. Mr. Speaker, I know you have great enthusiasm and respect for parliamentary process, and I am certain you will guide this Chamber accordingly.

[Translation]

Once again, I want like to acknowledge Sergeant-At-Arms Phyllis LeBlanc, who joins us for her last session prior to a retirement that is much deserved, of course, but also quite premature, I would think. Good luck, Phyllis.

I thank the Clerk, Clerk Assistant, commissionaires, and all staff here at the Legislative Assembly, who work tirelessly to ensure that legislative business proceeds as smoothly as

possible.

I would like to welcome our new pages to the Legislative Assembly. I am also pleased to see at least one familiar face who has returned to brave another session. I look forward to getting to know each of you a little better as the session progresses.

I want to recognize the public service of New Brunswick. I do not think that it can be said too often that these dedicated and competent individuals are the best public service in Canada.

I want to thank, of course, the staff of the Opposition Office, with whom we work on a daily basis, as well as employees at the Liberal Party Office. They are small in number, but they work tirelessly to support our caucus to ensure that we keep this government accountable. It would be impossible for us to do our job without them.

[Original]

I am very honoured to lead such a dedicated and passionate team as this official opposition. Each member brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and talent to our table. I am proud to call them colleagues and friends.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the horrific events of recent months and the impact they have had on our lives. Certainly, these events have given us all pause to stop and think about what is really important to us, to look at our own lives, and to contemplate what sort of world we want to live in.

While we are all grappling to address the new reality in which we live, it is with great pride that I have watched the way New Brunswickers reacted to the terrorist attacks. The people in Moncton who assembled to help stranded passengers have gained friends around the world. Around the province, we have seen New Brunswickers give money to relief efforts, donate blood for the injured, and send teddy bears to the children of New York City. I also commend the New Brunswick men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces who are now preparing to travel overseas to serve our country in military and humanitarian efforts.

However, while we watch events in the U.S. and overseas, life here at home must go on. There are issues in New Brunswick that must be dealt with, and that is the responsibility we assume today.

I promise to be positive during this legislative session. In the interest of that commitment, I will have very little to say on the throne speech itself. There is much less to that speech than meets the eye. Many of the initiatives in Tuesday's speech were announced before, from nurse practitioners that were announced in the spring, to the total development strategies promised two throne speeches ago, to the coastal zone policy that was announced four years ago by the former government. While this government has opted for hindsight, the opposition is offering foresight.

Within the next 12 months, it seems very likely that New Brunswickers will be going to the polls. We intend to give them a clear choice. We intend to set ourselves apart from the governing Tories. How will we do this? Well, the government has a lock already on platitudes,

rhetoric, and indecision, so I guess it is up to us to take on plain speaking, decision making, and action. We may make mistakes, but we will make them trying, not standing on the sidelines. We will shoulder our responsibilities and not try to pass the blame on to others. We will tell New Brunswickers where we stand and respect them to make up their own minds.

We are putting the government on notice that we will bring forward policy proposals and initiate debate on a number of important issues this session. We started that yesterday by bringing forward a number of debatable motions.

Because the job has been too tough for this government, we are asking that this Legislature condemn the government's abysmal record on economic development and job creation. Because emergency care should be available to all New Brunswickers when and where they need it, we are asking the government to include in its master plan for hospitals a provision requiring emergency rooms to remain open and fully staffed at all times. Because New Brunswick should be an attractive place for medical professionals to locate, we are proposing a program to forgive a portion of student loan debt associated with medical school for each year a physician practices in New Brunswick. We are proposing a similar program for nurse practitioners.

Because we value the health of our young people and because it is the right thing to do, we are urging the government to implement a provincewide policy prohibiting smoking on school property. Because New Brunswickers requiring spinal and neurological rehabilitation need the best possible care in the best possible setting, we are proposing that the government must take immediate action to relocate the new Stan Cassidy Centre so that it is adjacent to and attached to the Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital. Because we want to ensure that our young people get the education they need, we are proposing an incentive program for universities that excel at providing innovation and relevance in education.

To open up lines of communication between the public and universities, we suggest that the Select Committee on Education invite representatives of the province's universities to appear before the committee to review their spending and outline their plans and priorities. We want the lines of communication to be open between the District Education Councils and the people of the province. We are asking the Select Committee on Education to invite representatives of each council to appear before the committee.

Because New Brunswickers told us that this is what they want, we urge the government to maintain NB Power as a publicly owned utility. We are also asking the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to call on the NB Power CEO to appear before it, prior to his contract expiring, in order to bring us up to date on three ongoing and very important development projects happening in NB Power as we speak.

Because the safety of New Brunswickers is important to us, we expect government to bring forward a plan of action to ensure that New Brunswick highways are safer for New Brunswickers as well as for those who visit us and for those who are simply passing through our province.

[Translation]

Because we do not think that gender should determine salary, we want amendments to the *Pay Equity Act* so that it applies to all parts of the public service, and we want government to bring forward, for open discussion by all New Brunswickers, a white paper on pay equity in all economic sectors.

Because we want New Brunswick seniors to be able to afford the medication they need, we are proposing measures that would automatically adjust ceilings for the provincial Prescription Drug Program to prevent bracket creep from imposing hardship.

Because we believe that clean drinking water is a necessity, not a luxury, we are proposing a policy that would prohibit clear-cutting within watershed boundaries without an appropriate environmental impact assessment to determine where and how clear-cutting may be done safely.

Because we know that northern New Brunswick is facing a bleak economic outlook with the closure of Brunswick Mine, we propose that the provincial and federal governments and the people of the area should cooperate to develop a program such as the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, that would see a long-term economic development strategy targeted at the particular challenges in the northeastern region with dedicated human and financial resources. This is important not only for northern New Brunswickers but also for all of New Brunswick.

We are also urging government to convince Noranda to make its data public to give the chance to other mining companies to come and prospect in the Bathurst area. Because we think it is time to eliminate the middleman, we are asking the government not to renew the contract with video lottery terminal owners and to use the extra profit generated to immediately increase the funding for gambling addiction services in the province and alleviate financial pressures in the health and education systems.

Because the *Official Languages Act* has now been in place for over 32 years, we propose the drafting of a white paper to allow public discussion of possible changes to this very important legislation.

Because we think we can take an idea that floundered and turn it into an effective mechanism of the Legislative Assembly, we will ask for a redistribution of seats on the Select Committee to Review Appointments by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. We want to create a balance between members of the government and the opposition so that this committee can serve its intended role of depoliticizing appointments.

Those are some positive and concrete proposals that we are offering to make New Brunswick better and more efficient. What does the Premier say about this?

[Original]

What does the Premier say about this? Reading the paper this morning, I was taken aback when I read the Premier's responses to our positive proposals and suggestions. He said there was one that might interest him. He looked at all of them, and he said, "So there is one out there that is good, so we'll take the time to consider that." That is a direct quote from the Moncton *Times & Transcript* this morning.

What about pay equity? What about emergency services in our hospitals? Is that not good enough for the Premier?

[Translation]

What does the Premier say about the *Official Languages Act*? Is he not willing to open deliberations on this fundamental legislation in New Brunswick? Apparently not. What does the Premier say about New Brunswick seniors' insurance rates? Not a word from the Premier on that.

[Original]

That is not good for the Premier? He does not think keeping doctors in New Brunswick is a good proposal? Working to keep nurse practitioners working here and finding incentives so that they will stay is not good for the Premier? As much as he has wanted us to be positive and to make recommendations, he needs to be less political himself and accept at least those recommendations that make sense for New Brunswick, because the government does not have a lock on making good suggestions and recommendations and on working in the interest of the people of New Brunswick.

These are some of the things we will be offering to New Brunswickers, and we will also be telling them what this government has failed to offer: solutions, action, and foresight. I would submit that our proposals have more substance than those found in the throne speech.

I have spent a lot of time talking to New Brunswickers, and I believe they have very clear expectations for their province and for their government. New Brunswickers want to be able to get up every day and go to work and have the dignity of work. New Brunswickers want to know that if they or a family member should be sick or injured, they will get the care they need when they need it. New Brunswickers want to know that their children and grandchildren are getting a good and relevant education, an education that will prepare them to take their place in our fast-paced and ever-evolving society. New Brunswickers want to know that their aging parents and grandparents will be able to get the long-term care they require. New Brunswickers want to know that the roads they travel every day are safe. New Brunswickers want to know that their electricity bills are not going to skyrocket and that they will be able to afford to heat their homes in the cold winter months.

New Brunswickers want a good life for themselves, their families, and their neighbours. They want a government that not only shares this vision but also acts to make it a reality. New Brunswickers are not demanding a government that performs miracles. They are just demanding a government that performs.

[Translation]

New Brunswickers know that you cannot govern effectively by reciting platitudes on everything over and over again and never acting on anything. The current government's assumption that, if you say it long enough and loud enough, people will think it is so is wearing thin, and more and more New Brunswickers of all regions, of all ages, are seeing through this cynical charade.

The lesson of our collective history in New Brunswick is that we have achieved great things by

doggedly pursuing a vision, by building on our progress, always gaining ground. But you cannot gain ground if you are standing still. This government has been standing still despite the pressing challenges mounting around it. It is gambling with our prospects, and we run the risk of being left behind.

New Brunswickers now have a better sense of what the Lord government is all about, after 30 months on the job. From where I sit, this mandate has been about drift, inaction, and loss of momentum. If it can possibly go away, study it; if it does not go away, blame somebody else for the problem.

This government has demonstrated that it is unwilling to be judged. It has lacked the courage to make any difficult decisions, taking a do-nothing record of not making controversial decisions into the next election. This government resists everything and embraces nothing.

[Original]

Abraham Lincoln once said: "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

New Brunswickers want to know that they count nationally, that they matter, that their can-do attitude has not been lost in a morass of indecision. I am putting this government on notice that we are intent on exposing to all New Brunswickers its method of governing. It will no longer be able to hide from the tough issues.

More and more New Brunswickers have questions, and we intend to ask them. We will be asking why this government has completely dropped the ball on economic development in the province of New Brunswick. We will be asking why the New Brunswick waiting lists for surgery and cancer treatment continue to grow. We will be asking whether our children are getting the best education to cope with the pressures of today's world. We will be asking what this government intends to do with NB Power. New Brunswickers have many, many questions. If this government refuses to offer answers, then we will.

New Brunswick used to be the little province that could. In the year 2000, our province was last in all of Canada in economic growth. It is anticipated that we will be last this year, and economic agencies predict that we will be last next year as well. If there was a place further than last, then this government would put us there. That is the sad part.

As with everything else, they talk a good game, but fewer and fewer New Brunswickers are buying it. The business community certainly is not. I think this article from the June 22, 2001, *Telegraph-Journal* sums it up rather well:

*For the first year the business community sat back and waited for their turn to come, but now after two years of being consigned to the sidelines, they are beginning to wonder if this government has a specific plan.*

*They have good reason for doubt.*

*A little while ago the government sent a draft copy of its economic development strategy to business people to find out what they thought.*

*It was generally panned and sent back for revisions, criticized for having too many platitudes and not enough policy.*

*The Conservative catch phrases about wanting to work with New Brunswickers and to choose prosperity didn't appeal to a business community used to multi-year plans and a definite direction.*

That is what the *Telegraph-Journal* had to say.

[Translation]

This government's ballyhoo about a new 10-year plan is not a positive effort but a defensive mechanism to blunt criticism that it is not doing anything and has shown no vision.

In October, the former Minister of Investment and Exports—now Minister of Finance—told New Brunswickers: I am asking everyone to help by starting their Christmas shopping. So, there it is.

New Brunswickers could start their Christmas shopping at Easter. It will not make up for this government's lack of concrete economic development strategies, its simplistic solutions, and shallow thinking.

Of course, this is the same minister who, as the newly appointed Minister of Finance, said: When the economy is good, you do not have to listen as much because there is more room for error. What does that mean?

There you have it, the government's economic policy: When the economy is good, you do not have to listen; when the economy takes a downturn, people should Christmas-shop, and, of course, it is never the government's fault. Certainly, the government will understand if New Brunswickers are not particularly heartened by this approach.

Perhaps I was a little hasty when I said this government had no new ideas for economic development. It did have one new idea. Of course, it was ill-conceived and caused great aggravation to the business community.

Almost two years ago, everyone was more than a little surprised when the Premier dismantled the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture. This was, after all, one of the most efficient and successful Departments of Economic Development in the country. It was focused, hard-driving, results-oriented, and a highly regarded player in the business sector.

We were constantly accused of poaching jobs from other provinces. We are no longer accused of that. No one is accusing us of stealing jobs, now.

I was relieved that, finally, this fall, the Premier realized the error of his ways when he tried to

reassemble the pieces into one department again. I only wish he had realized it much sooner and spared business people, employees, and prospective companies 18 months of frustration. As the old nursery rhyme goes, All the Lord's horses and all the Lord's men couldn't put Humpty-Dumpty together again. The damage is done, and it will take years to repair. Alas, alas! And New Brunswickers are the ones who will pay; New Brunswickers will bear the cost.

[Original]

Unfortunately, when you do nothing, it doesn't leave things as they are. Actually, you lose ground, and that is the sad part. I have spoken with businesses both inside New Brunswick and outside the province. They tell me that our province is fast becoming a "where-are-they-now . . ." Many of the job creation announcements this government has been able to make have come as a result of groundwork laid by the previous administration. There is little else they can claim credit for.

New Brunswickers are a people who have embraced innovation and progress. For generations they built an economy on traditional industries. New Brunswickers then realized that our province had a great deal to offer visitors, so they embraced the tourism industry and added another pillar to our economy. In the eighties, New Brunswickers realized that there was a new economy, a digital economy, and they wanted to be part of it. However, they didn't want only to be in the middle of these new industries. They wanted to be in the lead, at the forefront.

The dreams for New Brunswick as a leader in information technology didn't just come from the second floor of the Centennial Building. New Brunswickers around the province shared these ambitions, this drive. New Brunswickers still have these goals, but they are finding a far less receptive audience in this government. We have heard the Premier talk about e-NB, e-business, e-government, e-learning—e-nough! It takes a lot more than slapping an "e" and a hyphen in front of a word to build the knowledge economy. It takes aggressiveness. It takes a winning attitude.

The government has taken the Maytag repairman approach to economic development: Sit by the phone and wait for it to ring. New Brunswickers have had enough of this government's tinkering with economic development. It is time to restore small business programs. It is time to restore the integrated call centre teams. It is time to reopen the doors to the information technology initiatives.

[Translation]

We will likely hear the Premier speak a lot in the coming weeks about investing in people. I object to the Premier's talking about investing in people, while his government makes decisions that run counter to that.

Are you investing in people when training programs for people with disabilities are being pared down? Are you investing in people when you allow the province's international award-winning literacy efforts to stall? Are you investing in people when a successful distance education has been allowed to languish? Are you investing in people when you create obstacles for people trying to upgrade their skills, by reducing financial assistance for expenses such as child care?

This government's bungling of training and employment development programs speaks far louder than its hollow words.

[Original]

The members of this government are in complete denial that New Brunswickers are able to control their destiny. They have not demonstrated any faith in the hardworking and entrepreneurial spirit of the New Brunswick people. Instead, they have treated New Brunswickers as care packages—a group of people who must be looked after, a group of people with no ideas, no imagination, and limited ability. New Brunswickers are not that gullible, and they resent a government trampling on a self-image that they worked hard to improve during the nineties.

It is not only the economy that concerns New Brunswickers. The people of this province want to be assured that quality health care will be accessible for them and their families. They have a lot of unanswered questions, and so do we.

You have to wonder how the Premier had the audacity and the arrogance to stand in a press conference two weeks ago and say: The level of increase in the health care budget will not be as high as it was last year or the year before because we feel a lot of the pressures have been dealt with. The Premier's theory on renewing health care seems to be: I have spent money on it, so it must be fixed.

We want to know, and New Brunswickers want to know, exactly which pressures the Premier feels his government has dealt with. Cancer patients who are waiting almost twice as long for radiation oncology as they would have in 1999 certainly want to know. The thousands of New Brunswickers who are without family doctors would like to know. The gentleman who spent 60 hours on a stretcher in an observation room in the Dr. Georges L. Dumont Hospital because a nursing shortage had forced the closure of beds would like to know. The 12-year-old boy whose tonsillectomy has been canceled twice because of staff shortages at the St. Stephen hospital wants to know. The gentleman from Shediac who was in hospital for several weeks while waiting for an opening in a nursing home would like to know. New Brunswickers on the increasing waiting lists for the provincial neurological rehabilitation centre, the Stan Cassidy Centre, must wonder as well how the Premier can say that these issues have been dealt with when the waiting list has doubled in the past year. An 81-year-old lady in Bathurst broke her arm and had to wait four days for reconstructive surgery. I am sure she would like to know.

Health care professionals who see a need for new equipment when the government has only spent 10% of the available federal money must wonder as well what has been dealt with. New Brunswickers in communities like Tracadie, Sussex, and Saint John, which have seen emergency room closures, are probably thinking there are still some significant pressures to address. Nurses, who have been pushed to their limits and who have seen little movement on the Nursing Resource Strategy, must have their doubts as well when they hear government members talk about increased numbers of nurses and the reality is just not there.

[Translation]

Over the course of this session, we in the opposition will be offering suggestions for what we

would do differently in health care, because we believe that New Brunswickers' priority is not governance structures but rather whether we can attract new young doctors and nurses to the province, whether there is primary care service available when and where they need it, and whether they will have to wait an undue length of time for surgery or cancer treatment. If the government will not offer solutions to New Brunswickers, we will.

We will also be talking about education. All New Brunswickers want to ensure that our children, from kindergarten through Grade 12, are getting a good education, that there are enough teachers and classroom resources, and that their schools are healthy and safe. However, we also want to talk about what happens after high school graduation, when many of our young people go on to postsecondary education.

This year, the average amount borrowed by New Brunswick university students is over \$7 300, and the situation is getting worse. By the end of a typical four-year degree, it is entirely possible that a student could owe over \$30 000. Certainly, government needs to address rising tuition costs and barriers to accessibility, but there are also issues that need to be addressed once the student is enrolled and the tuition cheque is written.

Regardless of how students pay for their university education, they want to make sure that they are getting their money's worth. Students and their parents want to know that the education they receive is going to help them obtain employment after graduation. Postsecondary education is a major investment, and we will be offering our suggestions on how we can work to ensure that students are getting the education today that will help them tomorrow and for years to come.

We also have a number of questions about this government's plan for long-term care in the province. For more than two years, the former Minister of Family and Community Services promised us a long-term care strategy. I hope that the new minister will not keep us waiting much longer, particularly in light of the fact that the nursing home waiting list has more than doubled since this government took power.

For the many New Brunswickers and their families who benefit from the excellent services of the province's home-care workers, there are many questions about the sustainability of these services. So, we will be looking for government's plans for home care as well.

[Original]

We want to know why the Minister of Transportation says he will be tightening his budget while the Premier has promised that the government will finally access some of the \$90 million in federal money that is sitting in the bank, waiting to be used. We want firm plans from this government on the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway from Longs Creek to St. Leonard, because moving ahead on this project will mean that lives will be saved. If this government can find \$30 million to pay off MRDC, if it can spend \$50 000 every day in shadow tolls—that was before the opening of the main highway, and it will be over \$100 000 per day soon—surely it can find the money to invest in making the highways of our province safer. We did. Sheldon Lee did. We will certainly be looking for significant investments in the upcoming capital budget.

This summer the members of the official opposition conducted public meetings on NB Power.

In my view, New Brunswickers are overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining control over this public utility. They want to know, when they open their electricity bill every month, that their rates are not skyrocketing. New Brunswickers want a publicly owned utility with obligations to the people of this province, not a privately owned corporation with obligations to its own shareholders.

In the meantime, the Minister of Natural Resources has been musing very publicly about the possibility of selling off some of NB Power's excess generating capacity. How sad. It seems to him that our province's economy or population will never grow to require it, so why hang on to it? This is a defeatist attitude. Clearly, I have more faith in the people and in the potential of this province than this minister does.

We will be asking this government to make known its position on NB Power. It is evident that New Brunswickers want to know. They don't want the Premier to turn off the switch at NB Power. There is no clear position on NB Power, no long-term care strategy, no economic development strategy, and no position on municipal taxation. This government's procrastination goes on and on.

[Translation]

This stalling, indecision, and study-to-death hesitancy are symptoms of a government that does not have the courage to lead, the courage to govern. They illustrate the shallowness of this government's thinking on critical issues. They show that its major interest is in having power over New Brunswickers, not in exercising the power with which it has been entrusted to the benefit of New Brunswickers.

This government would do well to spend less time boasting about winning 55 seats in the next election and more time actually governing. New Brunswickers, not the Premier or the Minister of Transportation, will decide how many seats the members across deserve. No matter how many times the Premier says he wants to make New Brunswick the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family, most of us believe that we were progressing faster in that direction before he and his government took over the reins of power.

Nevertheless, the government is accomplished at passing the blame. First, it was the previous government's fault. That went on for two years. The members opposite have now been in power 30 months, and the same excuse is given. However, with each passing day, we all moved a little further away from June 7, 1999, and it became increasingly difficult to blame predecessors.

Then, it was the federal government that was not doing its share, never mind that there is federal money for New Brunswickers that this government has not yet bothered to access—over \$100 million, possibly \$200 million, parked for medical equipment, road construction, and I could go on, which this government has barely used.

(Interjections.)

In the bank, guaranteed, at a time when government should be investing in New Brunswick infrastructures.

Then, it was the municipal governments. They were going to have to tighten their belts and sharpen their pencils, as the former Minister of Finance told them.

A few times, the government even blamed its own employees. The civil service was out to make the government look bad, it claimed. Other times, it was the unions and professional associations.

Finally, two weeks ago, the Minister of Health and Wellness even resorted to blaming the state of Maine for the rabies outbreak in our province. That takes the cake. Who will the government blame next?

[Original]

This could be my last session—who knows? An election could be called. I might not run, but I could run and lose. Certainly, better men and women than I have done that before. I thought I would reflect with you and perhaps make a bit of a confession. It goes something like this, if you will allow me. My father was a Conservative. I am sure he will forgive me for saying that today. I am sure he has voted for me, or at least I think he has. He was involved in the Conservative Party many years ago, and I am sure that, like any father, he wanted me to become a Conservative as well. That would only be natural.

Out of love and respect for him, recently I have been asking myself very personal questions about my own future. I thought that, out of respect and love for my father, I would think about the meaning of being a Conservative. Well, I have thought about it. Here is what I have found from looking in the dictionary and from doing some research and some soul searching of my own.

(Interjection.)

I know he is listening. I am sure he is.

Here is what I found. First, I looked at what part of the province would be represented by Conservative MLAs. I looked that up, and that would be “terri-Tory”. I looked up something on the Minister of Transportation, Hon. Mr. Mockler. I will call him by his name. I probably shouldn’t. When he is answering any question, I would say that is “inflamma-Tory”, if not “deroga-Tory”. When the first Minister of Finance in living history, perhaps in the history of the whole world, is removed from his office in mid-mandate, that would be “ambula-Tory”. I looked up the Conservative philosophy of government, and all I could come up with was “manipula-Tory” and “supposi-Tory”. I was looking at the period of time before a Conservative government says it will do something and when it actually does it, and that is “anticipa-Tory”.

When a Conservative MLA says he has no clue about allegations of influence peddling in his own riding, that would be just a “regula-Tory”. I looked for the meaning of untendered work, hirings without competitions, consulting contracts to well-known Conservatives, and I found the word “inven-Tory”. For when a Conservative minister is removed from his Cabinet seat, I found the word “purga-Tory”. In fact, you could spell it with a “j”, and it would be pronounced “perja-Tory”. I looked up Conservative Cabinet ministers soliciting funds from companies doing

business with their own departments, and I found “preda-Tory”. Having companies contribute to a Conservative fund-raiser, of course, would be “oblīga-Tory”, or “manda-Tory”, if you prefer.

The RCMP’s job of following up on all of that—and I had to look this up in an Italian dictionary, actually—would be “catcha-Tory”. If ever the Premier answers one of my questions, that would be “expira-Tory”. What most New Brunswickers are not likely to do in the next provincial election is “conserva-Tory”. The probable result for someone running for the Liberals in the next provincial election might be “creama-Tory” or “deposa-Tory”. Where the Conservative candidates are likely to end up is in the “lava-Tory”. A group of backbench Conservative MLAs—this one is for you, guys—is a “dorma-Tory”. The definition of MLAs who form the government but lose after just one term would be “his-Tory”.

As you can see, as a result of extensive research, there is really no way I could become a Conservative. However, I know my father still loves me and he forgives me, because love means never having to say you’re Tory.

This is a lot of work.

(Interjections.)

I am sorry you are offended.

Along with the privilege of governing comes great responsibility. I think it is about time this government started to take some. Every day, New Brunswickers make decisions in their own lives for which they are responsible. I believe the people of our province value a sense of responsibility in themselves, and they certainly expect it from their own government. This government may not take its responsibility seriously, but we, as an opposition, do. We intend to bring real and positive suggestions forward not only for the consideration of this Legislature but also for the consideration of the people of New Brunswick.

As I sat down a few days ago to contemplate this speech, I could not help but notice the date, November 22. Thirty-eight years ago, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I was 12 years old and walking home from school when I heard the news. Throughout my life, as I became more and more interested and active in politics, I drew inspiration and encouragement from President Kennedy’s speeches and comments. Even as a presidential candidate, he had a strong sense of what exactly the role of government should be. I would like to quote the following passage from the first televised presidential debate:

*I think the question . . . is: Are we doing as much as we can do? Are we as strong as we should be?*

.....

*I believe in effective governmental action, and I think . . . it’s the only way that we’re going to move ahead. I think we can do a better job. I think we’re going to have to do a better job if we are going to meet the responsibilities which time and events have placed upon us.*

*We cannot turn the job over to anyone else.*

I believe this continues to be what citizens expect from their government. It is certainly what New Brunswickers expect: a government that continually asks, “Are we doing as much as we can do?” and that refuses to rest until it can say yes. We have not seen that sense of responsibility from this government. We have seen a government that is content to languish on the sidelines, that is satisfied with “good enough”. I am not satisfied with the status quo. I will not be satisfied until I see a government committed to excellence and progress. I realize the learning curve was steep for the Premier and his government, but surely—surely—the time has come to get this province moving once again. Thank you.