



SPEECH *from*  
*the* THRONE

# Strengthening Prosperity

Fifth Session of the  
54<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly  
of New Brunswick  
November 19, 2002



*The Honourable Marilyn Trenholme Counsell*  
*Lieutenant-Governor*

New  Nouveau  
**Brunswick**  
C A N A D A





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



BATHURST-CAMPBELLTON  
JEUX DU  
**CANADA**  
GAMES



# Speech From The Throne 2002

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and all New Brunswickers.

Welcome to the opening of the Fifth Session of the 54th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

The cover of this year's Speech from the Throne features a painting by Molly Lamb Bobak, one of New Brunswick's most notable artists and one of the first recipients of the new Order of New Brunswick.

## Golden Jubilee Visit

Last month, New Brunswickers welcomed Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada and the Duke of Edinburgh to our province in celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Thousands of New Brunswickers, young and old, turned out to greet the Royal Couple and share with them our affection and respect for her accomplishments as Queen and the historic ties she represents for Canada.

In honour of Her Majesty's visit, four \$5,000 university scholarships will be awarded annually.

## Order of New Brunswick Recipients

During her visit, the Queen participated in the inaugural investiture of the first 10 Order of New Brunswick recipients. New Brunswick's highest honour recognizes individual New Brunswickers who have demonstrated excellence and achievement and who have made outstanding contributions to the social, cultural or economic well-being of our province.

I was pleased as Chancellor of the Order to join with Her Majesty and the Premier in recognizing these outstanding individuals. They represent who we are as New Brunswickers.

## Recognizing New Brunswickers and their Accomplishments

Once again, this Throne Speech recognizes the accomplishments of individual New Brunswickers.

Three New Brunswickers received appointments to the Order of Canada: Marguerite Maillet of Moncton was named an Officer to the Order, and Frederick Charles McElman of Fredericton and Gerard Saint-Cyr of Caraquet were named members.

This fall marks the 20th anniversary of the first meeting of the Premier's Council on the Status of the Disabled in October 1982. Its ongoing accomplishments are saluted.

Team NB came home with two medals in boxing from the 2002 North American Indigenous Games. Kelsey Legace won a gold in the Women's Junior Novice C weight class and Robin Berube won a silver in the Men's Junior B Open weight class. Both athletes are members of the Eel River Bar First Nation. Kelsey has just been honoured with the 2002 Tom Longboat Award as New Brunswick's top female Aboriginal athlete.

In February 2003, New Brunswick welcomes Canada to the Canada Winter Games in Campbellton and Bathurst and the Athletes Village in Dalhousie. These games will assemble over 3,000 athletes from every province and territory to compete in over 50 sporting events. Between 5,000-7,000 volunteers from Restigouche and Chaleur, as well as around New Brunswick, will be supporting this event.

Since the Legislative Assembly last met, a former lieutenant-governor of this province from 1981 to 1987, the Hon. George. F.G. Stanley, passed away in September. A noted historian and scholar, Dr. Stanley, was best-known for his role in designing Canada's national flag, the Maple Leaf.

Leo Francis McNulty, former Sergeant-at-Arms for 25 years in this Legislature, passed away this fall. Mr. McNulty was a true friend to all MLAs and served this House and its traditions well.

Samuel E. Field, Supervisor of Political Financing in the province since 1978, died suddenly this fall. His counsel will be missed by members of all parties.

## **IXe Francophonie Summit**

New Brunswick enjoyed another successful Francophonie Summit this year in Beirut. Focused on the theme of "cultural dialogue," New Brunswick's delegation consisted of representatives from Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick, Université de Moncton, Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick.

The summit advanced our position as a promoter of youth within the International Organization of the Francophonie, while strengthening economic and social cooperation between New Brunswick and Francophonie members.

## **Commitments Made, Commitments Kept**

This Speech from the Throne marks the fifth and final Throne Speech of the 54th Legislative Assembly. The legislative and policy agenda set out in each have added up to a clear vision and long-term plan for a strong, prosperous New Brunswick.

In 1999, the first two Throne Speeches set the stage for implementing *New Vision-New Brunswick*, your government's clear plan to bring change to our province based on five focused priorities: Changing the Way Government Works; Renewing Health Care; Investing in Education; Building New Job Opportunities; Managing Smarter and Lowering Taxes.

In 2000, your government's third Throne Speech empowered people and communities with major initiatives leading to new Regional Health Authorities, District Education Councils, and Community Economic Development Agencies.

Last year in the wake of September 11 and growing national and international uncertainty, your government's fourth Throne Speech focused on securing our province's future with over 30 initiatives in public safety, finances and the economy, health care, education, families, the environment, energy, and within Canada.

Today, with the agenda set out in this Speech from the Throne, your government will have completed the initiatives in its original *New Vision-New Brunswick* platform, raising government accountability to a new standard in our province.

Commitments made have become commitments kept. Funding for health care and education have both increased to record levels. People and businesses are benefiting from lower taxes. People and communities have been empowered more than ever before with local decision-making in health care, education, and economic development. New job opportunities are being created. Government finances are being managed smarter and the way government works is more open and accountable.

Together, the initiatives of the past three and one-half years have helped put New Brunswick on a clear path to long-term prosperity. By focusing on key public priorities, controlling government spending, investing in long-term growth, and working with New Brunswickers, your government has helped make New Brunswick more prosperous.

Now is not the time to look to the past. It is time to keep moving forward.

**This year's Speech from the Throne therefore continues to move our province forward with a strong agenda of over forty actions and initiatives focused on one overriding goal: strengthening our prosperity.**

## **Strengthening Prosperity**

*Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan* is our province's 10-year strategic plan to transform our economy, reduce the economic gaps with the rest of Canada, and create new jobs for New Brunswickers. It is based on four building blocks: Investing in People, Embracing Innovation, Building Strategic Infrastructure, and Creating a Competitive Fiscal and Business Environment.

Already it is working. Growth is up. Investment is up. Jobs are up. Exports are up. Personal income is up.

Over 20,000 more New Brunswickers are working now than in 1999. Over 388,000 New Brunswickers are in the labour force, the highest level ever. Over 40,000 low-income New Brunswickers have been exempted from the tax rolls since 1999. Over \$14 billion in new investment since 1999. Over \$2 billion more this year in exports, a 34 per cent increase since 1999. Over 11,000 fewer individuals on social assistance today, a 19 per cent reduction since 1999.

These are real gains from the past. Gains that will be strengthened even more through the Prosperity Plan.

Your government will therefore implement **over 20 new initiatives under the four building blocks of the Greater Opportunity Prosperity Plan**. Actions that will strengthen our prosperity and help create new job opportunities for New Brunswickers.

### ***Investing in People***

Investing in people to ensure New Brunswick has an educated, well-trained, skilled, and adaptable labour force supported by a culture of life-long learning is the goal of this building block. It is the best strategy we can undertake to achieve long-term prosperity.

Investing in people begins with children. Our children are our greatest hope and most important obligation. Ensuring they have the learning, the skills, and the citizenship qualities to succeed and excel in an increasingly competitive world must be "mission one" of our education system.

Your government will therefore release a comprehensive **Quality Learning Agenda** to raise the educational achievements of New Brunswick children and students to high national and international standards of excellence, support our teachers and schools in quality teaching, prepare students for transition to post-secondary education, and ensure a more accountable education system to students, parents, and all of our education partners.

Strong universities are necessary to create post-secondary opportunities for New Brunswick students and prepare them for the jobs of the future. To ensure that our universities are able to compete and remain accessible to students, your government will **again increase funding for universities as part of a new three-year funding plan**.

The New Brunswick Community College network is an important part of our education and skills system. Today's growing economy with its demand for skilled workers requires a strengthened community college governance structure more responsive to the needs of students, the private sector, and taxpayers. Your government will therefore modernize and improve the **governance structure of the Community College network** so it is 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.

To continue to help give children the best start on life and development, your government will implement **year three of its Early Childhood Development Agenda** involving continued supports for child care, early language development, prenatal care and other programs. As part of this agenda, your government will provide a **public report to New Brunswickers on *Indicators of Young Children's Well-Being***.

From the best start on life to the best start for work. Giving young New Brunswickers the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in their first job is an important part of investing in people. Your government will undertake a **JobStart Initiative** targeted towards recent post-secondary graduates and individuals about to graduate from university to help retain young New Brunswickers in our province.

Bringing New Brunswickers back home to help build our province will be the focus of another initiative that invests in people under the Prosperity Plan. This **N.B. repatriation initiative**, to be launched in the new year, will seek to connect New Brunswickers currently living and working outside the province with job opportunities right here at home.

Investing in people means supporting New Brunswick workers. Your government will introduce amendments to the *Employment Standards Act* providing for **call-in pay protection for workers**.

## ***Creating a Competitive Fiscal and Business Environment***

Ensuring New Brunswick has a strong and attractive business climate founded on sound fiscal management and a competitive tax regime is the goal of this building block. That means controlling government spending, managing smarter, reducing red tape, and providing tax relief for people and businesses.

Your government will continue its record of strong, prudent financial management and fiscal discipline by tabling its **fourth consecutive balanced budget**. This budget will continue to focus on clear public priorities by investing more in health and senior care and education, lowering taxes to create jobs and growth, and managing smarter in government operations.

Lower taxes create jobs and attract new investment. That's why your government has provided tax relief to people and businesses in each and every one of its budgets. It will continue to do so. Your government will introduce a **Taxpayer's Protection Act** to strengthen New Brunswick's growing tax competitiveness for business and help maintain our overall lower tax burden for people. This Act, a first in Atlantic Canada, will require voter approval for certain tax increases and for the creation of new taxes.

Small businesses are New Brunswick's number one job creator. As a result of your government's initiatives to date, our small businesses enjoy the lowest tax rates and tax burden in the country. This is helping to create jobs by leaving more tax dollars in the pockets of small business owners to invest and grow their businesses. Your government will facilitate even more growth for New Brunswick's small businesses by introducing **new targeted tax incentives to encourage new investment and job creation**.

Red tape reduction is working in New Brunswick. It is helping clear the way for jobs and new business growth. Your government will go the next step and help cut red tape before it starts by implementing a mandatory **Business Impact Test** to assess the need for, and potential impact of, future legislation and regulations.

Further red tape reduction, streamlining, and managing smarter measures will be undertaken including: **amendments to the *Economic Development Act*** to streamline delivery of business assistance programs; two eNB initiatives, the first **permitting automobile dealers throughout the province to issue licence plates directly** to new purchasers and, the second, 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 building setback requirements along roadways; as well as amendments to several Acts aimed at eliminating or streamlining the operations of various agencies, boards, and commissions.

To help ensure New Brunswick's heavy industries can remain competitive, your government will introduce **amendments to the *Assessment Act*** that will provide for a more manageable, phased-in property tax assessment. Municipalities will also benefit from this measure.

## ***Embracing Innovation***

A smart, innovative economy is key to New Brunswick's future prosperity. Ensuring New Brunswick is a leader in the knowledge-based economy is the goal of the Embracing Innovation building block.

To reach this goal, a clear, long-term roadmap that all innovation partners can follow is required. Your government will therefore release a comprehensive **Innovation Agenda** focused on four strategic clusters: knowledge industries, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and value-added natural resources.

In support of this Agenda, your government will announce the mission and board membership of the **New Brunswick Innovation Foundation** with its \$20 million innovation fund.

To assist New Brunswick companies in building their innovative capacity and to encourage more research and development investment, your government will enhance the **New Brunswick Research and Development Tax Credit** making it one of the most competitive in the country.

## ***Building Strategic Infrastructure***

Ensuring New Brunswick has a globally competitive strategic infrastructure system is the goal of this building block. Building strategic infrastructure helps create jobs, enhance services for people, and attract more investment.

Investing in New Brunswick's highway network to ensure it is safe and efficient is a key strategic priority. Following successful negotiations with the federal government, your government will formally sign the largest-ever highway infrastructure agreement in New Brunswick history to **fully complete the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway** within five years. This \$400 million cost-shared agreement will twin over 130 kilometres of highway between Long's Creek and St. Leonard. The Trans-Canada Highway is a vital transportation link for both New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada. This critical highway improvement project will significantly ease traffic congestion, improve the flow of traffic and goods, and enhance safety.

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

Strengthening our health care system for families and seniors continues to be a top priority of your government. Record levels of investment have already been made. Over \$1.1 billion more in cumulative health care funding has been provided since 1999, representing more than 96 per cent of all new government spending. More than a million dollars a day more is being spent on health and senior care in 2002 than in 1999.

This increased funding has helped renew our health care system and set the foundation for improved services into the future. The Physician Recruitment and Retention Program has already produced a net increase of 82 new physicians since 1999, improving access to primary and specialized health care services. There were 347 more full-time registered nurses working in New Brunswick last year than in 1999. The first nurse practitioners will soon begin working in New Brunswick.

But more needs to be done. Your government will therefore continue to **increase funding even more for health and senior care** in its forthcoming budget as part of its commitment to strengthening health care. Stable, predictable, and growing funding for health care is an essential part of your government's plan to improve health care services for families and seniors.

Medicare is part of our identity as Canadians. It is critical that the federal government demonstrate its commitment to a sustainable health care system for all Canadians by increasing its own funding commitment, while providing additional financial support to advance needed health care delivery reforms. Your government will therefore call upon the Legislative Assembly to adopt a **unanimous motion on health care sustainability** in support of this province's position on health care, as well as the health care reforms now being undertaken by your government.

Changing the way health care services are delivered in New Brunswick is just as important as funding in making our health care system more sustainable. As part of creating a new 24/7, primary health care services network for New Brunswick families and seniors, **four new Community Health Centres** will be created in Saint John, Lamèque, Minto, and Doaktown before the end of June 2003. Other CHCs will follow in response to community needs and the availability of additional resources.

New Brunswickers believe strongly in their health care system. They believe it should be there for them when they need it. Your government shares this belief and wishes to recognize the rights and responsibilities we all have regarding our health care system. Your government will therefore introduce legislation creating Canada's first-ever **Health Charter of Rights and Responsibilities**. This new Charter will contain a **Provincial Patient Advocate** position with a mandate to help facilitate access to health care services for New Brunswick patients.

Your government believes in greater accountability in health care. A **New Brunswick Health Report Card** will therefore be released to provide an annual report to New Brunswickers on the state of their health and health care system.

## **Strengthening Education**

Education is key to our future prosperity and the best guarantee of individual opportunity. New Brunswick must focus on raising academic achievement and building a strong learning culture throughout our province.

The 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 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 our education system.

Targets for achievement based on standards of excellence will be set. A strong foundation for early grades literacy will be a key focus. Building strong schools with strong leadership will be encouraged. Helping high school students transition into post-secondary education opportunities will be supported, ensuring a truly accountable education system responsive to the needs of students, parents, and educators will be created.

## Strengthening our Environment

A strong, healthy environment is part of our collective heritage from past generations. It is part of the collective legacy we must also leave for future generations. Numerous environmental initiatives have already been undertaken by your government to protect our watersheds and public drinking water supplies, reduce waste, and strengthen environmental management.

Your government will take additional steps to strengthen our environment by introducing **amendments to the *Clean Water and Clean Environment Acts to provide for the protection of wetlands and coastal zone areas***. This will help protect these environmentally sensitive ecosystems into the future 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 introduced to allow for the designation and regulation of activities in the province's protected natural areas. This Act will provide for the protection, management and conservation of 10 protected natural areas and 20 existing ecological reserves and conservation areas, as part of your government's Protected Natural Areas Strategy.

To facilitate the designation of an ATV trail ways system that is safe and accessible for users while protecting the environment and private property, your government will introduce **amendments to the *All-Terrain Vehicle Act***. These amendments will also strengthen the role and responsibility of independent snowmobile and ATV federations in helping develop their trail ways and manage activities on them.

## Strengthening our Energy Sector

A strong energy sector is crucial to building prosperity for New Brunswickers. Your government's 10-year energy policy is providing a comprehensive roadmap to ensuring security of energy supply for consumers and business at reasonable, affordable rates.

As part of ensuring a balanced and practical approach to the future of NB Power, your government announced earlier this year its intention to maintain NB Power as a publicly-owned utility, while restructuring it to place it on a more commercial and financially-sustainable basis necessary to meet the challenges of a changing North American energy market. To help protect ratepayers and taxpayers, it was also decided to invite private sector equity participation or third party equity investment in Coleson Cove and Point Lepreau generation projects. That announcement also reconfirmed the decision to move to a competitive wholesale electricity market in April 2003.

To give effect to these decisions, your government will introduce a **new *Electricity Act*** setting out the structure and operations of a restructured NB Power, the market rules for the operation of a wholesale competitive marketplace, and a strengthened Public Utilities Board to protect ratepayers. An important feature of the new Act will be the development of a Renewable Portfolio Standard which will require that a portion of New Brunswick's annual electricity supply come from renewable energy sources. The Standard will be developed in consultation with representatives of industry and the environmental community.

As New Brunswick moves carefully to a more competitive electricity marketplace, your government will continue to follow its deliberate and controlled approach to electricity restructuring and market competitiveness based on the principle of managed transition.

## **Strengthening New Brunswick in Canada and the World**

As one of the four founding provinces of Canada, and the country's only officially bilingual province, New Brunswick has a unique and special role to play in strengthening Canada. We have done so by advocating a new funding partnership with the federal government on health care, by advancing Atlantic regional cooperation through the Council of Atlantic Premiers, and by adopting a new *Official Languages Act* as an example to Canada.

New Brunswick is also a trading province, open to the world, with strong linkages through trade and investment with the United States, Mexico, China, and Europe. La Francophonie continues to provide an important framework for future economic and social cooperation. Our relationship with New England through the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers demonstrates the ongoing importance of New Brunswick/U.S. relations.

Reflecting this stronger, open relationship New Brunswick desires with the world, your government will release the **first-ever New Brunswick International Strategy**. 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. To demonstrate this internationalist approach in a highly visible way, your government will introduce amendments to the *Executive Council Act* **changing the name of the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs to Intergovernmental and International Relations**.

## **Strengthening the Way Government Works**

Strong and efficient local governments that are accountable to their taxpayers and residents are a goal all New Brunswickers share, and essential to make our province more competitive. Your government will therefore introduce a series of **administrative amendments to modernize the *Municipalities Act*** aimed at helping municipalities operate in a more efficient and accountable manner.

As certain municipalities have a legal obligation to adopt by-laws in both official languages, your government will introduce **amendments to the *Municipalities Act* to facilitate this process**. Your government has already provided financial assistance to cover the translation costs for all existing by-laws. In support of future by-law translations and to facilitate the provision of services and communications in both official languages by designated municipalities to their residents, your government will also establish a **new financial assistance program** to help cover associated transition costs in that regard. Your government will continue to call upon the federal government to contribute an important share of this program as they have done in the past both in New Brunswick and with other provinces.

The Legislative Assembly's Select Committee on Local Governance and Regional Collaboration held public hearings this year on local governance in unincorporated areas and regional collaboration and service delivery. Its report will be released during this session. Your government will **respond to the Select Committee's Report on Local Governance** following its public release.

To assure municipalities of continuity in their unconditional grant status, amendments will be introduced to the *Municipal Assistance Act* to **freeze the level of unconditional grants** in 2003 at 2002 levels.

To promote greater accountability and ensure an open, listening government responsive to the concerns of people, your government will introduce **legislation creating a New Brunswick Seniors Council**. A consultation process with seniors organizations is already underway to help develop this initiative. Amendments will also be introduced to **formalize the role of the New Brunswick Youth Council**.

Strengthening our judicial system is also an important objective of this year's Speech from the Throne. **Amendments to the *Provincial Court Act*** will be introduced to help meet this objective. **Amendments to the *Small Claims Act*** will also be introduced to create a process for dealing with complaints against adjudicators. A **new *Statute Revision Act*** will be introduced to establish the parameters for a complete revision of New Brunswick's statutes.

A Select Committee of the Legislature held public hearings on automobile insurance rates and coverage earlier this year. Your government will **respond to the committee's report on auto insurance** following its public release.

## **Strengthening Prosperity**

This year's Speech from the Throne sets out your government's continuing ambitious agenda to strengthen prosperity for New Brunswickers. We have made progress as a province over the past three and one-half years in setting the long-term foundations to transform our economy and create greater economic and social opportunity for people.

Building on those strong foundations means we must take even more steps to strengthen our prosperity. Now is not the time to look to the past, but look forward with confidence and vision. Confidence and vision based on New Brunswickers themselves.

As the legislative session progresses, ministers will provide more details on the policy and program initiatives contained in the Speech from the Throne. Additional legislative amendments will also be introduced on other matters. A **third annual Progress Report to New Brunswickers** will be released as part of your government's commitment to enhance its accountability to all New Brunswickers.

During this session, Members of the Legislative Assembly will also be asked to review and approve a budget presented by the Minister of Finance, a Statement of Estimated Revenues and Expenses, and Capital Account appropriations for 2003-2004.

May divine providence guide you in your deliberations.