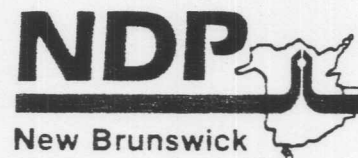


PLATFORM **82**

**An action plan
for the future.**



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Introduction

In the election on October 12, the people of New Brunswick have a choice to make: the politics of the past, or a new approach.

The Liberal and Conservative parties in New Brunswick represent the past. Their record over the years is one of failure, failure to develop the rich heritage of human and natural resources that we have here in this province.

Last year some 16,000 jobs disappeared; a result of Conservative policies in New Brunswick combined with Liberal policies in Ottawa. Incomes have fallen behind the rise in the cost of living. Unemployment is rising. New Brunswick is not producing the kind of wealth that we need to guarantee a good life for our people. Government falls deeper and deeper into debt because it cannot raise the revenues to provide the services we need.

Neither of the old parties holds out any promise that things will be better if they are elected. All we can expect is more of the same: broken promises, falling standards of living, a future for our children that is clouded by problems that could be solved but may not be.

This disturbs me deeply. I wish that the old parties had been able to keep their promises. But it is not so.

We in the NDP believe strongly that New Brunswickers deserve better. Generations of New Brunswickers have worked hard to build a good life here. They have a right to look to the future with some hope that things will improve.

I'm proud to be one of the hundreds of New Brunswickers who have taken part in developing the ideas in this platform. They are ideas that have come from people in all walks of life, and they are designed to tackle the problems we see all around us but which the old parties have not addressed.

The new approach of the New Democratic Party reflects a concern for the future, together with a new vision of what that future can be if we all work together.

I invite you to examine our new approach, to think about the issues, and to join with us in building a better future here in New Brunswick. Times are tough, we all know that. But together we can make it better.

Jobs: Our First Priority

People in New Brunswick want to work. We're a province where people have worked hard to make a good life. But in the past year alone 16,000 jobs have disappeared. A lot of people have been laid off; a lot more are worried that they will be next.

In the New Democratic Party our goal is a job for everyone who needs one. We're committed to the long term economic development of New Brunswick, because we know that while New Brunswick is a wealthy province with plentiful human and natural resources, not enough of the wealth has flowed through to the ordinary people of this province.

We can build on those resources. Our forests, our mineral resources, our land and our fisheries, can be used to provide a better future.

We are committed to getting a fair return on our resources. If we were getting a fair price for our lumber resources, for instance, the provincial government could count on two to three times as much revenue from this source. If we were getting a fair price for our potash resource, the people of New Brunswick would have a billion dollars more, over the next ten years, than the present government has managed to negotiate. That money could be used to improve services. It could be used to upgrade our resource industries, creating new employment opportunities for New Brunswickers. It can be done, and we're committed to seeing it is done.

The NDP has plans to do more processing of our resources here, more manufacturing. Every time our raw materials are exported in unprocessed form, we export jobs along with them. This can be changed, and we have plans to change it.

The more manufacturing we do here in New Brunswick, the less vulnerable we are to the boom and bust cycles of the resource sectors. And the manufacturing sector could be the source of thousands of secure and well-paying jobs.

Careful planning will be necessary to make these changes possible. A combination of private enterprise, co-operatives and direct government can turn the province's economy and direct government intervention can turn the province's economy around, so that in the long term we can all become more prosperous and secure.

The NDP Action Plan: Doing Something Right Now

Liberal and Conservative politicians have been telling us that there is nothing we can do to pull ourselves out of the current recession. They say we will have to sit and wait for international events to make things better.

This approach is not acceptable to the New Democratic Party, and we know it is not acceptable to the people of New Brunswick.

Something can be done now, and we have put together a plan to begin to create jobs this winter and spring. It's an integrated plan that will create real jobs where there are real needs to be filled.

The first step in turning the New Brunswick economy around is to make sure that ordinary people have enough money to meet their daily needs. If people can buy what they need, then more New Brunswick businesses will stay in operation, and the jobs of thousands of New Brunswickers will be more secure.

We think that the income tax increase from the last provincial budget should be rolled back. That could put up to \$20 million more in the hands of people. It's part of an overall plan to reform the tax system in New Brunswick.

We think that the provincial government should be pressuring the federal government to reduce interest rates: high interest rates are one of our most serious economic problems. Many New Brunswick companies have gone out of business because they couldn't cope with high interest rates, and when that happens the whole economy suffers. People lose their jobs; the standard of living falls. It's a vicious cycle, but it can be broken, if only the provincial government had the will.

We have an interest rates subsidy plan patterned after that introduced in Manitoba, the most progressive plan in Canada. As long as interest rates remain high, we will help out small businesses, farmers and homeowners with their interest payments. It works in Manitoba and it could work here, saving jobs and protecting people's standard of living.

We're committed to taking the sales tax off building materials, as soon as possible. It would lower housing costs, make it possible for people to fix up their houses, and create more construction jobs this winter and spring. The cost to the New Brunswick treasury would be modest, and would be more than made up for by the increase in jobs.

We'd speed up plans for the natural gas pipeline into New Brunswick. It could produce up to 2000 construction jobs for several years, and 200 permanent jobs after the line is built. It would also lower our heating bills over the winter. The Hatfield government has been delaying a decision on the pipeline. We'd start it as soon as possible.

We'd work with the municipalities to put together a priority list for schools, government buildings, hospitals and other buildings that could be upgraded to make them more energy efficient. To encourage private homeowners to do the same, we'd provide a grant of up to 30% of the capital cost. These projects would save money on heating bills, and put hundreds of New Brunswickers to work, this winter and spring, doing real jobs not make-work projects.

We can begin to turn the economy of New Brunswick around in the next few months. Tough times don't have to stay forever. All it takes is the will to do it.

Raising the Quality of Life in New Brunswick: The NDP Program

Government has a responsibility to its citizens, to provide adequate services and to make sure that these services keep up with the changing needs of our people. Too often in recent years, our governments have chosen not to make government services a high priority, because their economic mismanagement has limited the amount of money they have to spend.

Senior Citizens

We have a special responsibility to our senior citizens. Many of them have special needs, and many are on limited incomes. For many, their old age pension is their only source of income.

The people who have worked hard to develop this province are entitled to retire in dignity, with a decent income and the services they need.

We are facing a difficult winter. Interest rates are much higher than they should be, and the costs of food, fuel and power have increased beyond the means of many older citizens.

To help people caught in this squeeze we will establish a special provincial income assistance program for senior citizens with limited incomes.

We will also work to improve pension legislation in the province, so that those nearing retirement can look forward to adequate retirement incomes.

We will also work to improve the housing situation for our older citizens. We believe it is important to keep older people in their own homes and in their own communities. It allows them to remain independent. There are a range of services the

government, working with the community, could provide to assist our senior citizens. Visiting homemakers, meals on wheels, government assisted repair services, snow shovelling services, assistance with shopping, and specialized transportation services are all among the community services offered to older people in many provinces. An NDP government would develop a full range of such services for seniors.

In many communities nursing home facilities are inadequate, and the waiting lists are long. Now is the time to start meeting the needs while creating jobs in the construction industry at the same time.

Older people are an important part of our community. An NDP government would not neglect them.

Meeting the Needs of Families

In the 1980's the family takes many forms. Many of our citizens do not live in the traditional two parent family, but our family services haven't kept pace with these changing needs.

The NDP is committed to improving services for the single parent families who make up an increasing proportion of our population. We are committed to improved day care facilities, with financial help for those who need it.

Transition houses for battered women, and counselling services for marriages experiencing difficulty are also important parts of an overall package that would allow families to cope with the difficult burdens of living in tough economic times.

Housing at a Price We Can Afford

With high interest rates, fewer and fewer people can afford to buy a house. Higher interest rates also push up rents.

Good housing at a price people can afford is a high priority for the New Democratic Party.

People are losing their homes because they can't afford to renew their mortgages at high rates. Most forecasts predict that interest rates will remain high for some time to come.

We think that the government has a responsibility to keep people in their homes, and to make sure that the cost of paying the mortgage doesn't cripple people economically. The more money people have to spend, the more New Brunswick businesses will remain open. The result- more jobs for the people of this province.

We have budgetted for a mortgage subsidy program that will help people of low and moderate incomes with their mortgage payments as long as rates stay high. The first priority will be to make sure that nobody loses their home because of high interest rates. Beyond that there are a large number of people who need more income to get by, even though they may be able to scrape together enough to pay the mortgage. They need money to pay other bills, and to keep their houses in good repair. Our program will help these people out too.

We believe that our mortgage subsidy program offers the best combination of moderate cost to the province combined with help aimed at those who really need it. Putting such a plan into operation, and keeping it in operation as long as interest rates remain unreasonably high, will be a high priority in the first term of an NDP government.

The mortgage subsidy, however, is only a part of an overall integrated plan to ensure that New Brunswickers get the kind of housing they deserve.

Removal of the sales tax on building materials, designed as a short term stimulus to the housing industry, would also make it cheaper for people to build their own homes. Combined with a program to help out with the cost of upgrading older houses, this program would make it possible for people to keep their houses in good repair at a price they can afford.

For renters, it is critical that some form of rent control be imposed. In the past few years, prices have been rising faster than wages, and most people who rent have found their incomes falling behind costs. We think that as a general principle rents in New Brunswick should be tied to a measure related to the average increase in wages, and we would institute a form of rent control that would give renters some stability.

Combined with rent control, we believe it is long past the time that renters in New Brunswick were guaranteed basic rights. The Hatfield government has now promised that it will finally bring into effect the tenants rights legislation that was passed some time ago. Perhaps this is yet another example of election promises made by that government which have never been implemented. The NDP is committed to ensuring that tenants have their rights guaranteed, as soon as possible after the election.

The NDP also has plans to put our construction workers back to work on senior citizen housing; rent geared to income housing; and on repairing public buildings to make them more energy efficient. The housing industry in New Brunswick has withered in every year since 1978, and thousands of jobs have been lost as a result. We think that a lot of these people could be put back to work, as early as this winter and spring, on worthwhile projects.

A Commitment to Quality Health Care

Health care is a concern for everyone. But health care funding is being cut back at the same time as costs for services are rising. Quality health care is something we just can't skimp on.

We need better regional health care facilities, especially in the north. We also need more neighbourhood clinics, so people can get good health care in their own communities.

A lot of people are beginning to see that we need to expand the range of health care services that we provide. We're in favour of a denticare program available to school age children which would be gradually expanded to cover adults. A public pharmacare program would make drugs and medicines more affordable to those who need them. In the long run, preventive health and dental care will save a lot of money, and it's important that our people have access to the best services available.

Education: We Need Progress, Not Cutbacks

Of all our resources, none are more important than our human resources. Good education for our young people will lead to a more prosperous future in our province.

But at the moment New Brunswick has more students per teacher, on average, than any other province. That means less individual attention and fewer programs for students with special needs. Now is not the time to cut back on education funding.

The NDP's plans include the expansion of services for students with special needs, a kindergarten program to be brought in as soon as possible, and a lower student-teacher ratio in the schools so students get the attention they need to learn properly.

We also believe that our community college system should be expanded so that it covers all parts of the province, and no students are excluded because of where they live.

The university system needs funding for research and for new facilities. Without money for research and new programs our universities will fail to match the standards set by those in other provinces. Our students will not get the kind of education they need to prepare for the future.

University students need help with student fees as costs of all kinds go up, and especially at a time when many students are unable to find summer jobs. We are committed to freezing tuition fees and to increasing student grants so that no one in New Brunswick is denied a university education because of limited income.

Expanding Our Transportation Network

A good transportation system is vital to a healthy economy. That's why we've opposed the cutback of federal government services like VIA Rail and CN Express. As far as we're concerned, the transportation links between New Brunswick and the rest of Canada are part of the Confederation bargain. They haven't been defended properly under the Hatfield government. We would see to it that the federal government was not allowed to destroy the transportation links upon which our economy depends.

Provincial road building has for too long been part of the politics of the past. Roads are built in election years to obscure governments' inaction in the other years of their terms. An NDP government would integrate the road building system into the overall economic development plan of the province, especially in the rural areas, to help local producers get their goods to market. Good transportation systems are important to our economic future. An NDP government would develop them fairly.

New Brunswick: A Partnership

Whether Acadian, Loyalist, Irish, Brayonne, Native, or a member of some other cultural group, we're all part of the mix that is New Brunswick. The politics of the past have often divided us rather than bringing us together. In the future, we must all become full partners in our province.

New Brunswick is a bilingual province--this is something to be proud of. People should be able to get services in either official language. The NDP will put into place concrete, adequately funded programs to make this a reality.

Among these programs will be a system of community service centres. In each community a local service centre would be established, under the control of a board elected by the people in that area. Each centre would be responsible for ensuring that government services are provided in a such a way that the community can make the best use of them. The centres would also advise the government of any additional services required by that area. This program has been instituted in other provinces, and it works.

It is equally important that people of both official languages be given an equal opportunity for a career in the civil service. Too often in the past this has not been the case.

A Safe Environment

Many companies have been allowed to pollute our air, our soil, our water. The government, over the past 30 years, has made it worse, with aerial spraying of our forests. It continues with the spray program, even though there is no evidence that the budworm problem is any better now than when the program started. This is totally unacceptable, because we depend on the forests for our livelihood.

The NDP would replace the spray program with labour-intensive forest management programs--the kind which have been proven to work elsewhere.

We need laws to clean up our environment, and to preserve our natural heritage of forests and waterways. We need proper disposal systems for hazardous wastes, and stricter laws on water quality so companies can't dump their wastes in our rivers. We need better laws on air quality as well.

We need a government that is committed to getting out of the risky business of nuclear energy. The power we get from Lepreau is expensive, unnecessary, and accompanied with environmental and health risks that we don't need.

We're committed to a vigorous environmental program that would attack all these problems, to do what needs to be done to make our environment healthier and safer.

Resources: The Key To Our Future

New Brunswick is a rich province, but too little of its riches benefit the people here.

We have rich potash mines, which will be operated at excessive profits by private companies.

We have forests where private companies pay a fraction of the worth of the wood they use.

We have farmers driven off their land, and fishermen who can't make a living even though they work hard.

It's time to turn our resource sector around. But only a comprehensive plan will do this. The NDP's development strategy would aim at getting a fair price for our resources, and investing that revenue in upgrading our resource industries, and promoting more processing in New Brunswick.

The Forest Industry

The forest industry is the backbone of our economy. But our woodlands have deteriorated in recent years. To protect our future, this deterioration must be stopped.

Liberal and Conservative governments in New Brunswick have gradually handed over control of our forests to the private pulp and paper companies, who get access to public resources at a fraction of the real cost. These companies have not been compelled by the government to manage our forests wisely.

The NDP is committed to a new approach to forestry. This new approach is based on a government-directed program to manage the forests more intelligently. Only in this way can we guarantee adequate returns from our forest resources for

ourselves and for successive generations. Proper management involves less clearcutting, the planting of more budworm-resistant species, and the selective cutting of the aged stands which are more susceptible to budworm.

It makes no sense to use sawlogs for pulp. We need an effective system for sorting and allocating wood to its best use.

All of these policies are based on the principle that the province should get a fair price for its resources. Our estimate is that this is about three times the price that is being charged to the private companies today. The extra revenue would allow for more systematic forest management, and expanded investment in the industry.

Mineral Resources

Traditionally, we have dealt with our mineral resources in the same way we have dealt with our forest resources: we have sold them off for a fraction of their real value to companies which promised jobs in return. The industry has produced fewer jobs than it might have. Because the minerals have, for the most part, been shipped out in unprocessed form, the present downturn in the economy has put even these in jeopardy.

If we are ever to use our mineral wealth as the basis of a stable economy that provides good jobs, we have to begin charging a fair price for our resources.

In the case of potash, for example, we have calculated that over a ten year period we will get a billion dollars less for the resource than it is worth. The result is less money flowing into government, less money for government services, less money available to government for job creation.

Fishing and Farming: Traditional Occupations That Deserve Support

Fishing and farming are traditional occupations for a great many people in New Brunswick. The sea and the land have provided a living for generations of our people.

We find today, though, that a lot of farmers have left the land.

In these times of high interest rates and rising costs, farmers need some help, and we are committed to see that no farmer goes out of business because of high interest rates. We'd put into place a plan that would combine credit counselling and good advice on finances with an interest assistance program for those who need it.

Farmers play a key role in our economy. Keeping them in business now means more prosperity in the future.

In the fishery sector, we were the first party to support the right of fishermen to organize, and to negotiate better prices for their catch. Fishermen need more help in making sure they get a good price, so they can make a decent living. We think government should invest in the fishery, to develop new products, to search out new markets for our fish, and to make sure the operation is efficient enough to return good incomes to fishermen and good prices to consumers.

A Bill of Rights for Workers

Too often, in this province, the Liberals and Conservatives have attacked the rights of workers. They have dragged their feet on implementing the kind of legislation that is common in other parts of the country, and that would give workers some security.

In these tough economic times, a lot of people have been laid off, and a lot more worry if they will be next. Effective layoff and shutdown laws, to give workers advance notice of layoffs, to protect their wages, pension benefits, holiday and severance pay, are a necessity. We're pledged to introduce such laws to protect workers in tough economic times.

We're also pledged to health and safety laws that give workers the right to refuse unsafe work; to better safety standards; more government inspection of the workplace. We would also set up worker-management committees to monitor safety conditions and to advise on how they can be improved.

We're committed to raising the minimum wage to a level that allows all workers a decent standard of living.

We're committed to laws that would require equal pay for work of equal value, so women are treated fairly in the workplace.

Finally, we're committed to giving civil servants the same rights as all other workers, like the right to take part in political activities without fear of losing their jobs.

Good Government, Efficient Government

When governments become distant and arrogant, as the present government has become, they stop consulting people on important decisions. Bureaucrats and politicians make decisions alone, when they should be consulting the people they are supposed to serve.

As a result of this isolation, the present government is very much out of touch with the province's real needs. Many communities in New Brunswick are waiting for facilities and services, but they can't get the government to listen to them.

Another result of this isolation is that government becomes sloppy with our tax dollars. We all know about the \$100 dinners for Cabinet Ministers and their helpers. We all sense that there is a great deal of waste in government, and that waste costs us all in tax dollars. This year in New Brunswick the government will pay over \$200 million in interest alone on the provincial government's debt. These are our tax dollars, and at least some of that debt results from sloppy management.

We believe that the provincial government should be more open, so people know what is going on. We believe it should be more conscious of how it spends our money. And we think it should be more responsive to people's needs.

Our plan for community boards, with a mandate to advise the government on needs in the community, and on the cheapest way to fill those needs, would also go a long way to putting government back in the hands of the people. It's been tried elsewhere, and it works.

In the NDP we've always made our policies openly, in a democratic fashion. We don't make policy in the backrooms. We think we can bring that experience into government, and make open efficient government a reality in New Brunswick.

Making the Tax System Fair

In the last provincial budget in the spring, the provincial government raised taxes of all kinds on individuals by some \$80 million dollars.

At a time when ordinary people are finding it harder and harder to get by, at a time when prices are rising faster than wages, the government has taken more out of our pockets.

But while taxes on ordinary people are going up, others are not paying their fair share. Stumpage fees on Crown land, mineral and mining taxes, all the revenues government collects for our resources are too low.

The result is that government does not have enough money to do the things it should. It winds up borrowing money that it could get from taxing those who can afford to pay. The key to turning our economy around is through reform of the tax system.

We're committed to rolling back the tax income increase imposed in the spring budget. It would put money in people's pockets, at a time when they need it most. And it would stimulate the business sector because people would use the extra money to buy things from New Brunswick businesses. That means more jobs, and more prosperity.

We're committed to tax reform that allows low and middle income people to keep more of their pay cheques. We would exempt the first \$1800 of taxable income from provincial income tax, in order to lower the effective tax rate. We estimate that would save each taxpayer in New Brunswick in the range of \$100.

We would remove the sales tax on building materials, in order to stimulate the construction industry, and to make it easier for people to build their own homes and to keep their homes in good repair. This would create jobs, and make life a little easier for many people at a time of rising costs.

We think the property tax system needs a major overhaul. Our long term plan is to eliminate the property tax as a way of financing local government operations, and to replace it with a more progressive system that doesn't penalize low income people. As a first step in that direction, we'd compensate tenants for the double taxation on rental property. We'd rebate it directly to renters, to make sure they got the full benefit.

We'd restructure the business tax, basing it on revenues rather than on property values. This will ease the burden on small businesses with declining sales, while other larger companies with higher profits might have to pay a greater share.

The tax system can be fairer, and it can be used to see that the New Brunswick economy develops as it should. We're committed to making that happen.

More Jobs and Lower Energy Prices: The NDP Energy Program

In 1982 the New Brunswick economy is in the worst state since the Great Depression. The urgent need is for economic planning that will guarantee economic stability. This need, and the failure of the present government to meet that need, is most obvious in the energy field. Without secure supplies of energy at reasonable prices, our standard of living will continue to fall, our businesses will become less and less competitive and will produce fewer and fewer jobs.

With the right kind of planning, though, we can look forward to a bright future.

The NDP energy approach begins with the need for planning. Our first step in putting our energy policy on the right course is to create the proper planning tools in the government. New Brunswick is one of the few provinces that does not have a Department of Energy. The lack of focus in the past, and the poor decisions that have been made, all show that energy planning is low on the present government's list of priorities.

The NDP proposes to meet our growing need for energy and to control costs by diversifying our energy sources. Right now, most of our energy comes from oil, a source that is expensive and insecure.

We're committed to bringing the natural gas pipeline into New Brunswick. The Hatfield government has been delaying on this, even though the project would create 2000 construction jobs, 200 permanent jobs, and would lower most people's heating bills by \$150 a year.

We're convinced that Point Lepreau was a mistake, and we're determined that the same mistake should not be made again. Lepreau power is expensive, it's risky, and it's not even necessary for our own power needs. As a result of the costs of developing Point Lepreau, our power bills are higher than they need be. And not very many permanent jobs were created by the project. Only one dollar in every seven spent on Lepreau went to workers as wages.

We're committed to small scale electrical energy generation and we have plans to promote it. We have lots of water power and wind power in New Brunswick. Hydro power is cheaper in the long run than nuclear power, and it's a lot less risky. All of these electrical projects, both private and public, would generate several hundred construction and permanent jobs.

The NDP has plans to use the wood waste generated by our forest industry to produce more energy. Our goal is to make the pulp and paper industry more self sufficient by using pulp liquors, bark, chips and sawdust to generate steam and heat.

We think that the wood left in the forest as waste could be used to fuel up to three methanol plants. Each plant could produce 200 tonnes a day, which would increase the revenues coming out of our forests. And the result would be up to 900 construction jobs, up to 200 permanent jobs.

Dollar for dollar conservation is the best energy investment New Brunswick can make. A dollar invested in conservation creates three times as many jobs as a dollar invested in a nuclear plant.

In order to reduce energy waste and to encourage conservation, an NDP government would undertake renovations, this winter and spring, of government buildings, schools, hospitals and other buildings; provide up to 30% of the capital cost of structural improvements to private houses; assist industry to become more energy efficient through grants and through a system of energy consultants available without charge; begin the planning of a more efficient public transit system, to encourage people to use public transit rather than private vehicles wherever possible.

All of these measures would go a long way toward making New Brunswick more self-sufficient in energy, and would help business and industry to become more cost competitive, thus preserving jobs.

In addition to these measures, we believe that the consumers of New Brunswick deserve a better deal on power rates. We would roll back power rates, so NB Power provides electricity at cost. This cut in power rates would represent a saving of about \$70 a year for the average family.

In order to ensure that power rates don't escalate in the future, we think NB Power should be forced to appear before the Public Utilities Board to justify publicly any future requests for power rate increases.

Finally, we would instruct NB Power to restructure their rates, so as to lower costs for moderate and low users of power; this would mean a saving for the vast majority of New Brunswick residents on their monthly power bill.

Another way of making sure we have good supplies of cheap energy for the future is to make sure that the natural gas pipeline, when it comes into New Brunswick, also provides energy at cost. We would award the rights to distribute gas in New Brunswick to a nonprofit consumers' cooperative which would distribute gas as cheaply as possible. We estimate this would save the average family \$150 a year compared to the cost of heating with oil.

By diversifying our energy sources, by reducing our dependence on high priced oil, by ensuring that we have enough supplies of low priced energy, we will be taking an important step to prosperity and stability in the years to come, and in the process creating the kinds of permanent jobs the present government has been unable to create.