

Speech from the Throne

Third session of the 59th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

The Honourable Brenda Murphy,
Lieutenant-Governor

November 19, 2019

Speech from the Throne 2019

Focusing on Priorities

Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, honourable members of the legislative assembly, invited guests, and most importantly the people of New Brunswick, welcome to the third session of the 59th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We recognize and respect that New Brunswick comprises part of the traditional territories of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples.

This session will build on the positive momentum gained through the work done during the second session. Over the past year, the government created a solid foundation, one the members are proud of. However, they know there is more work required. Tough decisions will have to be made if we want to create a New Brunswick in which we can all be proud.

An important element of this coming session will continue to be collaboration. Since taking office, the government has stressed that we must work together if we want to make lasting improvements, ones that will benefit New Brunswickers not just today but for generations to come.

Congratulations/Recognition

A number of New Brunswickers have had noteworthy achievements since our last session of the legislature.

Ten New Brunswickers were named to the Order of New Brunswick, including Patricia Bernard, Héliodore Côté, Michel Doucet, Léo Johnson, Lois Scott, Robyn Tingley, Abraham Beverley Walker, James “Jim” Wilson, Claire Wilt and John Wood.

W. Dale Dauphinee, Georges Henri Goguen, Jean-Claude Savoie, and Camille Thériault were invested as Members of the Order of Canada. Lyse Doucet, Ann McCain Evans, Roxanne Fairweather, Walter J. Learning, Bennett McCarty and Francis Pang were appointed Members of the Order of Canada.

Many talented and caring New Brunswickers have been recognized this past year for their impressive contributions and achievements.

Paul M. McDonnell of Fredericton received the New Brunswick Human Rights Award for his work creating intervention training programs to assist children with autism.

Students from École Abbey-Landry in Memramcook received the Youth Human Rights Award for their project, *L'espoir d'avenir*, promoting the rights of children.

The winners of the 2019 Disability Awareness Week Awards were Christine Duguay of Cap-Pelé and Kanza Hashmat of Fredericton. In addition, Amond McKenna of Fredericton was the recipient of the annual Randy Dickinson Scholarship.

New Brunswickers Karen Garnett and Doreen Sirois were among the recipients of the Council of the Federation's Literacy Awards.

Fifteen teachers and three early childhood educators from the anglophone and francophone sectors received the Minister's Excellence in Education Award in recognition of their exceptional work. They were: Tania Roy, Éric Chiasson, Stéphanie Raymond, Hélène Savoie-Chouinard, Linda Harris Soucy, Michelle Dupuis, Steven Haché, Tina Brasseur, Ginger Carson, Sheila Morgan, Alice Sewell, Lesley Stewart, Angela Young, Jonathan Godbout, Venessa Poirier-LeBlanc, Susan Boyle, Shane Kelbaugh, and Paul Kelly.

Colleen Sullivan of Glen Falls Elementary School in Saint John was honoured as one of Canada's Outstanding Principals by the Learning Partnership. She was one of 30 individuals across the country to receive this award.

Scott MacAfee, co-ordinator of the community inclusion networks at the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, was appointed chairperson of the National Advisory Council on Poverty.

Four New Brunswickers were appointed to the Order of Military Merit for their service to our country. They were: Captain Guy Michel Bériau, Chief Warrant Officer Joseph Roger Dominic Lapointe, Sergeant Caroline Marie Linteau, and Master Warrant Officer Jerome Patrick MacMullin.

New Brunswick athletes have had some notable highlights in recent months.

Six New Brunswick athletes were part of Team Canada at the Pan-Am Games in Lima, Peru. Geneviève Lalonde brought home a gold medal and Kate Campbell won a silver medal. We were also proud to have three New Brunswick athletes compete in the Parapan American Games in Lima this year.

Six new members were inducted into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame: Michel Coté, Franklin Henderson, Patricia Nolan-Edwards, Anne Orser, Allain Roy and Hermel Volpé.

New Brunswickers were among the 39 athletes who represented Canada at the 2019 United States of America Warrior Games that were held in Tampa Bay, Florida in June.

Jesse Canney from Durham Bridge was named the male athlete of the year by Special Olympics Canada.

New Brunswick's tourism and cultural sectors continue to thrive and grow.

The sixth edition of the Congrès mondial acadien was hosted by Southeast New Brunswick as well as Prince Edward Island this summer. This international gathering strengthens the ties that unite all Acadian communities and was an excellent opportunity for New Brunswick to demonstrate its support of this vibrant culture.

I would like to recognize that Brian Gallant, the former premier and Leader of the Liberal Party, has resigned his seat since our last session. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

This year also marked a milestone anniversary for New Brunswick's *Official Languages Act*. Fifty years ago, our province became the first and only officially bilingual province in Canada. Each of our official linguistic communities contributes to our province's development, our diversity and our openness to the world. Our bilingualism is a unique and integral part of New Brunswick, and something we should all be proud of.

Condolences

We also pause to remember those we have lost in the past year.

We remember Her Honour, the Honourable Jocelyne Roy Vienneau, ONB, former lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick. Her Honour was a passionate advocate for this province and its people throughout her career, and during her time as lieutenant-governor, she championed literacy, mental health issues and the need for a new sense of pride for the place we call home.

We pay tribute to former Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Greg Thompson. Mr. Thompson was a businessman, teacher and financial planner who had a passion for serving the public and representing his community. He served in both federal and provincial politics over the course of his impressive career.

This year, we lost Erminie Cohen, a former New Brunswick senator and Saint John community leader. We remember her as a passionate member of the Jewish community and a life-long social justice advocate.

We remember Fredericton hockey legend and community leader Danny Grant. As a former Stanley Cup champion and member of the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame, he was an inspiration both on and off the ice.

We lost Robert Pichette this year, a former director of cultural affairs for New Brunswick as well as an historian, author, and champion of the French language and Acadian culture. He will be remembered for his many contributions to New Brunswick – most notably, the design of our provincial flag.

We honour David L. Myles, who had a lifelong passion for the local history of buildings, and provided invaluable technical assistance, advice and supervision for the restoration and maintenance of a number of important provincially owned buildings, including the Legislative Assembly, Legislative Library and Government House.

We pay tribute to Jeffrey Spalding, the former chief curator of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. He was a prominent artist, curator, museum director and educator who will be remembered for his many contributions to the Canadian art world.

We remember Michael Nicholas, the son of former Lieutenant-Governor Graydon Nicholas. Michael was a proud member of the Wolastoqiyik who was passionate about his life's work in archaeology.

We lost Jacqueline "Jackie" Webster, a pioneering journalist and member of the Order of New Brunswick. She will be remembered for her wit, intelligence and impact on the social and cultural life in our province.

We pay tribute to family matriarch Jean Irving. She will be remembered for her philanthropy, charitable works, and dedication to improving the lives of young people across New Brunswick.

We also honour former Fredericton City Councillor David Wilson. He contributed greatly to Fredericton through his dedication to numerous causes and committees, including the Miramichi Salmon Association, the United Way and the Chalmers Regional Hospital Foundation.

Introduction

This is a crucial time for New Brunswick. It has become increasingly clear that the status quo is no longer an option. There are many challenges facing our province. If we are to overcome them, we must face those issues head on, work together, and find made-in-New Brunswick solutions that truly work.

Currently, New Brunswick is one of the most indebted, most rapidly aging and least literate provinces in Canada. Approximately 25 per cent of our children live in poverty and close to 34 per cent of New Brunswick households have incomes so low that they cannot pay taxes.

In a world that is changing at an impressive rate, our future graduates will be responsible for ensuring our democratic values and the well-being of our communities.

Your government understands the challenges we face as a province and has developed a roadmap to ensure we are on the right path to a better future. They began by laying a solid foundation and establishing measurements to not only stay on track, but to make sure there is rigour behind the decisions being made on behalf of New Brunswickers.

It won't be easy, and it won't be quick, but with hard work, positive change is possible. In fact, this province has already shown what is possible through the steps taken and progress made over the past year.

Making Progress

The financial results are an example of how the government's hard work is paying off.

Second-quarter results for the 2019-20 fiscal year show a projected surplus of \$88.1 million compared to the budgeted surplus of \$23.1 million.

The net debt is projected to decrease by \$232.7 million from budget. This includes an improvement of \$146.0 million due to 2018-19 year-end results and an \$86.7 million improvement in 2019-20.

By ending the 2018-19 fiscal year with a surplus and reduced debt, the government saved the province from a downgrade in its credit rating.

The government also introduced a new way of reporting financial results, one that shows quarterly actual financial results as well as year-end projected results. By doing this, they delivered on a commitment made to New Brunswickers in the 2019-20 budget.

To help those pursuing post-secondary education in the province, the government reviewed the bursary program, reinstated the tuition tax credit and extended the bursary program to include private institutions.

The government established a protocol to link minimum wage to the consumer price index, allowing both employers and employees to be better prepared for increases when they occur.

The government implemented changes to WorksafeNB to prevent continuing increases in Worksafe premiums.

The government was able to save jobs through an agreement to buy its supply of road salt from the Nutrien mine in Sussex. This decision ensured the continued operation of the mine, supported 50 mining jobs and generated economic spinoffs for the region.

The government has restored the integrity and independence of the Office of Public Health, as recommended by public health experts across Canada.

The government abolished the physician billing number system, to allow for better mobility of physicians already working in the province and to help with the recruitment of new physicians to the province.

The government has reviewed the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website to allow easy public access to literacy, math and science scores.

The government implemented the tourism accommodation levy which enables local governments to create bylaws to put in place a tourism levy on guests of hotels and other accommodation providers. In turn, that revenue will be used for tourism promotion and development at the local level.

In July, the government launched a nursing resource strategy focused on the recruitment, retention, promotion of the nursing profession, and on enhancing nursing education, employment and work-life balance.

The Department of Social Development is improving the long-term care system for our province's seniors. They are improving access to home support services through initiatives like Nursing Home Without Walls, and they are assisting more seniors in accessing the appropriate level of residential care either through special care homes or nursing homes.

As well, the department continues to focus on social assistance reform to ensure the removal of barriers to employment. Work will also continue on improving New Brunswick's child protection system, including public consultation on child welfare legislation.

As of July 1, 2019, New Brunswick's population reached a record high of 776,827. The addition of 5,906 people marks the largest single-year growth for the province in the last 30 years.

In August, the government released *New Beginnings: A Population Growth Strategy for New Brunswick 2019-2024*. This action plan has ambitious immigration goals which provide a roadmap for economic growth and renewed prosperity in the province.

Conserving natural areas is an important part of the overall approach to meeting forest and land management objectives, including adapting to climate change, protecting biodiversity, protecting wetlands and watersheds, and protecting species at risk. That is why the government has pledged

to more than double New Brunswick's protected and conserved land and freshwater from 4.6 per cent to 10 per cent.

This positive momentum isn't just happening within government. Across the province, New Brunswickers are also taking steps to make New Brunswick better for everyone.

For example, members of the orthopedic care team at the Saint John Regional Hospital designed and implemented a two-hour class to engage patients and make them part of their own health-care team. This class helps patients and their families understand the role they play prior to undergoing spinal fusion surgery. This low-cost class has been effective in managing patients' expectations, increasing their satisfaction after surgery, reducing reported back pain and reducing their visits to the emergency department by approximately 50 per cent in the 12 weeks following their surgery.

In Fredericton, an electrician has co-founded a company that can help people generate electricity. MJM Solar Solutions installs renewable energy systems, such as solar panels. All the energy generated is consumed by the house. If there's any left, it goes back onto the local grid where it is stored for future use.

The owners of McGuire Chocolate moved from Calgary to St. Andrews to open their business, in part because of low real estate prices and the town's proximity to the American border. They have plans to expand their retail distribution across Canada and then into the states.

And Fredericton-based Upfront Cosmetics, which offers a line of shampoo and conditioner bars free of sulfates, parabens and synthetic fragrances, is making strides in building its global brand.

These are just a few examples of good news stories happening across our province.

Though good things are happening, this is just the beginning. More must be done. Each and every New Brunswicker has the ability to make a positive impact on our province. And now, more than ever, it is important that all of us find a way to do so.

We must continue to act if we want to create more success stories.

Government Priorities

The government has a plan to continue to build on the progress that has been made, to keep our forward momentum going.

The government is focused on six priorities:

- Dependable Public Health Care;
- World-Class Education;
- Energized Private Sector;
- Vibrant and Sustainable Communities;
- Affordable and Responsive Government; and
- High-Performing Organization.

In this session, concrete action will be taken in each of these priority areas. Concrete action that the public will see, as each of these priorities have measurable goals and the results will be made public to ensure transparency and that the government is staying on track.

Dependable Public Health Care

New Brunswickers must have access to dependable public health care. Currently, we face a number of challenges in health care, including a lack of human resources and inefficient use of resources.

The government has a plan and is taking steps to tackle these issues, and others facing the health-care system.

For example, the government is developing an initiative to enhance the emergency departments in Fredericton, Saint John and Moncton. This will improve care for patients with urgent but not life-threatening conditions and reduce emergency department wait times for all patients.

The government also plans to open nurse practitioner clinics in Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton. This will enable more residents to have access to primary care.

A physician resource strategy is in the works and will build upon the elimination of the physician billing number system and make it easier for doctors to set up practice in the province.

Recognizing that it is crucial to improve mental health services, the government is working with subject-matter experts from across the province on steps that can be taken in the short- and medium-term so people know that they are not alone. There are no easy answers, but the government is focused on finding real solutions to support New Brunswickers and their families.

Health risks associated with vaping, especially for young people, is a rising concern. Government will work with health specialists and advocates to develop a strategy to combat youth vaping in New Brunswick.

As well, the government will introduce amendments to the *Prescription and Catastrophic Drug Insurance Act* and the *Prescription Drug Payment Act* as part of its goal to find ways to deliver high-quality health care in a fiscally responsible manner.

Another important element of dependable public health care is senior care.

The government will propose amendments to the *Essential Services in Nursing Homes Act* to better protect residents, workers and taxpayers.

World-Class Education

New Brunswick's education system must go above and beyond in order for our children and youth to thrive.

In the spirit of working together, in October the New Brunswick Education Summit was held in Fredericton. This summit offered an opportunity for parents, teachers, educators and students to provide input on *Succeeding at Home: A green paper on education in New Brunswick*.

Following consultation, the government will continue to work with educators, parents and students to reimagine the education system; a system that will empower teachers, increase student resiliency and create safer classrooms, ensuring a high-quality education for young New Brunswickers.

Having a personalized approach for learning and offering our children and youth experiential opportunities will open their horizons to opportunities they may not know are available and within their reach. Through these experiences and winning classroom practices, students will gain knowledge of themselves, discover their passions, and explore potential career paths while developing their communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and innovative thinking.

New Brunswick youth will continue to have access to learning opportunities that will improve their comprehension of math, literacy and science in new and better ways. These foundational skills will allow youth to continue to thrive long after they graduate. Furthermore, the government is working to identify potential developmental risks as early as possible, and work with families to improve the outcomes of all children, better preparing them for a life of learning.

To help ensure that New Brunswick students are engaged and challenged, the government will continue to examine replacing early year grades with flexible learning environments with the goal to provide students with the skills they need to be life-long learners.

As a bilingual province, we want to give every child the opportunity to learn both French and English. Everyone should have the opportunity to be able to become conversationally bilingual, and it should be fun. The government is exploring new educational approaches to allow more children than ever to learn both official languages. Introducing languages in the early years and offering opportunities to every child will allow our young people to better compete in our bilingual province's ever-changing job market.

Also, the department is engaging in discussions with First Nations in New Brunswick in order to renew the Enhanced First Nation Education Programs and Services Agreement.

To ensure the health and safety of students, immunization requirements will be enforced in the public school and early learning and child care systems in the province.

The government will introduce amendments to the *Education Act* to further empower and engage educators to innovate in the classroom.

Providing young New Brunswickers with a world-class education will position them for success.

Energized Private Sector

If we want to grow New Brunswick's economy, we need an energized private sector. The role of government is to help create an environment where companies can thrive. This will enable existing companies to grow and will attract new ones.

To do that, we must increase our labour force. This will require effort on two fronts. The first is to ensure that young people are receiving the education they need for the jobs that will be available. The second is immigration.

The government will work with post-secondary institutions in New Brunswick to better prepare students for current and future labour needs, as well as ensure the education system is doing its part.

On the immigration front, the government's new Population Growth Strategy focuses on three targets to help build a skilled workforce to meet our future labour market needs.

One is increasing our immigration target over time and welcoming up to 7,500 newcomers annually by 2024. This will bring New Brunswick's annual immigration intake to about one per cent of the provincial population. To put this in perspective, New Brunswick welcomed approximately 4,600 newcomers in 2018.

The government will also continue working toward the targets laid out in the 2014-2017 New Brunswick Francophone Immigration Action Plan to have a two per cent annual increase in French-speaking newcomers. Their goal is to reach 33 per cent by 2024.

As a province, we must also focus on creating the right environment so that newcomers want to stay. The province has a great record for attracting people, but we need to do a better job of keeping them here. The government's goal is to reach a one-year retention rate of 85 per cent by 2024.

In addition to increasing the labour force, we must also remove barriers for businesses.

Currently, New Brunswick does not have a competitive regulatory framework. Complying with rules and regulations is cumbersome and time-consuming when we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions.

Each year the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represents about 5,000 New Brunswick companies, rates governments across the country with a Red Tape Report Card. New Brunswick has failed to improve over the past number of years and has hovered around a grade of C-.

Every minute a business in New Brunswick spends complying with rules and regulations, is a minute lost in growing their business and helping build a stronger economy. Every dollar spent complying with rules and regulations is a dollar not spent on machinery, equipment and hiring more New Brunswickers.

The government is committed to reducing, in absolute terms, the amount of time and effort that it takes for businesses to comply with rules and regulations imposed by government departments and agencies.

Departments and agencies will focus more time and effort on determining how to lighten their impact on businesses.

In the spirit of reducing red tape and to better align with other Canadian provinces, the government will introduce amendments to the *Days of Rest Act* to remove existing prohibitions with respect to engaging in real estate activities on Sundays.

Following a review, the government will establish a new mandate for Opportunities New Brunswick to help companies to grow, increase exports, increase new investments, and increase competitiveness.

Service New Brunswick, in partnership with Opportunities New Brunswick and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, will lead the New Brunswick First Procurement Strategy. This strategy will set the direction to increase the success of New Brunswick companies to be awarded government contracts.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will continue its work with other jurisdictions to standardize procedures and make it easier for New Brunswick companies to bid on Crown projects in other Atlantic provinces.

The department will also pursue regulatory amendments that will improve productivity in the trucking industry and support New Brunswick's economic competitiveness.

It is important that New Brunswick develop its natural resources in a responsible manner. Our land is covered in forests, and the forest sector is a vital industry in this province. We need to make sure the sector remains viable and operates in a sustainable manner. We must strive for a balance between employment and economic benefits and protecting and preserving our environment.

To this end the government will:

- increase conservation efforts while ensuring we encourage the growth of the forest sector and its economic benefits;
- ensure meaningful consultation with First Nations on forest management on Crown lands;
- improve transparency and information sharing about our forests and forest sector;
- increase forest management participation in the private woodlot sector;
- ensure the operation of a competitive and fair primary timber products market;
- help protect and conserve our freshwater, forests and other wild spaces for future generations; and
- develop a broadly-supported forest management plan for Crown lands.

New Brunswick's agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors are significant contributors to the province's economy and accounted for 17 per cent of total exports in 2018.

The government will continue to support efforts to increase production and the availability of products, diversify markets and build on previous successes in export sales in the agri-food and seafood sectors, including sales of wild blueberries and oysters.

New Brunswick's aquaculture sector supports many rural, coastal and Aboriginal communities. As part of the government's commitment to expand the blue economy, there is an opportunity to expand and diversify our aquaculture sector in a sustainable and responsible manner.

The government will introduce a modernized *Aquaculture Act* that will provide for an outcome-based approach that strengthens its regulation-making authority and enhances enforcement capabilities. These changes will further enhance environmental protection, drive innovation and improved operating practices, better align with legislation across the Atlantic provinces, and result in a reduction of the cost of doing business for the aquaculture sectors.

The government will amend the *Seafood Processing Act* and update regulations to provide the processing sector with the flexibility to utilize current industry standards for certification and audit programs and ensure that stakeholders are prepared to quickly respond to new market opportunities in a highly competitive seafood sector.

The government will also explore options to capitalize upon the opportunity to further develop the industrial hemp sector in New Brunswick.

Your government believes its role should be to regulate and enforce the regulations to protect the health and wellbeing of New Brunswick citizens. The government will be amending the *New Brunswick Liquor Corporation Act* to allow a single private operator to undertake the operation, distribution and sale of recreational cannabis in the province.

Tourism is an important economic driver for our province and to grow this sector for the benefit of all New Brunswickers, the government is re-focusing its tourism strategy to ensure we are ready for visitors here at home.

Visitors are looking for world-class experiences when they come to New Brunswick and we all play a role when it comes to being great hosts. The Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture will develop an Ambassador Program to encourage New Brunswickers, businesses and communities to play a role in creating positive experiences for visitors.

The department will increase New Brunswickers' awareness of the many tourism experiences available in the province through a 'Staycation' campaign. This will encourage people to explore New Brunswick, so they can better 'sell' what we have to visitors.

The government will focus on building sustainable physical and cultural infrastructure in cities and small communities.

The tourism industry is important to New Brunswick's success and the government will work with the industry to develop strategic partnerships, develop new experiences, and provide training in key areas so they can meet the expectations of our visitors. Investments are being made in key infrastructure to meet modern standards and expectations.

While the department is refocusing resources within the province to build up our tourism offering, they will also be strategic in our key external markets to maintain our existing market share.

In accordance with legislative amendments made in the spring, WorkSafe New Brunswick has reviewed the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission and Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal Act* and the government will address their recommendations in the coming session.

Taking these steps will help to positively impact the economic future of our province.

Vibrant and Sustainable Communities

If we want vibrant and sustainable communities, we must work together to create them.

New Brunswick has 341 local government entities including municipalities, local service districts, rural communities and a regional municipality, with a provincial population of approximately 776,800. The province has a local government system that is fragmented with limited capacity. In addition, more than 30 per cent of the population has no formal local representation.

Local government representatives have identified many challenges including the ability to raise additional revenue, the cost of delivering services, and the disparity in the collection of taxes to pay for services in incorporated versus unincorporated areas. In addition, members of the regional service commissions would like to see legislative amendments to support the addition of services and, more specifically, the types of regional services that may be provided by the commissions.

The government will work with local governments and local service districts on priority municipal reform areas including: property tax reform, regional service commission improvements and making it more attractive for communities to come together.

Working with local governments to help with regionalization is important, because local governments understand the challenges they face.

Your government has worked with the City of Saint John to put in place a very ambitious action plan. This comprehensive plan addresses long-standing issues that local governments across New Brunswick are experiencing. The lessons learned through working with Saint John will help to inform decisions in other communities.

During this session, the government will amend the *Greater Saint John Regional Facilities Commission Act* to ensure the communities that benefit from the five regional facilities pay the associated capital and operating costs.

Building resilient communities and ensuring a healthy natural environment are critical components of vibrant and sustainable communities. Your government accepts that climate change is real and influenced by human activity and is committed to being part of the solution to this global challenge.

New Brunswick will do as much as it can to combat climate change. Implementing New Brunswick's Climate Change Action Plan will help to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to build resilience in our communities along with infrastructure. It will also support economic growth and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The government will continue to support local governments as they create adaptation plans and put those plans into motion to help protect their communities from the effects of climate change.

Promoting the use of our natural infrastructure, including our forests, wetlands, salt marshes, and floodplains, is an important tool to buffer against the impact of climate change and help mitigate localized flooding.

To that end, the government will bring a new watercourse and wetlands map into effect on January 1, 2020. The government has already begun educating stakeholders on this change.

Last spring, significant flooding affected communities throughout the province. Damage to private infrastructure, such as homes, and public infrastructure, such as roads, was substantial.

Your government is examining how future risks can be mitigated and will develop and release a long-term plan to better address the impact of flooding and shoreline erosion.

New Brunswick has successfully reduced its carbon emissions by 28 per cent since 2005 and is on track to meet its share of the national target of bringing emissions 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

In June, the government released its plan to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions entitled *Holding Large Emitters Accountable: New Brunswick's Output-Based Pricing System*. This pricing system will cover roughly half of all greenhouse gas emissions in the province and requires large emitters to reduce their emissions intensity by 10 per cent by 2030.

This session, your government intends to introduce amendments to the *Climate Change Act* to allow for the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from New Brunswick's large emitters.

Your government is working to establish a carbon pricing system and will introduce legislation seeking to achieve fairness for New Brunswickers in relation to our neighbours in the Atlantic Provinces.

As well, your government has initiated an independent review of the 30-year-old Solid Waste Management Service Model. The goal is to identify areas to reduce waste through recycling and other programs. This review will identify what is working well and what could be improved so that we can better adapt to global trends, enhance future solid-waste management programs and protect the province's natural environment.

The government will continue to work with Recycle NB and stakeholders to develop an extended producer responsibility program for packaging and printed paper, as well as glass containers. This will benefit our environment and our communities, as it will lead to more recycling of a wider range of items.

Communities are about people and how we interact with one another. Truly, New Brunswickers are what make our province unique.

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, the government is forming an All Nations and Parties Working Group on Truth and Reconciliation. This group will keep government accountable and give departments a greater understanding of the priorities of First Nations.

In partnership with the Premier's Council on Disabilities, your government will engage New Brunswickers on developing an *Accessibility Act* to assist those living with disabilities.

To support New Brunswickers when they are at their most vulnerable, the government will amend the *Residential Tenancies Act* to allow victims of domestic violence to terminate their lease agreement early if there is a threat to their safety or to that of a child.

The government has been working with the New Brunswick SPCA and animal protection advocates to modernize and improve regulations to better protect dogs and other animals. Updated regulations will be introduced in the coming months. This is a big step forward and one that has been long awaited by animal protection advocates.

We can create vibrant and sustainable communities across New Brunswick. By doing so, we will create a more resilient province, one all of us are proud to call home.

Affordable and Responsive Government

Since taking office, the government has been clear about the importance of getting good value for money.

The financial challenges our province faces, if not addressed, will have a negative impact for all New Brunswickers.

These challenges affect all departments and threaten the government's ability to provide high-quality services for all New Brunswickers.

In light of these challenges, the government is reviewing programs and services to ensure they provide demonstratable value for taxpayers.

The government will develop a tax reform roadmap that will include a review of all major taxation programs. The information collected through this process will help to inform the budget process.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure will continue to develop and implement evidence-based tools to improve its operational efficiencies and maximize value for money.

As well, the department will encourage and make it easier for private sector contractors to provide innovative, creative and cost-effective solutions to address infrastructure requirements.

It is a matter of prioritizing needs over wants to ensure that essential services that New Brunswickers depend upon will be available in the future.

High-Performing Organization

The New Brunswick public service has an important role to play in developing and achieving the government's vision for the future of our province.

It is key that the needs of New Brunswickers drive all aspects of the work done by the public service, including the services offered and the programs delivered. There must be rigour behind the formation of the government's top priorities to ensure that it is delivering on its commitments.

To make sure that happens, the public service will become a more performance-driven organization, where results are measured and shared.

The government will identify top performers and potential leaders within the public service and work with them to ensure they have the opportunity to reach their full potential. It is important to develop the skills and talent of the people who work every day to help move New Brunswick forward. The government will also ensure that succession plans are in place for critical positions within the public service. It is important that an organization the size of the public service is able to operate smoothly and efficiently.

To build a stronger relationship between government and labour groups, and to encourage collaboration on addressing issues affecting New Brunswick's labour force and economy, a government-labour steering committee will be re-established. This committee, which will include more labour representatives than before, will focus on specific labour issues, with representatives from industry being invited to participate as needed to provide a balance of interests and perspectives.

Legislative officers play an important role in providing an independent voice for New Brunswickers, so it is important that the most qualified candidates are found for these positions.

The government will appoint a new official languages commissioner and a new integrity commissioner during this session.

On the advice of the former integrity commissioner, the government will amend the *Conflict of Interest Act* and the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. This will change the mandates of both the ombud and the integrity commissioner and will result in more openness and transparency.

Conclusion

It is exciting to see what has been accomplished in our province over the past year, as well as the plans being made by the government to continue this positive progression.

Momentum is building and people across New Brunswick are stepping up, because they want to be part of the change.

The tough decisions the government is making today will lead to a better tomorrow for New Brunswick.

We can already see how the steps that the government is taking are helping to create a solid foundation for future generations.

Your government has said from the beginning that they cannot do this alone.

You have an opportunity to help determine the future of this province.

Your government wants to work with the people of this province and all parties as they continue to make headway. We are stronger together – we have shown that time and again.

Just imagine what is possible if we join forces, if we continue to share our successes and find ways to overcome the challenges we face.

The future is ours to create.