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AGENDA FOR CHANGE - THE
PLATFORM OF THE LIBERAL PARTY
OF NEW BRUNSWICK FOR THE 1987
PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION

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THE PLATFORM

OF THE

LIBERAL PARTY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

FOR THE

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AGENDA FOR CHANGE

The Liberal Party of New Brunswick is pleased to present the following platform for the 1987 provincial general election. At the heart of this platform is New Brunswick's most valuable asset -- its decent and hard-working people. For too long the people of this province have been trapped in economic hardship and uncertainty. Too many citizens have been unable to gain the employment necessary for a decent standard of living. New Brunswick can no longer afford to waste talent as a result of high unemployment levels. Nor can the province afford to export its youth to other parts of the country.

The Liberal Party believes that this province has great, untapped economic potential, and has the resources which, when developed through astute and imaginative management, will allow our people to achieve the greater prosperity which is within their reach. The Liberal Party is fully committed to achieving this greater prosperity.

New leadership is required in order for our province to advance. With Frank McKenna as Premier, New Brunswick will have the leadership with the vision, drive and fresh, conscientious approach which the province is looking for.

As will be evident in the following detailed statement of policy, the Liberal Party is ready and able to provide full-time leadership and to govern this province with integrity, with conscience, and with constructive, practical, and financially responsible initiatives which will revitalize its economy and enhance its quality of life. The people of New Brunswick deserve no less.

I. EMPLOYMENT

Employment and job opportunities will be the first priority of a new Liberal government.

In order for New Brunswick to participate fully in the changing economic reality which is unfolding before us, bold economic leadership must be exercised to develop and encourage the innovation, knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit necessary to compete in today's economy.

Our people must have the training and education required to take advantage of available opportunities; our small businesses must have the means to implement new technologies and create jobs; and our traditional industries must be encouraged in their efforts to add value to products and modernize so they can remain competitive in the marketplace. The Liberal Party is ready to meet this economic challenge.

(A) Focus of Government

To ensure that the entire New Brunswick government structure is dedicated to creating and securing jobs as the number one priority of a Liberal government, an Office of Economic Development will be established under the direct jurisdiction of the Premier.

This office will promote and advance the various employment-creating efforts of government departments, and will provide a focus for all government programs on the overwhelming need to provide jobs for our people.

(B) Government Responsibility and Leadership

The Liberal Party believes that leading by example is a fundamental duty of any government. A government must not lead by words alone; it must lead by its actions. A Liberal government will be ever mindful of this duty and of the absolute need for honesty, openness, and integrity in the Office of the Premier and in every ministerial department.

Governing with integrity involves a thrifty, responsible, and ethical management of the public purse. New Brunswickers need and have a right to this conscientious fiscal management. The Liberal Party is committed to providing it, and to setting a positive example which will encourage the business investment and labour-management cooperation which will benefit the province.

To demonstrate its commitment to sensible and prudent fiscal management, a new Liberal government will sell the government aircraft, and will impose strict guidelines to control ministerial expenses for travel and entertainment. Lavish ministerial indulgences embarrass the province and disappoint its people. They will not be tolerated in a McKenna government.

A Liberal government will adopt several measures to ensure that the government's own administration is as lean as possible, and that these expenditures will yield the utmost benefit for the province. For instance, goods and services needed by government from outside the public sector, and available from more than one source, will be either tendered or subjected to periodic competitive bidding to guarantee best dollar value. Similarly, a Liberal government will regularly obtain competitive proposals for advertising to make sure that the province obtains maximum value for expenditures in these areas. It will also introduce public tendering for leased space when such space is needed for government purposes. In all these efforts, the new government will use, to the maximum extent possible, the talent and resources available in New Brunswick.

A Liberal government will give the province dependable economic direction which will encourage new investment and assist the private sector to better plan for the future. The budget of a Liberal government will announce a long-term plan of specific economic and budgetary goals. This will establish a clear sense of direction and the reputation for reliability which will encourage private enterprise and entrepreneurship.

In keeping with its determination to shape budget strategies and fiscal policies for long-term management of the economy rather than for short-term political expediency, a Liberal government will introduce capital budgets earlier in the year to take advantage of the full construction season. A new government will distribute capital spending more evenly over the government's mandate so as to avoid the "boom and bust" cycles in the important construction industry.

A Liberal government will provide the province with a comprehensive economic strategy which involves all sectors of the economy and all areas of the province, thus assuring that New Brunswick grows as one, and not in isolated, scattered pockets. The strategy will view our various resources and industries as parts of a total, inter-related unit, working together for the prosperity of the province as a whole.

(C) Small Business

The Liberal Party believes that small business is vital to our province's economic recovery and that our greatest potential for economic growth lies in nurturing our own entrepreneurial talent and in developing our small businesses.

Under a Liberal government, business courses in high schools and community colleges will be improved and strengthened to foster entrepreneurship. Innovation, independent thinking and cooperation will be encouraged throughout the school curriculum. Universities will be urged to produce not only good managers, but also entrepreneurs with the skills to start and operate the small businesses which are the cornerstone of a healthy economy.

A Liberal government will adopt several specific measures to build on and further stimulate the vital job creation role of small business. Chief among these will be the introduction of a New Brunswick Stock Savings Plan. This plan will give New Brunswickers an opportunity to invest in New Brunswick companies by providing a tax break to provincial residents who invest in these businesses.

Under this plan a New Brunswicker who purchases shares in a company with a permanent place of business in the province will receive a tax credit against New Brunswick income tax payable. The investor will receive a tax credit on personal income tax up to 30 per cent of the cost of shares purchased in the New Brunswick company. This will encourage investment in the province's business community and help increase economic activity for our province.

To demonstrate further the importance it attaches to small business, a Liberal government will negotiate with the federal government for the expansion of the Local Economic Development Assistance Program to help small businesses and industries in rural areas overcome the special problems of distance from, and access to, markets. Counselling, technical assistance and marketing expertise will be made available to entrepreneurs in existing and new industries; skills, training and management programs will be introduced to tap the enterprising spirit of our women to expand further the base of the New Brunswick economy. Business people who identify potential export markets for their products help put New Brunswick to work, and a Liberal government will assist their efforts.

The Liberal Party recognizes the importance of developing economic ties with the countries of the francophone summit. An inter-departmental committee will be created to pursue new markets and business opportunities.

The new Liberal government will be dedicated to assisting the cooperative movement in the province, and will encourage the development of worker co-ops and other cooperative initiatives as a means of people helping themselves. The new government will work with the Credit Unions and other cooperative organizations to develop government initiatives and programs which foster the development of this important sector.

To encourage the active participation of unemployed people in charting the course of their own future, and to involve the community in identifying local employment and social problems and potential solutions, a Liberal government will consult with organizations of the unemployed to develop methods to support the self-help efforts of unemployed workers, including credit counselling and other projects.

The Liberal Party recognizes the importance of multicultural groups in the business community. Citizens from multicultural groups will be included in trade delegations and export development proposals so New Brunswick can benefit from their knowledge of other cultures and languages.

Consistent with the Liberal Party's "Made in New Brunswick" approach to our election campaign, a new Liberal government will show leadership in developing our Province's communication industry. The services of New Brunswick writers, photographers, graphics designers, film makers and production artists will be utilized to the greatest extent possible to foster the growth of this important industry.

The above measures will give small businesses the start-up and growth incentives they need to serve as the driving force of a healthier economy.

(D) Tourism

Tourism is an industry with immense potential for revenue and job creation. A Liberal government will develop that potential by introducing a more vigorous marketing program to promote the special tourist attractions of our province. New Brunswick firms will be encouraged to participate fully in this marketing program.

The province's rich and unique cultural life will play an important role in the new government's tourism policy. The widely acclaimed skills of our many artists, artisans and craftspeople will be encouraged for their own sake, as well as for their importance in attracting tourists through craft festivals and exhibitions. A Liberal government will launch a cooperative program with the province's museums and galleries to make their attractions and activities better known to our citizens and potential visitors. It will also promote the unique heritage and cultures of our two linguistic communities as major attractions of the province.

There is a critical need for an effective system of highway signing which will ensure that travellers reach our province's many attractions safely and with a minimum of inconvenience.

A Liberal government will, in consultation with various agencies in the province such as Hospitality New Brunswick, municipalities, and citizens' groups, identify the major signage problem areas and introduce a program to ensure efficient and attractive highway signage for our citizens and visitors to the province.

Scenic routes, such as the Fundy, Saint John Valley and Acadian trails, are a popular means of attracting tourists off the major traffic lanes, to visit areas which have exceptional scenery and features which appeal to tourists. In other provinces, tourist trails are identified by a logo or illustration specific to that region. The present New Brunswick Government's program for scenic routes was poorly planned, and lacks adequate signage and regional identification.

A Liberal government will examine the existing scenic routes, introduce changes to improve the effectiveness of the program and develop a supporting promotional plan which will encourage visitors to enjoy the scenic routes of the province. In addition, a new government will initiate a plan to develop the Fundy Trail.

To take fuller advantage of our seacoasts and river systems, a Liberal government will pursue negotiations with the federal government to develop these attractions through improved marinas and outfitting. Nature, hiking and biking trails will be developed on abandoned rail lines where appropriate.

A Liberal government will promote "four season" use of tourist resources, thereby creating year-round employment. For instance, the focus of such well-known sites as Kings Landing and Village Historique Acadien will be redirected to enhance year round use of and employment on these sites.

In consultation with Hospitality New Brunswick, a new Liberal government will introduce an enhanced hospitality training program for people who have direct contact with tourists to New Brunswick. This program will create an improved awareness about the importance of hospitable service to the public.

In order to take full advantage of the tourist potential of our province, a new government will bring together operators and entrepreneurs within the tourism industry. A working group will act as a sounding board for new tourism initiatives, identify problem areas, and make sure the government is aware of industry concerns and proposals. In addition, comments and ideas will be invited from the public on new and better ways to promote our beautiful province of which we are all so proud.

(E) Energy

Increases in costs for electricity touch all New Brunswickers and all sectors of the economy. These increases have often been drastic and seemingly random, with little consideration given to their implications for the people and the economy of this province.

Central to the Liberal Party's energy policy is the belief that power rate increases must be made subject to tighter control and regulation. Under a Liberal government, New Brunswick Power rates charged to consumers will be subject to approval by the New Brunswick Public Utilities Board. A public intervenor will be appointed to ensure that the consumer viewpoint is represented in rate hearings.

More tightly controlled electrical costs will benefit all New Brunswickers, and by lessening production costs will give added incentive to new industry to locate in our province.

Realizing that emerging energy forms will also help to stabilize electrical costs and that Lepreau II is not a viable option at this time, a Liberal government will pursue alternative means of power and heat generation, including coal, coal-water slurry, oil shale, wood chip, and undevelopped hydro power. All opportunities for securing long-term low-cost energy contracts with Hydro Quebec will be explored. This policy of diversified power sources will also serve to stimulate the mining and forest industries.

A Liberal government will undertake the construction of a new coal generating plant at Grand Lake in the 200 megawatt range, thereby providing long-term stability and growth in the coal fields of Queens, Sunbury, and Kent Counties. Strict environmental standards will be maintained to ensure that New Brunswick meets its environmental commitments.

The conversion of the Coleson Cove generating plant to low sulfur coal or orimulsion will proceed immediately.

Two wood chip burning plants will be constructed within two years, for the co-generation of heat and electricity. The first will be built in the Sussex area and the other at a location to be determined by resource supply. Further small wood chip generation units will be added according to private sector demand.

The construction of a 400 megawatt orimulsion or low sulfur coal generating plant in the Saint John area will be pursued with the expectation of an additional plant in northeastern New Brunswick. Full environmental protection, including public hearings, will be guaranteed.

(F) Transportation

The Liberal Party views transportation as an important instrument of economic development and believes that a good road system is essential for New Brunswick's economic progress. The Party is committed to major highway upgrading to improve the quality of New Brunswick roads and bridges. A new highway program will stress a more balanced and equitable program for upgrading highways and secondary roads in all areas of the province. Completion of Routes 8 and 11 will be an important part of this program.

The Trans Canada Highway in New Brunswick requires special and immediate attention. It cannot meet the growing demands being placed on it.

A Liberal government will immediately commence negotiations with the federal government to upgrade the Trans Canada Highway to a multi-lane highway, for the safety of travellers as well as for the more efficient movement of goods to and from markets. A special case can be made for improving this highway because it carries the trucking and other traffic for all four Atlantic provinces as well as the rest of Canada, particularly since the decline of rail traffic.

The people of Miscou Island have long endured unsatisfactory access to their homes with sometimes tragic consequences. The present transportation service to and from Miscou Island is not acceptable to the Liberal Party and will not be acceptable to a new Liberal government. The people who choose to live on Miscou Island are entitled to safe and continuous access to and from their Island for the necessities of life, schooling and government services. A new Liberal government will ensure this access by providing the people of Miscou Island with a bridge to the mainland.

The Liberal Party recognizes the Grand Manan ferry as an extension of the New Brunswick highway system and for some time has advocated a new and larger ferry to overcome longstanding deficiencies in the ferry service. A new Liberal government will take immediate steps to secure a new ferry to replace the M.V. Grand Manan, with the maximum possible New Brunswick content in the project.

(G) Fisheries

Fisheries is an industry with vast opportunities for growth, both in its traditional sectors and in aquaculture. The policies of a Liberal government will be directed towards developing this potential.

An aggressive, new marketing program will promote the export of New Brunswick fish products, and will assist fishery organizations in their own marketing efforts. To improve the quality of fish products, the development of freezer trawlers will be promoted.

Recognizing the important training needs of both the Gulf and Fundy fisheries, significant initiatives will be undertaken. In the Gulf Region, the fisheries school in Caraquet will offer improved business management, safety and quality control courses. Other technical trades training will be restored. On the Fundy coast, the Community College in St. Andrews will be recognized as a major training centre. Building on the substantial expertise already in the region, the Centre would take the lead in providing training in fisheries business management, quality control, technical advances and safety.

The Liberal Party recognizes the new realities and enormous potential of the fishing and aquaculture industries on the Fundy coast. A board with a fair balance of government, traditional fishery and aquaculture industry representatives will receive comments on applications for cage licenses. A new Liberal government will ensure that promotional programs are made available to both the aquaculture industry and the weir fishery.

To find novel ways to use underutilized species and to develop new products, a McKenna government will establish a fisheries research fund. This fund will be administered with the direct input of the industry. A new advisory board, made up of the various representative groups in the industry, will help prioritize research projects.

Research projects will be carried out in cooperation with the private sector and existing institutions such as the Marine Centre, the Shippagan and Moncton Campuses of the University of Moncton, the Biological Station and the Huntsman Marine Science Centre in St. Andrews, and the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton and Saint John.

The clam fishery is a prime example of an underdeveloped sector and underutilized species. Research should proceed on developing the full potential of this industry, including research on bringing depleted clam flats back into production.

To deal with the problem of the debt load of the shrimp fleet, a Liberal government will appoint an independent adjudicator to resolve the current debt problem. A Liberal government will also endeavour to release funds allocated for fleet modernization currently frozen under the federal-provincial agreement.

(H) Forestry

Sound forest management is the key to the development of the forest industry. A Liberal government will be committed to this management and will set goals to increase the production from New Brunswick's forests.

To realize this objective, a Liberal government will undertake stepped-up silviculture and reforestation initiatives in softwood production, backed up by research and development programs to guarantee a long-term supply of softwood. Continued development of silviculture in hardwood production will also be encouraged and assisted.

In keeping with its commitment to wise management and use of this valuable resource, a Liberal government will ensure that maximum use is made of our forest resources. Wood residue from harvesting, from wood processing and from stands of low quality trees will be used to fuel wood chip burning plants for the cogeneration of heat and electricity. A wood chip fuel industry will facilitate forest improvement programs, stimulate forest industry and construction jobs, and provide an additional market for production from private woodlots.

Given that the private woodlot is the primary source of wood supply, a Liberal government will encourage good forest management on private woodlots by working with woodlot owners through their own organizations. To improve the productivity of small woodlots, training of owners and woods-workers in silviculture methods will be improved.

Administrative bottlenecks hinder the delivery of government programs to private woodlot owners. Assistance will be provided to private woodlot associations to help them more effectively deliver programs to their members. New marketing opportunities for private woodlot owners will be pursued, and in consultation with the industry, a Liberal government will also assist Christmas tree growers to market quality trees. A new government will pursue a federal/provincial sub-agreement for additional funding for the development of private woodlot resources.

The Liberal Party has a long-standing concern for the plight of the woodworkers of New Brunswick. A Liberal government will ensure that woodworkers live and work in dignity and that they are treated in a fair and equitable manner. A full Public Inquiry will be commissioned to investigate and make recommendations into all aspects of the working and living conditions of woodworkers, including the hiring of workers from outside the province, and the effect of mechanization in the forest industry.

(I) Mining

New Brunswick is privileged to have some of the largest deposits of base metals in Canada. Considering their economic potential for the province, these resources must be developed to the fullest. While the Liberal Party recognizes the importance of private sector initiatives in developing a mineral industry, it also believes that development can be facilitated by complementary government action.

Accordingly, a new Liberal government will contribute to the vitality of the New Brunswick mining industry by providing information and knowledge of our resource base to assist the industry in discovering new ore bodies. A Liberal government will undertake a review of exploration tax incentives to encourage prospectors and operators of junior mines to participate more fully in exploration and mining activity in the province. In addition, potash will be made available for prospecting on the same basis as metallic minerals.

To gain full economic benefit from our abundant mineral resources, a Liberal government will encourage further processing of minerals in New Brunswick. Presently, most of the output from the mining sector is exported to other provinces and countries in the form of ores and concentrates. A new Liberal government will explore all possibilities for establishing a zinc or combined lead, zinc, silver smelter in New Brunswick.

Energy constitutes a very significant cost component to our mining and other resource based industries. Neighbouring provinces to the west have a major advantage with lower energy costs, yet our industries must compete in the same market. A Liberal government will seek to bring this controllable cost to a competitive level by pursuing long-term energy contracts with Hydro Quebec and developing alternative sources of generation.

(J) Agriculture

A Liberal government will adopt a New Brunswick Food Policy to maximize local production and processing of food consumed in or exported from the province. It will aggressively promote throughout the world our seed and table potatoes to assist in ensuring a long-term, stable marketplace for our producers; support and defend Right to Farm legislation; protect supply management sectors such as egg, chicken, turkey and milk in any free trade agreement; and encourage the development of new food technologies, particularly those which add value to new agricultural products.

Property taxes represent a significant cost to many farmers in New Brunswick. In order to relieve the farming community of this cost, a new Liberal government will exempt farm outbuildings from assessment for property taxes.

The Farm Development Board will be re-organized to reflect the current concerns of the farming community. A Liberal government will ensure that the credit policies of the Farm Development Board will support a healthy agricultural sector and viable family farms.

Ring rot disease endangers the seed potato industry in New Brunswick and compensation must be made available to the farmers who have suffered losses in 1987. A Liberal government will make up the difference between the crop insurance program and the actual cost of production of seed potatoes. In addition, concerted efforts will be made to improve inspection procedures to maintain New Brunswick's reputation as a world leader in this field.

To stimulate the use and development of promising innovations, new and expanding sectors such as greenhousing and market gardening will be assisted in the development of centralized storage and grading.

In order to remain in touch with the concerns of farmers, a Liberal government will strengthen ongoing contact and consultation with the farming community, including regular meetings between the Minister of Agriculture and agricultural organizations.

A Liberal government will strive for self-sufficiency and extend efforts to produce fertilizers, food grain, and all other staples of farm production in New Brunswick. This commitment is consistent with the Liberal Party's determination to use homegrown resources whenever possible.

II. LIVING IN DIGNITY AND SECURITY

The Liberal Party believes that all New Brunswickers have the right to live with hope and dignity, and that they must enjoy access to an efficient, modern health care system. They must also have the opportunity to develop their unique talents through an educational system which recognizes and responds to their individual needs and aspirations. A Liberal government will encourage youth, support the just struggle of women for full equality, assist senior citizens in their desire to live in dignity and respect, and aid those who have been unable to participate fully in society because of disabilities or hardships.

In the crucial area of educational reform, a Liberal government will move forward through consultation with the maximum participation of citizens. Through the Task Forces on Parents and Early Childhood Education and on the Public Education System, the Liberal Party has shown its determination to involve New Brunswickers in the formation of policy. The Party is pledged to continue this approach.

A McKenna government will adopt a comprehensive approach to early childhood, school and work which will stress early identification of learning problems, lower student/teacher ratios especially in the lower grades, and education as the foundation for future economic achievement.

(A) Parents and Early Childhood

Liberal Party policy in this area is directed towards pre-school children and the support of a strong family unit, whatever its form. The early years are the most important for growth and development. The Liberal Party believes that all our children deserve the opportunity to grow up in a healthy, secure, stimulating and caring environment. The Liberal Party is deeply committed to programs aimed at strengthening the family unit and at providing pre-school children with a stable daily atmosphere, whether they are at home or in non-parental care.

A Liberal government will establish an Office of Childhood Services which will integrate such programs as pre-school clinics, child care, early intervention and enrichment programs, and parent education and other family resources. Present programs will be evaluated to determine how they can be improved and extended to include more parents and children.

Unfortunately, there are many children who are disadvantaged by unstable family circumstances. A Liberal government will strengthen family support programs, including existing community services, in order to give these children the benefits of an environment which provides greater opportunity to develop their potential as constructive, self-reliant, and well-adjusted citizens.

(B) A New Day for our Schools

The social and economic well-being of this province depends to a very large extent upon the soundness of our educational system. Under a Liberal government, education will be elevated to the priority it deserves.

While believing that many improvements in education are needed, the Liberal Party also feels that these improvements must be developed through step-by-step consultation with educators and others affected by the changes. Furthermore, any modifications to the system must be motivated by the desire to achieve excellence in education, while meeting the needs of students and society.

The Liberal Party further believes that any re-examination of our educational system must consider the vital importance of the early educational years, when students acquire the grounding in basics and develop the attitudes which form the basis for later success.

Given the importance of these early years, a Liberal government will strongly encourage efforts to identify and address learning problems in the formative stages, before "the concrete sets" and these problems develop into serious academic or social impediments. These efforts will also reduce the need for later, expensive remedial instruction. Specifically, we support enrichment programs for preschool children and their parents designed to diminish the impact of socioeconomic problems. We intend to explore methods of making the first three school years more flexible in terms of organization to accommodate various learning styles and speeds.

A sound education system depends largely upon appropriate class sizes. To teach effectively, teachers must be given the opportunity to know their students well and to work with them on an individual basis. The Liberal Party is committed to reducing the student-teacher ratio in our schools, especially in the lower grades.

Recognizing the wide range of abilities and talents of any group of students, a Liberal government will encourage flexibility in the high school curriculum so that students can make choices according to their individual needs, aptitudes and interests. In keeping with this approach, vocational education will be retained as an integral part of the high school curriculum and a Liberal government will support scheduling alternatives, such as semestering, which increase the quantity and improve the quality of learning.

In keeping with the Liberal Party's commitment to the dignity of the individual, a multicultural and human rights curriculum will be introduced in the school system. This will be based on a respect for the diverse cultures which make up the fabric of New Brunswick society, and an understanding of our shared humanity.

Believing that all individuals have the right to participate in society to the fullest extent of their abilities, the Liberal Party is committed to the integration of special needs children into regular classrooms under conditions which allow them to attain their fullest potential. These conditions include individual assessment, adequate professional support staff and teachers who have the training to meet the needs of all children in the class.

New Brunswick must achieve an educational system which gives all students fair access to quality second language training. To ensure this access, a Liberal government will make significant improvements to the core second language program, at the same time maintaining a continuing commitment to other second language options such as immersion.

A Liberal government will retain and strengthen the present structure and system of homogeneous school districts, and will regard parents, teachers, and school trustees as full partners in planning educational programs and in charting the future course of education in this province. This includes conducting contract negotiations in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

(C) Higher Education

Our society is clearly becoming more sophisticated and technological. It is increasingly expensive to provide the training required to compete in the modern marketplace, often demanding investments in highly advanced technological and computerized equipment. The Liberal Party maintains that this investment is a necessary one, and that up-to-date and adequately funded universities and community colleges are essential for our economic advancement and prosperity.

Our community colleges provide training for much of our skilled labour. They offer the opportunity to acquire and upgrade the skills needed to win long-term employment in a work-place which is increasingly technological and skills-orientated. A Liberal government will make every effort to ensure that our community colleges continue to play a leading role in this important aspect of our educational system.

Increasing enrolments and continued government under-funding have placed our universities in a critical situation. Over-sized classes and shortages of space, equipment, faculty, and library resources handicap these institutions and jeopardize the quality of advanced education.

Adequate funding of universities is a challenging objective, particularly given the shrinkage in federal equalization payments which have supplied the bulk of funding for post-secondary education. To meet this challenge, a Liberal government will join the academic community and others in a strong insistence that the federal government recognize the importance of our universities by providing the funds necessary for their continued development and growth. We will work towards the establishment of a permanent national consultative body on post-secondary education.

A Liberal government will use the federal funds earmarked for post-secondary education as they were intended, and will endeavour to meet or surpass the recommendations of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

We also intend to promote the further development of centres of excellence at our universities and other means of involving universities, government and the private sector in a mutually productive partnership.

(D) Health

A Liberal government will support our free and universal medical system, and in consultation with health professionals and other health workers, adopt a straightforward, problem-solving approach to the difficulties of the current system.

Achieving equitable access to health care in all regions of the province, and in the official language of the citizen, is a paramount commitment of the Liberal Party. A new government will, as its number one health priority, launch a major program of catch-up in medical services and facilities for northern health regions.

To fulfil this commitment, a Liberal government will introduce improved incentives to encourage health professionals to locate in areas where medical services are below the provincial average.

At the same time, the province must continue its pursuit of excellence and the new government will ensure steady improvement of health care in all regions of the province.

In keeping with the need to achieve fair access to quality health care for all our citizens, hospital user fees which penalized so many New Brunswickers in recent years will not be imposed by a Liberal government. An integrated ambulance policy will be introduced to overcome present inequities in ambulance coverage.

There will be a new focus on the human resources in health care. Human care and concern are vital in making people well again and health professionals will be given more voice in the development of health policies.

The Liberal Party is committed to ensuring that equitable representation of health professionals and the two linguistic communities is achieved in the decision-making levels of the Department of Health. The new government will show its confidence in our health staff people through such programs as a salary deferral scheme for nurses which allows them to take occasional leave for renewal or upgrading.

Recognizing both the health and economic advantages of preventive medicine, a Liberal government will intensify the efforts of the Department of Health to promote this practice, including a stronger emphasis on the need to keep the workplace and environment free of hazards which endanger the health of workers and the general public. In pursuing its stress on preventive medicine, a Liberal government will re-introduce the periodic check-up as a free service under medicare.

Unfortunately, alcohol and drug abuse continue to be a serious problem in our society. A Liberal government will implement an expanded role for the Alcohol and Drug Dependency Commission, with a special emphasis on the schools.

A Liberal government will give particular attention to the drug, alcohol, family and mental health problems of teenage youth. Through improved counselling, community support and treatment, every effort will be made to help troubled young people with their problems so that they do not become involved in the criminal justice system.

(E) Security for Those in Need

Assisting people in need is the responsibility of any government and any caring society. A Liberal government will treat people in need fairly, and in a way which respects their dignity and self-worth. Social programs will be defended and protected and stronger emphasis will be placed on allowing people to achieve the self-reliance they seek.

A new Liberal government will provide an annual supplement of \$50 per child to school children eighteen years and under whose families are in need.

A new Liberal government will increase the province's heating supplement for needy families to \$100 a month. The heating program will be lengthened from the present four months to cover a seven-month period, from October 1st to May 1st.

To help break the cycle of economic hardship and dependency, a Liberal government will establish early intervention and enrichment programs involving economically disadvantaged preschool children and their parents. These programs will assist children in acquiring the skills necessary for success in the school system.

Family stability and education are critical factors in the achievement of personal productivity and satisfaction. A Liberal government will strive to strengthen these two pillars in the effort to overcome poverty and its problems.

(F) Housing

Housing is a basic human need as well as a major expense in most household budgets. The slide in mortgage rates from their peak in the early 80's is welcome, and has made the purchase of homes more affordable for many of our citizens. The fact remains that New Brunswick still suffers from a serious housing problem, especially from the lack of quality, affordable rental accommodations. Lower income families are especially vulnerable as a result of this shortage.

The Liberal Party is committed to improving the housing situation for the less advantaged and the homeless in our province. Present government programs do not adequately address these needs and the Liberal Party believes that new policies are required to ensure sufficient good quality, affordable housing. A new Liberal government will establish a Task Force on Affordable Housing with special emphasis on the homeless to review current housing policies and recommend solutions to the province's serious housing problems.

The Liberal Party recognizes that disabled persons often face substantially higher housing costs. A McKenna government will revise the criteria for the rental assistance program for the disabled so it is available to more disabled people to cover housing costs.

Landlord and tenant legislation in New Brunswick is confusing and outdated. A new Liberal government will introduce a new Landlord and Tenant Act to address many of the problems that currently exist and to provide a more equitable balance between the rights of both parties.

(G) Seniors

Senior citizens have earned respect for their life-long contributions to this province. Many require and fully deserve special assistance. Liberal policy will take into account the varied needs of these citizens, whether in housing, health care, or support services. Seniors will become full partners in the development, design and delivery of government programs affecting them. To facilitate this participation, and to make sure that seniors enjoy full and easy access to all services, a new Liberal government will provide a new focus for services to seniors.

Increases in property tax bills are especially hard on senior citizens, many of whom live on fixed incomes. To assist seniors wishing to live in their own homes, a Liberal government will provide all home-owning seniors with a \$200 deduction on their property tax bill, with assurances of no loss to municipalities from this measure. Seniors living in non-subsidized rental accommodations will qualify for a \$200 annual rental rebate.

To promote quality care for our senior citizens, a new Liberal government will strengthen and improve support for families who care for seniors at home, including provision for vacation and relief care.

Recognizing the importance of fitness among the senior population, a Liberal government will provide resources and assistance toward the development of improved fitness programs organized by local senior citizen clubs.

All of the above measures will enable our seniors to enjoy the greater comfort, security and fulfilment to which they are entitled.

(H) Women

The Liberal Party supports full equality between women and men, and is committed to combatting all discrimination based on sex.

Women in the work force have long suffered from unfair wages and other barriers to advancement. A Liberal government will introduce equal pay for work of equal value in the civil service within the first term of its mandate, and will guarantee women fair access to all advanced positions in the civil service.

The Affirmative Action Program in the New Brunswick Civil Service will be continued and each department will be encouraged to achieve swift results in improving the occupational status of women and in removing barriers to their advancement. A Liberal government will ensure full involvement of women in the government's policy making process.

Legislation will be introduced so that women taking pregnancy leave will continue to accumulate seniority during their absence from work. All persons taking authorized leave will also be able to continue to accumulate seniority.

Many women in New Brunswick are employed part-time, and a new government will work with the business community and the federal government to bring about improved protection and benefits for part-time workers.

A Liberal government will work to overcome obstacles, such as lack of child care facilities, which stand in the way of full participation of women in the economy. The Liberal Party believes that every preschool child should have access to a daily environment which contributes to positive growth and development. A Liberal government will show leadership in this area by promoting the development of day care facilities in the workplace.

A Liberal government will protect victims of domestic abuse and violence, through stiffer enforcement of laws, and will endeavour, through its various social agencies, to reduce the strains which give rise to domestic violence. Child maintenance orders will be strictly enforced and wherever possible, abusive husbands will be removed from the home situation, rather than obliging women and children to seek safe refuge outside the home.

Transition houses will be funded in all regions of the province. Counselling will be made available for victims and aggressors and prevention will be encouraged through the schools and family services. This approach will, over the long-term, show positive results, not only in cases of family violence, but in related areas such as child abuse.

(I) Youth

The Liberal Party recognizes that investment in our youth is an investment in our future and believes that this group must have the opportunity to express its concerns to government and to participate in projects and programs affecting it.

A large percentage of our students require assistance to attend university. A Liberal government will reduce the front end load limit of the Canada Student Loan to \$2700 from \$3,300, thus ensuring greater access for students to provincial bursary money and a lower level of indebtedness at graduation. We also undertake to raise the question of parental contribution at the federal level and work towards eliminating injustices in its application.

The Liberal Party is also committed to freezing the minimum debt level required for rebate eligibility.

To enhance the job prospects of students after graduation, a Liberal government will encourage the expansion of the co-op educational programs so that students can obtain on-the-job experience in conjunction with classroom instruction. We will create additional summer jobs in the public sector and promote a "summer off" program for public servants to open up summer jobs for students.

We are committed to utilizing Student Manpower Centres for the hiring of summer students.

Entrepreneurship is a skill which must be fostered if New Brunswick is to achieve a more robust economic climate. To encourage entrepreneurship among our younger citizens, a Liberal government will expand the Youth Venture Capital Program to make available small business venture capital to all qualified youth on a year-round basis.

III. JUSTICE, FAIRNESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The Liberal Party will bring to the government of New Brunswick a new dedication to fairness. Reforms to the justice system will restore public confidence that there is equal justice for all in New Brunswick.

The Liberal Party has a tradition of caring for the disadvantaged and eliminating disparities in services and opportunity within the province. A Liberal government will maintain and uphold this tradition while continuing to build a strong, united New Brunswick.

As part of its commitment to fairness, dignity and opportunity, a new government will show respect for the cultural values and contributions of the aboriginal peoples. Their just efforts to bring about self-government will be supported, and we join them in working for an agenda to bring aboriginal issues before the First Ministers.

The Liberal tradition also puts great emphasis on the quality of life for the individual. The enjoyment of our natural resources and wildlife, our lakes, rivers and seashores, and the rich cultural life of our province are all essential to this quality of life.

(A) Justice

A judicial system must be totally objective and free of political or other influence; it must also be seen as such if it is to have the full confidence of citizens.

The Liberal Party strongly believes that the present combination of the Offices of Attorney-General and Minister of Justice threatens the perception that the justice system is independent and beyond political sway. As a major first step in renewing public confidence in the justice system, a Liberal government will separate the Department of Justice into an office of the Attorney-General having responsibility for prosecutions and courts, and an Office of the Solicitor-General having responsibility for corrections and policing services, thereby restoring the all-important perception of absolute impartiality.

The new Liberal government will also establish an independent system of prosecution through the creation of a statutorily empowered Director of Public Prosecutions.

In keeping with its belief that everyone be treated with fairness and equality, a Liberal government will not keep the interest accumulated on damage deposits held for tenants. All interest accumulated during the term of the tenancy will be returned to the tenant along with the damage deposit.

Each commission, tribunal and court in New Brunswick must have the capability to carry out its business in the two official languages. Each citizen involved in such judicial proceedings must have the right to be heard and understood in the official language of choice.

(B) Language

The Liberal Party believes in the equality of New Brunswick's two linguistic communities. These two linguistic groups have come to live and work together in mutual respect and justice.

This linguistic diversity is one of the most important riches of our province. The flourishing of our two linguistic communities finds expression in our economic, social and linguistic life.

A Liberal government will ensure that the spirit of paragraph 16(2) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which makes French and English the two official languages of New Brunswick, and which guarantees both languages equal status and equal right of usage in the Legislature and the government of New Brunswick, is respected.

The Liberal Party recognizes the right of each of the linguistic groups to its distinct institutions which contribute to the protection and development of their own linguistic and cultural characteristics.

The Liberal Party believes that the right of citizens to obtain government services in the official language of choice must be respected. The services offered to the members of each of the two linguistic groups must be of equal quality.

It is essential that all New Brunswickers have equitable access to positions in the public service, including management positions.

In its administration of the affairs of the province, a Liberal government will take into account the existence of several regions and sub-regions with particular economic and socio-cultural characteristics. We will see that the characteristics of each region are respected.

A new government will institute an exchange program which will allow students to visit and work in other regions of the province.

A Liberal government will make a compelling case with the federal government to ensure that CBC radio and television service is available in both languages throughout the province.

(C) Labour

A Liberal government will pursue a more cooperative approach to labour relations and will work to overcome the climate of confrontation which has prevailed in recent years.

High on the new government's agenda in this area will be a reform of the structure of the Workers' Compensation Board. Appointments to the board will be made to give fair representation to employees, employers, and government. Equal access to better services in the language of the citizen will be assured. Service will be improved in northern New Brunswick with the delivery there of counselling, rehabilitation, and record-keeping. WCB appeal hearings will be held in the regions in the official language of the citizen. The Workers' Compensation Board will also be made accountable to the public through a Legislative Committee.

A Liberal government will adopt other measures of benefit to workers. For instance, legislation will be enacted to protect workers from the effects of technological change, including the requirement that employers give employees reasonable notice of the introduction of technological change which will result in layoffs.

(D) Environment

The Liberal Party believes that a clean environment is essential for a healthy quality of life and must be passed on as a legacy to our children. A Liberal government will demonstrate its commitment to a clean environment by strengthening protection standards, and by making available the resources and expertise necessary to ensure that environmental mishaps are cleaned up and that future instances of pollution are prevented.

The recent occurrences of ground water contamination in the province indicate the urgent need for legislation which will protect our precious and fragile water supplies. A Liberal government will introduce a Clean Water Act which will establish firmly the role of the environment department in safeguarding our waters for drinking and recreation. Firm quality standards will be set out in the Act, with provision for thorough inspection and testing procedures. Polluters will face stiff penalties.

Aware of the ever increasing dangers of acid rain, the new government will assume a leading role in combatting the threat of this hazard to our lakes, streams, and forests.

A Liberal government will develop transportation of dangerous goods legislation involving proper enforcement and monitoring so that the citizens of our province can be assured that every possible measure is being used to protect them from dangerous cargoes on our highways.

A Liberal government will draw up a plan for the movement, storage, treatment, and disposal of hazardous waste, as well as develop a comprehensive waste management system with the emphasis on waste recovery and recycling. The Liberal Party is confident that its new comprehensive waste management system can become self-sufficient and supply a significant number of new jobs.

To reduce the dangers which chemicals pose both to people and the environment, a Liberal government will assist and encourage research in cooperation with the forest and agricultural industries and the academic community to find ways to reduce the use of chemicals and find non-chemical alternatives.

(E) Arts, Culture and Heritage

Arts and culture flourish in a healthy society. Artistic and cultural endeavours are especially important in establishing for our people a rich quality of life and a state of well being. As such, they must be, and will be, supported under a Liberal government.

The Liberal Party also realizes the economic potential, particularly for the tourist industry, of the province's artistic and cultural life. A new Liberal government will put in place a five-year development plan, working in close co-operation and consultation with existing organizations such as the Conseil de Promotion et de Diffusion de la Culture and the New Brunswick Arts Council, as well as the artists themselves. In developing this plan, a review of existing structures and programs offered by the Cultural Development Branch and other relevant government agencies will be carried out. Special attention will be given to the development of improved funding mechanisms for the arts and the need for professional administration of the arts for the benefit of the arts community, friends of the arts and the general public.

A new Liberal government will ensure that arts funding is allocated with equitable guidelines and publicity on the availability of programs.

Close ties between arts and culture and the educational system will be developed to take advantage of cultural activities through close liaison between those administering the arts and local school boards and arts organizations.

A Liberal government will allocate a portion of the revenues from Atlantic Loto Corporation to a fund in support of the arts. Through this mechanism, the new government will share in the cost of staff for cultural organizations.

A new government will also work vigorously towards a federal-provincial agreement on arts and culture to provide long-term funding for arts and culture and assistance to artists in the various sectors.

New interest and leadership will be shown in the field of heritage preservation and enhancement. The Liberal government will consult with and support the well established network of heritage and historical organizations in order to develop and promote a strategy to realize the full potential of the heritage sector.

(F) Sports and Recreation

Sporting and recreational activities are rightly considered to promote good health and a good quality of life among citizens. Unfortunately, the area of sports and recreation has occupied an uncertain place in the government structure in recent years. A Liberal government will adopt several measures in this area, all aimed to ensure that sports and recreation gain a proper emphasis and that our citizens have access to a full range of activities.

A McKenna government will seek out the ideas of sports volunteers and sports organizations in drawing up future government policy. With this in mind, a minister's **Advisory Council on Sports and Recreation** will be created. With the guidance of the Advisory Council, precise guidelines will be established for the funding of sports and recreation activities and organizations.

A Liberal government will give careful consideration to proposals from the sports governing bodies with regard to leadership programs, and will be especially mindful of the need for leadership as well as other programs in rural areas.

The Liberal Party is particularly concerned with the need to make recreational facilities and programs accessible to disabled persons. A new government will launch a stepped-up program to make school gyms, provincial parks, swimming pools, nature trails and other public facilities accessible to the disabled.

The Liberal Party realizes that many sports and recreational activities exist because individuals and organizations unselfishly volunteer their time and expertise. A Liberal government will give these volunteers the support and encouragement they have so obviously earned.

(G) Revitalization of Community Cores

In recent years there has been a movement within New Brunswick communities, and indeed within communities throughout North America, to revitalize their downtown cores. The Liberal Party regards this movement as a worthy effort to keep the cores of our communities alive and progressive, while at the same time preserving their unique historical flavour.

The Liberal Party recognizes the key role of government in promoting the revitalization of downtown areas. Exciting, active downtown cores are vital for developing entrepreneurship, renewed economic growth and community pride.

A Liberal government will support downtown revitalization initiatives, and will encourage and assist municipalities to develop the innovative approaches and solutions needed to address their unique situations. A new government will increase funding for the Main Street program, in particular the Facade Improvement component, in order to assist the revitalization of the province's downtown areas. In keeping with this, a Liberal government will match the municipal commitment towards the new Civic Centre in the City of Saint John and will help the city make its case to have the federal government match the municipal and provincial funding.

As a further expression of its support for core development, a Liberal government will implement a policy to locate government office space, liquor stores and all public buildings in downtown areas whenever possible and in full consultation with downtown merchants, Chambers of Commerce, and other affected groups.

The surge of interest in downtown development offers an opportunity to upgrade the inadequate housing endured by many of our less fortunate citizens. As well, it offers the opportunity to improve and supply additional housing for our seniors and for our disabled persons, who will benefit especially from the proximity to core amenities. A Liberal government will pursue the potential for better housing in downtown development projects.

TOWARDS THE FUTURE WITH HOPE

New Brunswickers can be rightfully proud of their province. It is endowed with natural beauty, friendly people, and a variety of rich cultural heritages. Its prospects for the future are limitless. The policies outlined in the above platform will move New Brunswick forward toward realization of this great potential.

In offering this Agenda for Change, the Liberal Party is making sound, practical, and financially responsible commitments. These actions will help to get New Brunswick moving again, with the maximum number of our people at work, contributing to and enjoying the benefits of a rejuvenated economy. They will also ensure dignity and security for the needy. The policies outlined here are the framework upon which a better future for our province will be built.

In leading New Brunswick into the future, a McKenna government will give the people of this province new hope. We can move ahead with a sense of purpose and economic direction, secure in the knowledge that our children will have their rightful opportunity to stay and work in our province, and participate in its greater prosperity. Creating this hope, and creating the opportunity to fulfil it are the deepest commitments of the Liberal Party to the people of this province.

A Liberal government will also govern with openness and honesty, providing leadership whose prudent and responsible handling of funds and the business of the province will inspire citizens' confidence and trust. The people of New Brunswick will be proud of the new government, because it will reflect the very qualities which shaped this province and its people -- hard work, thrift, and integrity.

The Liberal Party will bring positive change to government -- fresh energy, enthusiasm and leadership. These qualities will make a difference for the province and its people. Guided by them, and by the new government's resolve to make this a better and more prosperous place to live, New Brunswick will advance into the future with a new pride in its achievements and a new hope in its opportunities.

