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FRESH START FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

THE LIBERAL PARTY PLATFORM

OCTOBER 10, 1978

THE LIBERAL COMMITMENT

There is much to be done in New Brunswick.

The Liberal Party is ready to lead New Brunswick to a fresh start.

Economic objectives are the major thrust of the Liberal platform. To achieve those objectives, available government resources must be applied intensively and efficiently.

We will concentrate on putting people to work by making greater use of our natural resources, the talents of our people, and by making government more productive in achieving defined objectives.

Public dollars will be better managed. Effective business principles will be applied to running government, which has grown too big, too expensive, and too complex.

The revenue sources of the province will be reviewed. The principles of equity and ability-to-pay will be the basis of the tax system.

New Brunswick needs a fresh start. The Liberal Party is committed to that goal.

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GOVERNMENT

Responsible Government

The principle of Ministerial responsibility must be reaffirmed. Government must become more responsive and open.

. The rules of the Legislature will be revised to prevent last-minute introduction of bills in the Legislative Assembly.

. Opportunities will be provided for public comment on all major government bills through Select & Standing Committees of the Legislature. A Standing Committee of Legislature members will be established to review government regulations and to recommend their elimination or amendment.

. The people of New Brunswick are entitled to prompt replies to inquiries about government services and programs. Toll-free Information Lines will be established for this purpose.

. Every applicant for a civil service position will have the right to examine his or her rating placement and written assessment.

Government Re-organization

A Liberal government will introduce efficient management principles.

. We will immediately recruit an independent voluntary committee composed of experienced businessmen, to assess the management and organization of the New Brunswick government with a view to reducing the number of departments. Re-organization and reduction of the number of departments will cut costs, eliminate duplication, and strengthen efficiency. Treasury Board and Finance will be consolidated immediately as will a number of other departments, whose functions relate.

. Government departments or branches of departments dealing directly with resource industries will be located in areas where these resources are, so that public servants are closer to their area of responsibility.

Spending Restraints

A basic objective of a Liberal government will be to protect and improve the credit rating of the province. For the last three years the New Brunswick government has been incurring serious deficits in its ordinary account.

A Liberal government commits itself to balance the ordinary operating account of the province within two years, using a system of zero-based budgeting.

. The rate of growth in provincial government expenditures will not exceed the annual growth of the Gross Provincial Product. Legislation will be enacted to make this principle the basis of fiscal policy.

. The present level of public service employment will be frozen immediately. A Liberal government will, through attrition, reduce the number of public service positions. Substantial staff reductions will be made in the Premier's Office, Cabinet Secretariat, Treasury Board, New Brunswick Information Service and the New Brunswick Liquor Corporation.

. Out-of-province travel by public service employees will be substantially reduced and subject to advance approval in writing by the Minister responsible. Personal and private use of government vehicles will be prohibited.

. The salaries of Cabinet Ministers, and senior public service administrators will be frozen until a real surplus is achieved in the ordinary account of the province's budget. This will give those who plan and administer the provincial budget an incentive to reduce departmental operating costs.

. All leases entered into for rental of space for government departments, agencies and Crown corporations will be reviewed. Action will be taken to terminate leases where it is determined that there is a clear abuse of the public interest.

Taxation

. A Liberal government believes that the provincial tax structure cannot be altered on a piece-meal basis. A Liberal government will immediately review provincial revenues and taxation policies, including the rapid rise in assessments, with the objective of making the taxation system more equitable; restoring the ability to pay principle and stimulating private investment in job creation. Priority attention will be given to these areas of taxation:

- The deterrent effect of the present property-based business tax on the operation and expansion of small and medium sized business enterprises.

- The effect on rents of the property tax on multiple-unit dwellings, including owner-occupied two-family homes.

- Inequalities in property taxes in rural areas on farm and non-farm residences.

- Assessment and taxation of community centres.

- To stimulate the economy by creating jobs through a greater number of new housing starts, repairs and renovations, and other construction activities, the sales tax on building materials will be removed immediately.

. Pending the review of revenue and taxation to ensure that no further inequities arise in the taxation system, a Liberal government will not increase any other provincial tax rates for a period of at least twelve months.

Federal-Provincial - Municipal Relations

The Liberal Party is firmly committed to a strong and united New Brunswick in a strong and united Canada.

. A Liberal government will participate actively in any forthcoming discussions on constitutional matters and will support the role of the Monarchy in the Canadian Parliamentary system. A Liberal government will press for entrenchment of minority and human rights in the Constitution of Canada.

. A Liberal government will strongly oppose any reductions in payments to New Brunswick under the equalization formula or cost-shared programs. The principle of equalization payments as a means of alleviating regional economic disparities must be enshrined in any new Canadian constitution.

A Liberal government will press Ottawa to extend financial assistance through the General Development Agreement for those programs which we will undertake to strengthen our province's economic base.

. A Liberal government will review the formula of unconditional grants to municipalities to correct inequities resulting from the transfer of responsibilities and a declining rate of provincial participation in municipal financing. Special consideration will be given to "fast-growth" areas.

. A Liberal government will give particular attention to accelerating the program of provincial assistance for installing of sewage treatment and disposal systems with the Greater Moncton area receiving priority.

ECONOMY

THE ECONOMY

The primary objective of a Liberal government will be to create a climate of confidence within which individual and private enterprise can flourish in a province of economic opportunity. A Liberal government will develop a cohesive industrial development strategy emphasizing small and medium-size labour-intensive industries, the use of New Brunswick resources and labour skills, and the development of local markets.

Business Opportunity

New Brunswickers from the private sector will play a direct role in developing government policy to create stable and satisfying jobs. Regulations and red tape which discourage individual initiative will be eliminated.

. The Small Industry Financial Assistance program will be revised in consultation with the Federal government to extend it to all sections of the province, raise the ceiling to \$100,000 and to extend financial assistance to include all resource-based enterprises and tourism.

. A Liberal government will allocate \$15-million, being a portion of the savings from provincial government spending, to establish a Small Business Finance Fund to expand job opportunities in new and existing small and medium-sized businesses. Existing staff of government will be assigned to administer the fund under the direction of a restructured, autonomous New Brunswick Industrial Development Board composed of a Chairman and Directors from private business. One of the Board's objectives will be to negotiate with private lending institutions, particularly the chartered banks, to establish operating lines of credit to supplement Fund financing.

. Provincial income tax incentives will be provided to small and medium business enterprises in tourism, manufacturing, processing and resource-based industries for the first three years of operation.

. New Brunswick suppliers and manufacturers will be given significant preference in government purchasing and contract awards. Contractors will be required to make maximum use of New Brunswick products and labour on public works projects.

. A Liberal government will co-operate with and strongly encourage the Saint John Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, the City of Saint John and the Government of Canada for expansion of the Saint John drydock for both shipbuilding and ship repair.

Farming

The objective of a Liberal Government's agricultural policy is two-fold. First, major expansion is required to make New Brunswick more self-sufficient in food production. Second, in those areas where potential exists for export markets, a program must be undertaken to market New Brunswick products to give New Brunswickers a fair share of the market at a price that assures a reasonable return to the farmers. To meet this objective a revitalized and adequately funded Department of Agriculture will give strong leadership and become a productive partner with the farming industry. Specifically, agricultural policies will be based on consultation with farmers and farm organizations. A Liberal government will:

- . Provide incentives for increased production, particularly of hogs, beef, fruits, vegetables and feed grains.
- . Establish a Farmland Acquisition Fund to assist young people interested in farming as a career to acquire farmland and equipment.
- . Provide assistance to farmers to undertake joint sharing of equipment and storage facilities.

. Provide financial support and leadership to improve potato varieties and quality; promotion of the industry; modernization of storage facilities; expanded research; improved market intelligence and better use of off-grade potatoes.

. In cooperation with producer organizations, promotion programs will be undertaken to encourage the consumption of New Brunswick commodities by New Brunswickers.

. Using the funds provided by the federal government in the recently signed five-year multi-million dollar agreement, and supplemented where required by Provincial funding, a major program of education in the field of agriculture will be undertaken. All programs will be available in both official languages.

The educational and training programs will commence at the high school level and a change in the existing curriculum will be made to ensure that the basics are available to interested students in the field of agricultural and rural life. The next level of new courses will be both part-time and full-time course programs at the Community College and Technical School level. In addition, an Institute will be established devoted specifically to education in the field of agriculture. Pilot farms will be established throughout the province to support at all levels the planned educational and training courses.

Forestry

A Liberal Government is committed to productive multiple use of the forest resource .. for jobs, recreation, wildlife management and conservation.

. To preserve and enhance the forest resource, a Liberal Government will undertake a management policy based on a combination of selective harvesting where it has proven effective, and strictly controlled clear-cutting which benefits the industry and respects other land uses.

. A Forest Resource Plan will be developed by a Liberal government in consultation with forest land users and citizen interest groups to provide a basis for long-term development by the private sector.

. Re-allocation of Crown lands, under strict conditions to comply with the Government's forest management plan and to encourage maximum job creation, will begin immediately.

. An aggressive and major reforestation program will be undertaken on freehold and Crown lands. This program will include removal of residual low-value species. The forest nursery program will be made more efficient and expanded to provide seedlings for Crown and freehold lands.

. A Liberal government will meet with the major wood processing companies in New Brunswick to obtain a commitment of long-term reinvestment to keep New Brunswick mills competitive.

. The thrust of job creation efforts in the forestry sector will be to identify and assist in establishment of small and medium-sized manufacturing and processing facilities. In addition to financial assistance from the Small Business Finance Fund, a Liberal government will help to expand the market demand for our products.

. Until effective forest management practices make our forests more resistant to infestation and disease or an effective new way is found to deal with the budworm, aerial spraying will continue but will be conditional upon:

- Increased cooperation with Nova Scotia, Quebec and the State of Maine to coordinate protection of forest land along our borders and develop new techniques for combatting forest infestation with the objective of ending aerial spraying within five years.

- Financial support for medical research into health hazards which may result from the existing spray program.

- Recognition of a person's right to sue for any damage caused by the spray.

Fisheries

A Liberal government will provide leadership and increased funding to make the inshore and offshore fisheries an efficient and profitable way of life.

. Inshore fishermen will be assisted, through increased funding of the Fisheries Development Board, in modernizing and replacing their boats and for purchases of new equipment. A Liberal government will increase the number of coastal service ports in which fishermen will have the advantages of storage, dry dock, ice-making, freezing and processing facilities.

. A planned program of modernization and replacement of the offshore fleet, will be carried out to take full advantage of the 200-mile limit.

. A Liberal government will meet and work with every segment of the fishing industry including fishermen, co-operatives and processors to establish an organization which can aggressively pursue and achieve the goal of increasing domestic and export sales for all New Brunswick fishery products, including less popular species and ensuring a fair return to the fishermen. Potential investors will be assisted under the Small Business Finance Fund.

. A training boat will be provided to give practical training experience for fisheries students.

. A Liberal government will work towards establishment of transportation and storage pools to ensure that surplus catches can be held or moved to areas within New Brunswick which are experiencing a shortage of fish for processing.

. Legislation will be passed to permit fishermen to organize.

Mining

A Liberal government will be committed to a program of expansion in the mining industry to ensure that this industry can develop to its full potential. A Liberal government policy will be centered on an accelerated exploration program combined with a plan to increase in-province processing.

. Known coal reserves in the Chipman-Minto area will be mined in a manner ensuring maximum long-term employment. Immediate steps will be taken to open the Kent County coal reserves. Using available research facilities, new ways of developing and marketing coal by-products to expand the use of coal and increase jobs in the coal industry will be undertaken.

. The exploration program will be expanded in every area of the Province to ensure that all potential economical mineral deposits are identified and put into production.

. Meetings with all holders of mining leases in New Brunswick will be held to determine opportunities for increased jobs and to ensure that maximum benefits from the province's resources are being returned to New Brunswickers through in-province processing and revenues.

Energy

The economy and life style of New Brunswick are dependant on a sound, long term energy policy. The position of New Brunswick in terms of power rates must not be allowed to deteriorate further. A Liberal government will prepare a long term policy based on maximum use of New Brunswick resources.

. A Liberal government will clean up the problems caused by mismanagement at the Point Lepreau nuclear site.

. Pending a complete review of the Power Commission's financing and rate structure, there will be no increase in residential electricity rates including the fuel adjustment tax for at least one year. Proposed rate increases for any class of customer will be subject to prior approval by a restructured Public Utilities Board after holding public hearings.

. A Liberal government will give priority to our natural resources in the development of all future generating capacity. These include the use of coal and hydro. The Grand Lake thermal plant will be expanded.

. An accelerated research program will be conducted into the use of residue wood waste from the forest, waste from wood-using industries, oil shale and solar energy as alternative power sources. Research will be increased into the use of peat as an alternative power source with special attention to the utilization of the enormous peat resource in New Brunswick.

. A Liberal government in cooperation with the municipalities will immediately institute an effective program of conservation to minimize energy waste in all areas of provincial and municipal jurisdiction.

. A Liberal government will continue to press for the development of tidal power and will assure that appropriate manufacturing, commercial and research activities are located in New Brunswick to supply and service the tidal power program.

Tourism

Tourism is a priority resource in the Liberal Government's Economic Plan. A Liberal government will make an assessment of the Department of Tourism and undertake the necessary reorganization to make it an effective vehicle for developing and promoting the tourist industry.

. A Tourism Development Plan, prepared in conjunction with the tourist industry, will make our natural and historical resources a year-round industry which will bring tourists to New Brunswick and keep them here longer.

. A Community Tourist Fund will be established to cost-share with municipalities and private organizations the development of local attractions and to maintain and renovate historic structures. Financial assistance will also be extended to the tourist industry through the Small Business Finance Fund.

. A School of Restaurant and Hotel Management will be established in conjunction with the Algonquin Hotel and the Community College throughout the Province.

. Tourist Information Centres at major ports of entrance, particularly at St. Stephen-Milltown, will be expanded to provide improved services to tourists.

Labour

Labour-management relations both in the private and public sector must be improved. The failure of present legislation and leadership to create a harmonious climate in labour-management relations is obvious. Legal and illegal strikes and lockouts are causing unnecessary economic and social hardship. The Minister of Labour will exercise leadership by using the prestige of his office to anticipate and prevent industrial turmoil.

. A Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly will publicly examine the Public Service Labour Relations Act with particular attention to finding alternatives to strikes and lockouts in essential services.

. After consultation with business and labour, a Liberal government will implement a new Employment Standards Code.

. A new Workmen's Compensation Act will be introduced to meet contemporary needs respecting both the rate of compensation and entitlement, and to provide appeal procedures from administrative decisions denying compensation.

Transportation and Public Works

The policy of a Liberal government in the area of transportation and public works will be to provide a network of arterial highways built to all-weather standards that serves the entire Province. This network will be supplemented by an improved secondary highway system. Attention will be given to the planning and scheduling of all highway and public work projects to ensure that the maximum benefits relative to short-term job creation are realized.

. Major highways in New Brunswick will be upgraded to allow relaxation of weight restrictions.

. Route 11 will be completed without delay. The Saint John Throughway and Route 7, including the Grand Bay/Westfield bypass, will be completed. Routes 8 and 17 will be rebuilt.

. An aggressive program of maintenance and reconstruction of secondary roads will be undertaken.

. A Liberal government will immediately stop the Department of Transportation's program of rural road abandonment, which has denied thousands of New Brunswickers guaranteed access to their rural properties.

. The Trans-Canada highway will be redesigned in those areas where the existing hazards are contributing to the highway accident rate in the province.

. A Liberal government will immediately commence serious negotiations with the Federal government to remove the tolls on the Saint John Harbor Bridge to enable the citizens of Saint John to realize fully the benefits of the Saint John Throughway.

. Residents of Grand Manan and Whitehead will be exempt from all tolls on the ferries serving Grand Manan.

. A Liberal government will press for the improvement of port facilities in Saint John to allow all-weather loading of all products from the forest and farm sectors of the economy.

. A Liberal government will co-ordinate planning and construction scheduling of all major public capital works projects with labor and the construction industry to obtain maximum job stability in both the public and private sectors.

SOCIAL POLICY

The Liberal Party is committed to the principle that every person capable of working has a right to the dignity and pride of productive employment. All Social Service programs will be reviewed to ensure a fair division of available monies between those unable to work, because of age or handicap, and programs to find employment for those able to work but unable to find a job. Because of financial restraints, a Liberal government will delay major new social spending programs until unemployment and growth in government are brought under control and the Province can afford them.

Social Development

. Effective measures will be introduced to control and eliminate abuse in social assistance programs.

. A major overhaul of the Department of Social Services will be undertaken with the objective of allotting more of the existing budget to job counselling and training services and less for administrative costs. Social assistance expenditures will be reoriented to put greater financial emphasis on programs to return unemployed employables to the work force.

Education

The principle that every child is entitled to an equal opportunity of obtaining a high standard of education must be re-affirmed.

. There will be no further reduction in the number of teachers in the New Brunswick educational system. In districts of declining enrolments, teachers will be re-allocated to reduce class sizes and enable more individualized instruction.

. A Liberal government will define and implement a basic educational program for New Brunswick. The formula budgetting system will be amended so that the distribution of educational funds will meet the educational needs of all areas of New Brunswick.

. A Liberal government will re-design the curriculum to ensure that students have the advantage of taking high school courses related to new and existing job opportunities.

. A Liberal government will implement a program to improve the level of school bus safety in the Province.

. A Liberal government will ensure that opportunities are available to achieve fluency in a second language through strong second-language and immersion training courses within the regular school program.

. The Schools Act will be changed to provide for the election of all School Board members on the basis of geographical representation within districts. Provision will be made for the appointment of members by the government when a full slate of members is not elected.

. The definition of school district boundaries will be reviewed. New boundaries will be established to take into account various factors, such as economic, social, language, travel distance, culture, population distribution, and the community of interests which directly affect operation of schools at the local level.

. A Liberal government will direct existing financial and human resources to develop a modern program for children with learning disabilities.

. A Community College will be established in the Miramichi area.

. A Liberal government will review the funding for post secondary education. The role of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission will be assessed to determine if the interests of New Brunswick Universities are adequately served by the Commission in its present format and method of operation.

. A Liberal government will assist, through a system of grants, community based day care centres and kindergartens.

Health

Liberal government policy will be directed at preventive programs, including physical fitness, as a means of reducing costs of remedial treatment.

. Programs to prevent alcoholism will be fully funded from profits of the New Brunswick Liquor Corporation. More detoxification centres will be opened and community alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation programs will be encouraged.

. Medicare will be broadened to cover the cost of eye examinations for children up to the age of 18 years and persons over 65.

. Existing medical facilities, including Community Health Centres, will be maintained and expanded where necessary under a Liberal government. Construction will commence on a Regional Hospital in Edmundston.

. The age of eligibility to obtain free prescription drugs will be lowered to 60 from 65 years of age.

SOCIAL POLICY

Senior Citizens

A Liberal government will significantly improve in-home services for our senior citizens that will greatly extend the number of years in which they can live in their own homes and apartments.

. Programs will be developed to provide improved services to senior citizens in their existing homes and apartments. In-home services will be in the form of nursing care, housekeeping services, shopping assistance, visitations and similar services.

. A Liberal government will amend the existing rent supplement for senior citizens to establish a permanent rent assistance program of up to \$75 per month. The eligibility requirements will be made less restrictive so that a greater number of senior citizens will receive higher monthly supplements. A Liberal government will exempt the first \$100 of property taxes on homes owned and occupied by senior citizens.

. A Liberal government will press the federal government for an amendment to the Old Age Security Program which would continue payment of the Spouse's Allowance to the age of 65, after the death of the partner receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement .

Handicapped

A Liberal government will be committed to taking practical measures, in consultation and co-operation with community organizations, enabling the handicapped to achieve fulfillment as equal members of our society.

. All legislation and regulations which discriminate against the mentally and physically handicapped will be repealed.

. The availability and delivery of mental health programs for adults and children will be expanded at the community level. A special program for the treatment of emotionally disturbed adolescents will be established.

Youth

. Hiring of students will be done through regular civil service hiring procedures. Student representation will be provided on all boards interviewing students for employment.

. A complete review of motor vehicle insurance will be made to ensure that accident-free drivers under the age of 25 are not being penalized.

. A Liberal government will encourage summer exchange programs for Francophone and Anglophone students.

. The Student Loan and Bursary program will be reviewed and the level of awards increased to bring them in line with the current cost of education. This review will ensure that deserving students are not denied, because of financial restraints, the opportunity of obtaining a quality education.

. A Liberal government will allocate funds received from Loto Canada to sport and recreation programs.

WOMEN

Advice of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be considered seriously and action will be taken to effect appropriate reforms.

. Representation of women on government-created boards, committees and commissions will be brought into line with the concern of women in the areas involved.

. Prompt action will be taken to meet the concerns of New Brunswickers in the areas of matrimonial property, employment, day-care, education and health.

Housing

A Liberal government will intensify programs relating to low-income housing, Home Improvement Loans and Senior Citizens Housing.

Under a Liberal government:

. Co-operative housing associations will be provided with better technical assistance by the New Brunswick Housing Corporation. A Liberal government will ensure that adequate land is available before co-operative housing members begin their plans to build. Local municipal governments will be advised of the projects at the outset in order to expedite the building of homes under the program. Adequate safeguards will be provided to the co-operative housing members to ensure completion of their homes.

. The existing red tape surrounding home improvement loans will be removed and the program strengthened with respect to home improvement loans to senior citizens.

. A review will be made of penalty or bonus interest being charged by mortgage companies in the province to ascertain if penalties being charged are in violation of existing provincial legislation.

. In consultation with the construction industry adequate protection will be provided to the purchasers of new residential homes in the Province. Contractors will be required to provide Home Warranties under this program.

. The Residential Tenancies Act will be proclaimed. This Act will expedite the settling of landlord and tenant disputes as well as providing protection for the rights and enforcement of the obligations of both landlords and tenants. The Act will be administered by existing staff members of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

. With the proclamation of the Residential Tenancies Act adequate safeguards will be provided to protect the rights of both mobile home owners on leased land and the land owners and will expedite the settling of disputes. Mobile homes will be taxed as unfurnished at a rate of 4%.

Justice

. A Liberal government will assess the role and duties of the Attorney General's Office in our system of justice.

. Although financial restraints would not permit immediate implementation of a full program of civil legal aid, action will be taken as soon as possible to implement limited aid to single parent families and persons suffering domestic legal problems.