

Highlights



SPEECH *from*
the THRONE

Strengthening Prosperity

Fifth Session of the
54th Legislative Assembly
of New Brunswick
November 19, 2002



The Honourable Marilyn Treshow Cassal
Lieutenant-Governor

New  Nouveau
Brunswick
CANADA



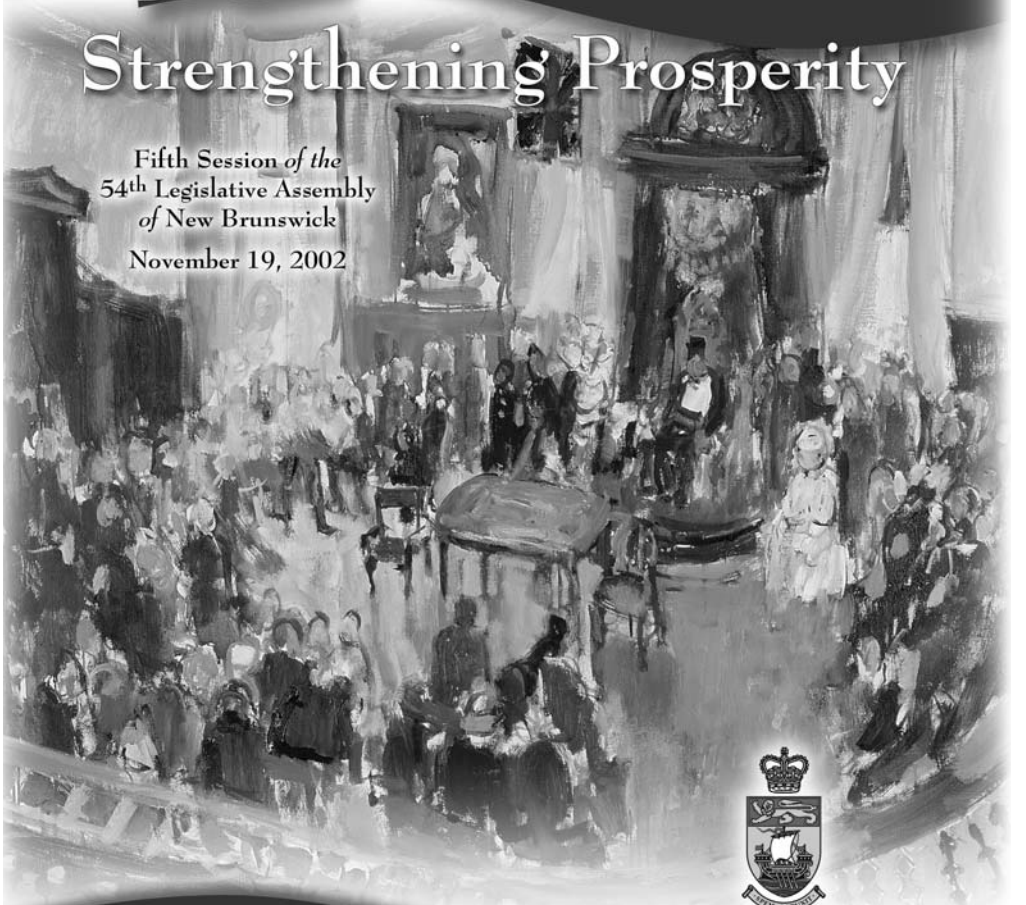
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The Legislature (1973) by Molly Lamb Bobak, O.N.B.
oil on canvas
Collection of the New Brunswick Art Bank



Speech From The Throne 2002 Highlights

- The **cover design** of 2002 Speech from the Throne is a treatment of The Legislature, a painting by Molly Lamb Bobak of Fredericton. Ms. Bobak was one of the first of 10 New Brunswickers inducted into the **Order of New Brunswick**.
- In honour of the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to New Brunswick, four \$5,000 university scholarships will be awarded annually.

Commitments Made, Commitments Kept

- The 2002 Speech from the Throne is the fifth and final throne speech of the 54th Legislative Assembly. The agenda set out in the Speech from the Throne, **with over 40 actions and initiatives**, will complete the initiatives contained in the *New Vision-New Brunswick* platform.

Strengthening Prosperity

- **Over 20 new initiatives** will be implemented under the four building blocks of *Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan, 2002-2012* that will strengthen prosperity and help create new job opportunities for New Brunswickers.

Investing in People

- A comprehensive, **Quality Learning Agenda** will be introduced to raise the educational achievements of New Brunswick children and students to high national and international standards of excellence; to support teachers and schools in quality teaching, to prepare students for transition to post-secondary education, and ensure a more accountable education system.

- **Funding for universities will be increased again** as part of a new three-year funding plan to ensure that New Brunswick universities are able to compete and remain accessible to students.
- **The governance structure of the Community College network** will be modernized and improved to be more dynamic, cost-effective and efficient in meeting private sector training needs and able to provide greater higher learning opportunities for New Brunswick students and workers.
- The third year of the **Early Childhood Development Agenda** will be implemented, involving continued supports for child care, early language development, prenatal care and other programs.
- A **JobStart Initiative** targeted towards recent post-secondary graduates and individuals about to graduate from university will be undertaken to help retain young New Brunswickers in our province.
- An **N.B. Repatriation Initiative** will be launched in the new year to connect New Brunswickers who are working outside the province with job opportunities in New Brunswick.
- Amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* will be introduced to provide for **call-in pay protection for workers**.

Creating a Competitive Fiscal and Business Environment

- A **fourth-consecutive balanced budget** will be tabled which will invest more in health and senior care and education, lower taxes to create jobs and growth, and manage smarter in government operations.

- A ***Taxpayer's Protection Act*** will be introduced to strengthen New Brunswick's growing tax competitiveness for business and help maintain our overall lower tax burden for people. The Act will require voter approval for certain tax increases and for the creation of new taxes.

 - **New targeted tax incentives** will be introduced to encourage new investment and job creation for small business.

 - A mandatory **Business Impact Test** will be implemented to help assess the need for, and potential impact of, future legislation and regulations.

 - Other red tape reduction and managing smarter measures will include:
 - **amendments to the *Economic Development Act*** to streamline delivery of business assistance programs;
 - two eNB initiatives:
 - permitting **automobile dealers to issue licence plates directly** to new purchasers; and
 - allowing for **full on-line business incorporations and business name registrations**, eliminating all paper certificates and approvals;

 - a **special red tape reduction initiative** to benefit the **agriculture industry**;
 - legislative amendments to create **limited liability protection** for professional partnerships;
 - amendments to various tax administration acts to **reduce growing paper burden in record keeping**;
 - **amendments to the *Community Planning Act*** addressing setback requirements along roadways; and
 - amendments to several acts aimed at eliminating or streamlining the operations of various **agencies, boards, and commissions**.
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- **Amendments to the Assessment Act** will be introduced to provide for a more manageable, phased-in property tax assessment to help ensure New Brunswick's heavy industries can remain competitive.

Embracing Innovation

- A comprehensive **Innovation Agenda** will be launched focused on four strategic clusters: knowledge industries, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and value-added natural resources.
- The mission and board membership of the **New Brunswick Innovation Foundation**, with its \$20 million innovation fund, will be announced in support of the Innovation Agenda.
- The **New Brunswick Research and Development Tax Credit** will be enhanced to assist New Brunswick companies in building their innovative capacity and to encourage more investment in R&D.

Building Strategic Infrastructure

- The largest-ever highway infrastructure agreement in New Brunswick history will be formally signed to **fully complete the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway** within five years. The \$400 million cost-shared agreement will twin over 130 kilometres of highway between Long's Creek and St. Leonard.
- A **capital budget** will be tabled, containing new investments in New Brunswick's strategic infrastructure network of highways, roads, hospitals, schools and nursing homes.

Strengthening Health Care

- **Funding for health and senior care will be increased** in the forthcoming budget as part of the government's commitment to strengthening health care.

- The Legislative Assembly will be called upon to adopt a **unanimous motion on health care sustainability** in support of the government's position on health care, as well as the health care reforms now being undertaken.
- **Four new Community Health Centres** will be created in Saint John, Lamèque, Minto and Doaktown before the end of June 2003 as part of creating a 24/7 primary health care services network for New Brunswick families and seniors.
- Legislation will be introduced creating Canada's first-ever **Health Charter of Rights and Responsibilities**. The charter will contain a **Provincial Patient Advocate** position with a mandate to help facilitate access to health care services for New Brunswick patients.
- A **New Brunswick Health Report Card** will be released to provide an annual report to New Brunswickers on the state of the health care system.

Strengthening Education

- A new **Quality Learning Agenda** will set out objectives aimed at creating a world-class K-12 education system that aspires to excellence and achievement at all times. These objectives include:
 - ensuring students achieve at the highest standards of excellence;
 - developing the whole child;
 - promoting strong, successful schools within involved communities;
 - making successful transitions to further learning and training; and
 - ensuring accountability throughout the education system.

Strengthening our Environment

- **Amendments to the *Clean Water and Clean Environment Acts*** will be introduced to provide for the **protection of wetlands and coastal zone areas** by designating provincially-significant wetlands as protected areas and regulating what land uses and activities can occur within wetland and coastal zone areas.
- A **Protected Natural Areas Act** will be brought in to designate and regulate activities in the province's protected natural areas.
- **Amendments to the *All-Terrain Vehicle Act*** will be made to enable the designation of an ATV trail ways system that is safe and accessible for users while protecting the environment and private property.

Strengthening our Energy and Natural Resources Sectors

- A **new *Electricity Act*** will be introduced, setting out the structure and operations of a restructured NB Power and the market rules for the operation of a wholesale competitive marketplace, together with a strengthened Public Utilities Board to protect ratepayers.
- A **Renewable Portfolio Standard** will be developed in consultation with industry and environmental stakeholders which will require a portion of New Brunswick's annual electricity supply come from renewable energy sources.

Strengthening New Brunswick in Canada and the World

- The **first-ever New Brunswick International Strategy** will be released. This strategy, entitled *Prospering in a Global Community*, will set out strategies and actions aimed at strengthening New Brunswick as a magnet for investment, a gateway to trade and an opportunity for immigration.

- The name of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs will be changed to the **Department of Intergovernmental and International Relations** to reflect this new strategy.

Strengthening the Way Government Works

- **Administrative amendments to modernize the *Municipalities Act*** will be introduced aimed at helping municipalities operate in a more efficient and accountable manner.
- A **new financial assistance program** will be established to help cover the transition costs of providing services to residents in both official languages by municipalities required to do so under the new *Official Languages Act*. Changes to the *Municipalities Act* will also be made to facilitate this process.
- The government will respond to the **Report on Local Governance** of the Select Committee on Local Governance and Regional Collaboration following its public release.
- Amendments will be introduced to the *Municipal Assistance Act* to **freeze the level of unconditional grants** in 2003 at 2002 levels.
- Legislation will be enacted to create a **New Brunswick Seniors Council** in consultation with seniors organizations and to **formalize the role of the New Brunswick Youth Council**.
- **Amendments to the *Provincial Court Act*** will be introduced to help strengthen the judicial system; **amendments to the *Small Claims Act*** will be made to create a process for dealing with complaints against adjudicators; and a **new *Statute Revision Act*** will be introduced to establish the parameters for a complete revision of New Brunswick's statutes.

- The government will respond to the **Report of the Select Committee on Auto Insurance** following its public release.

Strengthening Prosperity

- A third annual **Progress Report to New Brunswickers** will be released as part of the government's commitment to enhance its accountability to all New Brunswickers.