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Making It Happen

Policy Platform 1999

Provincial Election 1999



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*Making It
Happen*

**THE PLATFORM OF THE
NEW BRUNSWICK LIBERAL PARTY
FOR THE 1999 PROVINCIAL GENERAL ELECTION**



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A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER

BUILDING A GENERATION OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

The journey on which we have embarked is full of challenges and hope.



Premier
Camille Thériault with
Gisèle, Sophie
and Sébastien

Your Liberal government is proposing another dynamic period of growth, prosperity and modernization for New Brunswick. We want to continue building a generation of self-confidence... instilling in our citizens the certainty that we are a winning province... that we are leaders... that we can compete. I dream of a time when our young people have no memory or concept of New Brunswick as a have-not province.

To achieve this objective, our fundamental vehicle is the economy, made strong through job creation. And although we have come a long way in New Brunswick, we still have work to do, jobs to create, children to raise, a society to build, and dreams to achieve.

In 1987, our Liberal government made a conscious decision to turn New Brunswick's fortunes around. Since that time, we have made tremendous strides toward self-sufficiency and the diversification of our economy. It is clear to me that in order to continue this unprecedented progress, we need strong leadership and direction along with prudent fiscal management and job creation.

Our vision of the economy involves steady progress toward a more prosperous society. In addition to concentrating on our current strong growth areas, we will achieve this objective by targeting geographic regions and industrial sectors that have not yet reached their full potential. It is our responsibility to assist and encourage these regions and industries to prosper.

I dream of an even more impressive economy based on New Brunswick's constant drive to do better. Our economic evolution must embrace both traditional and knowledge-based industries. We must ensure that we are part of North American and world trends and are not pushed to the sidelines, doomed to be spectators as the world evolves without us. Those days are gone forever.

Growth will come from within New Brunswick and through the relentless pursuit of quality investment from outside. On this point, our Liberal government has an excellent record by which I stand firmly and proudly.

The measure of success of this economic model can be found by comparing ourselves to North America's

best. We do not just want to be the best here at home. We want to be the best, period. I want New Brunswick to be held up as an example to the world of a society that believed in itself and made things happen.

The ultimate goal of these economic aspirations must be the care and well-being of our fellow New Brunswickers. A strong economy enables us to invest more resources in health care. A strong economy enables us to invest more in education. A strong economy enables us to be more progressive and moderate on the social side of the ledger. It is as simple as that.

I believe that health care, education and other social programs are the true measures of a society's wealth. In this mandate, we want to be judged on the quality of our social infrastructure. This said, however, we will never again pay for today's groceries with tomorrow's paycheque. That lesson has been learned in New Brunswick. We are the only political party in this province to have steadfastly and consistently stated that we must live within our means. I believe that New Brunswickers clearly see the benefits of this philosophy and wish to stay the course on prudent fiscal management. This is the way we will achieve our goals and sustain them.

I believe in a forward-looking New Brunswick where we invest in our children, knowing full well that they and their descendants will reap the benefits for generations to come. I believe in a more modern and contemporary province, where we confidently take our place on the world stage. I believe in an open and progressive dialogue among our citizens.

I believe in a province where we can flourish and evolve in our own distinct cultures, while at the same time working together in harmony to build a better New Brunswick.

I speak of a generation of self-confidence. We know our place in history. We know our full potential. Together, let us keep writing the ongoing history of New Brunswick, the province that continues to turn its fortunes around at a record pace.

We know where we are going. We know how we are going to get there. Please join me as we continue on our exciting journey.

Camille H. Thériault

Premier

Leader of the Liberal Party of New Brunswick

A DYNAMIC ECONOMY: SHARPENING OUR EDGE

Jobs are central to the development of a strong economy. In turn, a dynamic economy will generate the revenues needed to sustain a compassionate society. And in this compassionate society, New Brunswickers can be assured that social programs, such as universal access to top-quality health care, will be secure not only in the short term, but far into the future.

Your Liberal government's job agenda is built around the fundamental recognition that New Brunswick's economy is undergoing profound change, driven principally by powerful external forces. We can no longer rely solely on a traditional, industrial economy to create and maintain all the jobs we need. The time when we could count on large businesses to employ large numbers of workers with basic skills is rapidly fading. The unrestricted export of our natural resources is no longer sustainable.

Today, most new jobs are created by small- and medium-sized businesses in the service sector. The job market demands knowledgeable, skilled, adaptable workers. Women make up an important proportion of the workforce, and fewer people work regular 40-hour weeks. These new realities change the way we conduct business, certainly, but they also have a profound impact on our families, the communities where we live, and how we relate to each other in our daily lives.

In the new economy, knowledge is the greatest asset. It is also a resource that we can have in abundance because it is based on the limitless potential of our minds. The wealth of provinces and nations is no longer defined by land mass and resources. Our policies will be oriented to facilitate the acquisition and the application of knowledge. Learning, in all its forms, will be as much an economic development issue as a social issue.

Your Liberal government believes in balanced growth. We will seek to achieve that balance through the following strategies: First, we will act to diversify the economy, reducing our reliance on the export of raw natural resources. Second, we will take bold new steps to reduce disparities between rural and urban regions. Third, we will seek growth within the context of sustainable development.

Your Liberal government believes that New Brunswick must live within its means. Sound public finances are good for business and good for society. Accordingly, we will act to ease the tax burden on citizens, keeping a close eye on spending while investing wisely in key economic and social programs.

Too much government intervention in the economy in the form of incentives or regulation only serves to reduce efficiencies; too little can trap business in non-competitive positions or inappropriate business practices. Your Liberal government will be strategic and selective in its interventions in the economy.

Businesses need more than a supportive government to thrive and create jobs; they also need vibrant and healthy communities. Your Liberal government's policies will reflect a new fellowship between vibrant communities, thriving businesses and enabling government services. All three must work together to create jobs and prosperity.

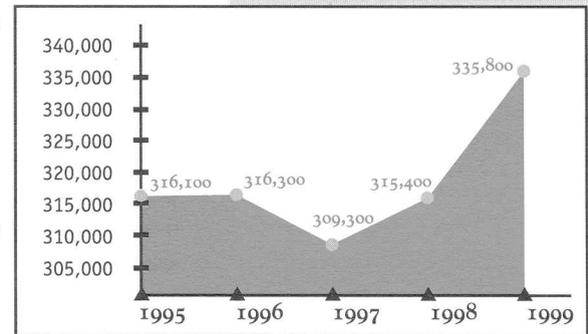
These are the main beliefs that will guide your Liberal government's job agenda in a new mandate. We know that these new orientations will build on the impressive gains made during the past 12 years. We know that they will lead to the opening up of the economy and the blossoming of New Brunswick into its fullest potential as we move to the new millennium.

THE POWER OF SMALL BUSINESS

Small business is big business in New Brunswick. Close to 94% of New Brunswick companies employ fewer than 50 people. One in three New Brunswickers works for a small business.

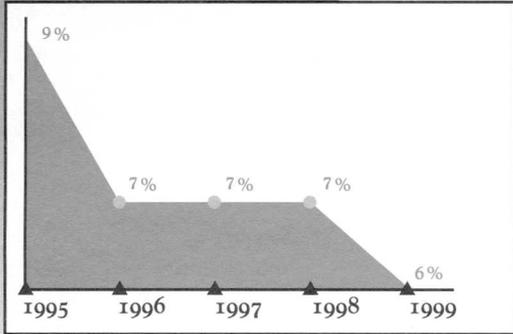
Given these facts, it makes sense that small- and medium-sized business should be the centrepiece of your Liberal government's strategy for economic growth. Much has been accomplished to help small- and medium-sized business grow and prosper. Through the Entrepreneur Program, the Self-start Program, Regional Opportunity Centres, the Small Business Directorate, the Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Tax Credit and the non-refundable New Brunswick Research and Development Tax Credit, your Liberal government has relentlessly pursued improved services to business. More recently, under the Thériault government, the Small Entrepreneur Capital Assistance Program (SECAP) has been expanded. New steps have also been announced, such as the "Small Business, Big Results" initiative and improved access to working capital for smaller companies.

*Number of
New Brunswickers Working
March 1995 • March 1999*



From March 1998 to March 1999, unemployment in New Brunswick dropped an impressive two full percentage points to 10.5%. In March 1999, we had the largest drop in unemployment in Canada.

**New Brunswick
Small Business Income Tax
Cuts Since 1995**



From 1995-1999, small business income tax cut from 9% to 6%, putting millions of dollars back into the pockets of New Brunswick entrepreneurs.

“Small business is always looking for support from the government, and I think this is one of the best ways ... It’s tremendous for small business in New Brunswick.”

Clinton Lawrence
President, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, on the Province’s “Small Business, Big Results” Initiative
October 1998

It is often said that governments do not create jobs, they merely create the environment in which job creation can be maximized. Your Liberal government believes this to be true. Furthermore, businesses do not create jobs to satisfy public policy objectives, but to satisfy their own needs: to meet new demand from customers, to acquire new skills and to reduce pressure on existing staff. Yet, when these things happen, the economy benefits.

In a renewed mandate, your Liberal government will place a new emphasis on entrepreneurial development and job creation at home through reduced taxes, access to capital and streamlined government services.

Competitive Tax Advantage

The business community in New Brunswick has told us that the overall tax burden is the largest barrier to expansion and further job creation. In the most recent budget, the small business corporate tax rate was reduced to 6% from 7%. Your Liberal government is committed to further reductions.

Over the course of a new mandate, your Liberal government will reduce the small business corporate income tax rate from 6% to 3%.

Your Liberal government will offer a three-year provincial corporate income tax holiday for eligible new small business start-ups.

Your Liberal government will offer a 30% labour tax credit on expenditures needed for small- and medium-sized businesses in New Brunswick to achieve certification in quality systems.

Your Liberal government will freeze for two years employers’ average assessment rates of the Workplace Health, Safety, and Compensation Commission.

Access to Capital

Your Liberal government recently introduced the Equity Tax Credit to encourage New Brunswickers to invest in New Brunswick ideas and innovation. It provides a personal income tax credit to investors and offers a new source of financing for New Brunswick companies.

Your Liberal government will create the NB Growth Program to assist small business in gaining access to working capital in New Brunswick.

This will do even more to make capital accessible to small business by working in conjunction with banks to provide entrepreneurs with a line-of-credit guarantee for a three-year period.

Streamlined Regulatory Environment

Your Liberal government has set the stage for economic progress by introducing measures to dramatically reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses in New Brunswick.

Introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax has benefited small businesses by reducing the burden of paperwork.

The Consolidated Registration System, established in 1996, provides a one-stop registration shop for businesses that require licenses and permits with the Department of Finance.

Storekeepers no longer require a licence from the Farm Products Marketing Commission in order to sell fluid milk products in the province.

Although significant progress has been made in this area, small- and medium-sized business owners report that the paper burden related to government regulations and programs continues to require too much effort. There is still room to improve access to government programs and services.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will renew its commitment to significantly reduce the regulatory burden for New Brunswick’s small businesses.

The Importance of Innovation: Research and Development

In an era of rapid technological change, innovation is a key to success.

Your Liberal government, in collaboration with industry and education, will actively promote and enhance innovation in our province. It is no longer enough to have a well-designed product and efficient methods of production. A successful launch also involves strong marketing skills, inter-disciplinary partnerships and trained knowledge workers. Our strategic policy framework accommodates all aspects of the innovation cycle.

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New Brunswick is well advanced in the application of leading-edge technologies. Your Liberal government has supported the development of core competencies in the agri-food, aquaculture and forest sectors, that will lead to breakthrough applications. An excellent example is BioAtlantech Inc., created in 1996 and already a leader in focusing biotechnology in these traditional industries.

Other areas, such as genomics and bioinformatics, both of which use DNA information and databases to develop new products and services, offer equally exciting opportunities. New Brunswick is strategically positioned to take full advantage of them.

Your Liberal government will build on past successes by making a significant new commitment to research and development infrastructure aimed at encouraging the growth of value-added industries. Specifically, your Liberal government will adopt an enhanced 30% refundable Labour-oriented Research and Development Tax Credit in the first year of a new mandate.

Your Liberal government will join forces with industry and higher education to lobby aggressively and systematically for a larger share of Canadian research and development (R&D) activity. In this respect, there may be a need to review existing research funding programs to determine whether they address the province's priorities and whether they can be more effectively leveraged against external funding opportunities. New Brunswick will pursue representation on national boards such as the Canadian Foundation for Innovation.

In partnership with industry and institutions of advanced education, your Liberal government will intensify national lobbying efforts to ensure that New Brunswick attracts a greater share of Canada's R&D activity.

Your Liberal government will work with the National Research Council to establish a virtual research centre in New Brunswick. This centre will blend expertise and capabilities without the need for expensive physical infrastructure and will enhance New Brunswick's research and development capabilities.

A SOUND FISCAL FRAMEWORK: FOUNDATION OF A DYNAMIC ECONOMY

Responsible fiscal management is one of your Liberal government's central responsibilities. Our leadership in this area is widely documented and produces many

benefits. It tells the investment community that New Brunswick is a good place to do business and create jobs. It tells taxpayers that their hard-earned money will be spent wisely. Finally, and most importantly, it is the right thing to do. It would be morally wrong to mortgage our children's future by spending more than we can truly afford today.

Your Liberal government is committed to meeting the requirements of balanced-budget legislation and will continue to pay down net debt. We will also work to maintain our credit rating as the highest in eastern Canada.

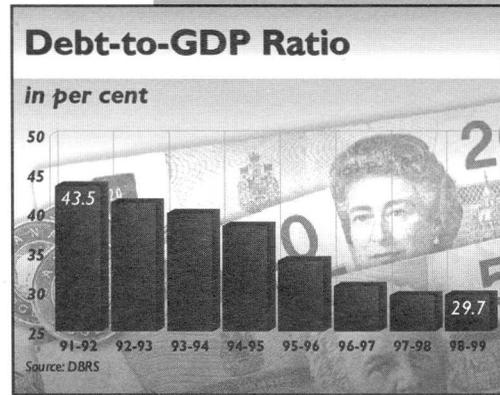
New Brunswickers have made many sacrifices during the past decade because they understand the importance of responsible fiscal management. The good news is that our collective efforts are paying off. New Brunswick is now less dependent on federal spending than at any point since the early 1960s. New Brunswick's overall rate of decline in federal dependence is one of the fastest in Canada. It is one of the clearest indications that New Brunswick is becoming a "have" province.

Does this mean that the job is done? No, it does not. It means we must continue to manage our public finances prudently. However, it also means we have options now that we did not have before. The task now is to create a healthy balance between reinvesting directly to help those whose need is greatest and creating a climate in which business can flourish and create jobs.

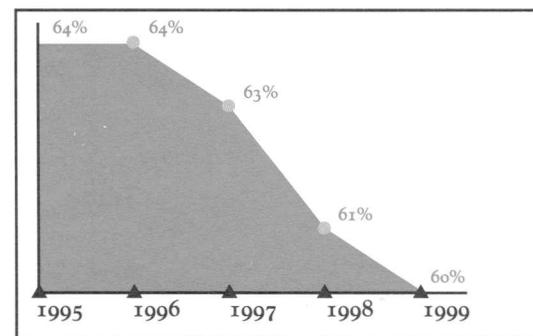
Your Liberal government has already begun to move in that direction. Since 1995, personal income tax has tumbled to 60% of basic federal tax from a high of 64%. We are committed to further significant reductions in personal income tax.

During the next mandate, your Liberal government is committed to cutting the personal income tax rate to 56% of basic federal tax and will further reduce the income tax burden over the next four years as fiscal circumstances permit.

Your Liberal government is committed to maintaining an overall tax structure for citizens and businesses that is competitive in relation to other provinces.



New Brunswick Personal Income Tax Cuts Since 1995



Personal income tax rates cut from 64% to 60% of the federal rate since 1995.

“Canbrands International Ltd. is proof that a New Brunswick-grown company can compete successfully in the world markets. This ability to compete from New Brunswick against billion-dollar US-based companies is due in no small part to the enlightened policies of the Liberal government over the past 10 years.”

John A. Austin
President/CEO, Canbrands International Ltd.
November 1998

FOSTERING TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Your Liberal government has a long tradition of facilitating trade and attracting foreign and Canadian investment to sustain job creation. The degree to which New Brunswick succeeds in the global marketplace is a function of its capabilities. Clearly, we continue to benefit from a number of competitive advantages. One of the greatest challenges in the future will be to ensure that we continue to prepare a competent, skilled and “work-ready” workforce.

Work-ready Workforce

Your Liberal government’s Work-ready Workforce initiative aims to gather information on the current state of New Brunswick’s workforce, broken down by available skills, regions and sectors, and to make it available as a tool to workers, employers and government. Your Liberal government is convinced that this initiative will help prepare New Brunswickers for the kind of jobs we will be attracting to the province and will minimize imbalances of labour supply and demand. It will also be a powerful planning tool in areas such as curriculum development, counseling social assistance recipients and targeting immigration recruitment efforts.

During a new mandate, your Liberal government will fully implement its Work-ready Workforce initiative by providing assistance to companies for the customization of training programs and other training needs. This will help with:

- establishment and delivery of new training programs
- implementation of company human resource development plans
- development and design of IT training curricula

Trade

Historically, exports have been dominated by resource-based commodities and greatly influenced by international market conditions. Exports continue to have a significant impact on the economy of New Brunswick (\$5.35 billion in 1998, or 31% of gross domestic product). In recent years, your Liberal government has focused its efforts on developing export readiness, increasing the number of exports and diversifying its markets. In collaboration with our federal counterparts, we have developed a strategy aimed at integrating our respective trade efforts and reducing program overlap and duplication.

New Brunswick’s proximity to the United States positions us strategically for trade and investment. With the US Interstate 95 at our doorstep, the north-

eastern US and some 68 million consumers are only a day away. Approximately 80% of our exports go to the United States. This fact, coupled with ease of access, a willing and available workforce and low operating costs, makes New Brunswick a compelling choice for relocations and expansions.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government policies will encourage the diversification of New Brunswick’s export portfolio.

Tight labour markets in the US, combined with a growing demand, are forcing American companies to look to Canada for contract work, joint ventures and expansions. This presents a window of opportunity for New Brunswick exporters. Your Liberal government will encourage firms to increase value-added processing of their product prior to export.

Your Liberal government will intensify its efforts to encourage value-added processing in all sectors.

Meeting the demands of global competition is an issue of critical importance for New Brunswick exporters. On the world stage, companies must not only adhere to the highest standards of quality when they bid on contracts or projects, they must have the confidence that they can deliver. Partnerships and networking are keys to such confidence.

Your Liberal government will establish a New Brunswick export corporation to help create partnerships among New Brunswick exporters, thereby combining core expertise and improving competitiveness.

The Francophonie Summit taking place in Montreal this September represents a unique opportunity for New Brunswick business people to discover opportunities for developing new international trade links. Your Liberal government will encourage networking during this event in order to help New Brunswickers make business connections with visitors from more than 15 participating countries.

Investment

Your Liberal government has enjoyed remarkable success in attracting significant private-sector investment to New Brunswick. In part, this success has been achieved through a strategy of targeting key industrial sectors for special effort. Among those targets are: IT centres throughout the US and Canada; IT products in the world; plastics manufacturing and metalworking in the US; textiles and apparel manufacturing throughout Quebec, Europe and Asia. Value-added wood and agri-food industries have also been targeted.

New Brunswick's message highlights benefits that the province offers to business: low operating costs; a large pool of available workers; geographic location; strong, fiscally responsible government; economic growth and tailored incentives; high-tech infrastructure and leading telecommunications solutions.

To qualify for incentives and other support, investment projects must be assessed according to strict guidelines and criteria. Direct assistance is awarded only if investors meet stated job creation targets so that public investment will be recoverable through the tax system over a period of time.

This system has been a model of economic success over the past few years. Now, your Liberal government is determined to intensify its efforts.

During the next mandate your Liberal government will redouble its efforts at attracting outside investments and will increase staffing levels in the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture to monitor still more closely the success ratio for investments in outside companies.

YOUTH AND THE JOB MARKET

Your Liberal government is determined to help young New Brunswickers who are graduating from post-secondary institutions enter the expanding job market.

Your Liberal government has recently introduced three initiatives to address this very serious problem. The New Brunswick Public Service Internship Program has been designed to recruit recent university graduates for two-year internships during which they will rotate through assignments with a variety of government departments and agencies. As many as 100 young professionals will be hired as interns over the next five years. An open competition initiative will ease the experience requirements for regular civil service entry-level positions by requiring that the competitions be advertised as "open" to all qualified candidates and not exclusively to those with additional experience. As well, your Liberal government has established the Youth Secretariat with a view to involving young people directly in the development of government policies that will affect them today and into the future.

A new Debt Repayment Assistance Program was introduced in August 1998, in addition to our Provincial Interest Relief Program, to assist students who are having difficulty meeting their student loan payment obligations.

We are prepared to do much more. Considering the rising costs of tuition, high student debt loads and the difficulty students have in matching the education they receive, especially at the university level, with a relevant career, your Liberal government will implement another new incentive.

Your Liberal government will implement a Youth Employment Bonus Program to help young New Brunswickers find suitable jobs within the province. Employers who hire young New Brunswickers within a year of completing their studies will be eligible for a \$2000 tax credit. Positions offered to the students must be full time, full year, incremental and commensurate with the level of education they have completed.

JOB CREATION IN KEY ECONOMIC SECTORS

Tourism

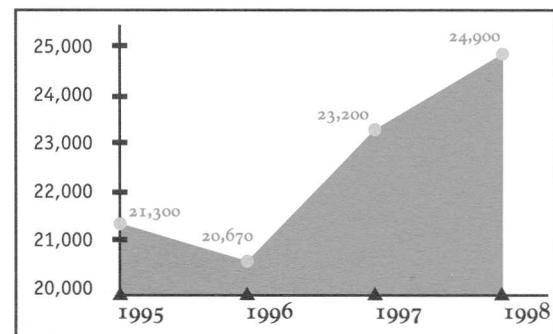
New Brunswick has become the Atlantic Canadian leader in terms of tourism growth. Since 1994, revenues have increased 25.7%, the number of visitors has risen by 14% and the average length of stay has increased by 24%. Our 1998 tourist season was the most successful in New Brunswick's history. Revenues of \$850 million were up by 7.6% over the previous year and visitation rose 7.9% to nearly 1.5 million. For the first time ever, the province's peak season occupancy rate surpassed 80 per cent.

This phenomenal growth is directly attributable to the unique product development and strategic marketing efforts your Liberal government has initiated in this dynamic sector. The result is a seamless product development and marketing strategy that is the envy of many other jurisdictions.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will continue to develop new tourism products, including:

- a new cultural tourism package
- a new Inn and Cottage Cluster Development Program
- a new Ultimate Fish and Hunt Adventure Program
- a new nature centre at Cape Jourimain
- a new year-round development at Sugarloaf
- further development of Fundy Trail and NB Trails System
- expansions at Pays de la Sagouine and Acadian Historical Village

*Jobs in New Brunswick
Tourism Industry
Since 1995*



“After just spending two weeks in your beautiful province, I have to take time to express my thanks.

This letter is specifically addressed to you (Premier Thériault) as the former Minister of Tourism, just to confirm that you and your staff have done an excellent job showcasing your beauty and expressing your provincial pride ... My wife and I thank you and your province for a wonderful time – yes, the seafood was terrific!”

Dave Wood
Port Coquitlam, B.C.
September 1998

Your Liberal government will develop strategies to open new markets for New Brunswick's tourism products. These will include:

- a new partnership with the Canadian Automobile Association
- a new marketing campaign to consumers in Europe
- a New Brunswick/Nova Scotia Bay of Fundy Marketing Program
- a new Western Cities Marketing Program.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will meet or exceed the following objectives in the tourism sector:

- reach the \$1 billion mark in annual revenues
- increase total tourism employment to 28,000 person years

Culture

Your Liberal government believes that thriving artistic and cultural industries are essential to a strong and vibrant society. These sectors embody the imaginative challenges, enquiring spirit and the creative potential of New Brunswickers. They are key stepping stones toward the development of a more sophisticated, diversified, creative and tolerant society.

Your Liberal government will be a dedicated friend to culture and the arts. To aid economic growth and diversification, we will enhance support to the music and film industries. Investment will help create jobs, pride and the kind of marketing money can't buy.

Accordingly, your Liberal government will:

- extend support for new film development over the next four years
- extend the Film Tax Credit beyond 2001
- continue to expand the NB Sound Initiative beyond 2000
- ensure access to financial assistance for start-ups and business development activities in the music and sound industry
- promote the publishing industry within the province

Information Technology – The Highway to the Future

New Brunswick is fortunate to number among its corporate citizens some very innovative communication companies. Taking advantage of some of the most advanced high-speed digital communications networks in Canada, your Liberal government set out, in the mid 1990s, to accelerate the evolution of the information highway in the province. The rapid growth of the call

centre industry in New Brunswick remains the finest example of how the province capitalized on its strategic advantages. Your Liberal government also saw a potential to stimulate private-sector development by acting as a model user/customer of the information highway. The principal focus is currently on opportunities in the areas of software development, advanced training technologies, content development, communications networks and technologies, remote application centres, the Internet and online services.

Investments in telecommunications infrastructure over the past few years have played a major role in the growth of the information technology sector in New Brunswick. The challenge in years to come will be to work with key participants in the communication and IT industries to encourage the development of on-line products and services that the world will buy.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will strengthen and accelerate information highway efforts by:

- placing a new emphasis on e-commerce site design and hosting, technical support, order processing and product development
- launching a Smart Communities initiative in collaboration with Industry Canada
- implementing an IT Finishing Program (in-house training) for New Brunswick IT companies.

Agriculture

New Brunswick's agriculture sector continues to offer significant potential for growth and diversification. Employing more than 13,000 people and producing annual shipments worth more than \$1.3 billion, the agri-food sector is a major contributor to New Brunswick's economy. The emergence of new markets and technologies and the renegotiation of trade agreements over the next few years will be critical for this sector. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has been working in full partnership with all stakeholders to facilitate the development of the agri-food industry and to foster entrepreneurship.

Primary agriculture is a very capital-intensive business and one in which financing can be prohibitively expensive or non-existent for certain types of new business start-ups. It is vitally important that new enterprises be able to access capital at reasonable rates of interest. In addition, we need to encourage New Brunswickers and immigrants to the province who are interested in agriculture.

Your Liberal government will aggressively pursue federal government funding to establish pools of money to assist business start-up in the primary agriculture sector and will implement a New Entrant Development Strategy.

The blueberry industry has gained momentum in recent years. There is a need to strengthen this development by encouraging new crops and additional value-added processing.

Your Liberal government will move expeditiously to make available Crown Lands that are suitable for blueberry development.

Other action items will include:

- collaboration with industry to develop an On-farm Food Safety Program to conform with national inspection standards
- support for the next generation of farmers through the New Internship Program and the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program
- cooperation with industry and environmental groups to plan for long-term protection of our land and water resources

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Your Liberal government has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate growth and stability in the fisheries and aquaculture industries. Today, fisheries and aquaculture generate more than \$554 million in export sales, up from approximately \$337 million in 1993. Aquaculture has become a major exporter whose production value exceeds \$115 million per year. It is anticipated that increased diversification will provide additional opportunities for exports.

While traditional fisheries still hold promise for growth, they currently face a challenging period. In the Acadian Peninsula, the depletion of fish stocks has been a source of concern. To better understand the situation, your Liberal government commissioned the Beaudin Report to review the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. Preliminary action has already been taken to develop a detailed profile of workers in the fish processing industry.

Your Liberal government is committed to long-term stability in fisheries and will continue progressive implementation of the Beaudin Report to:

- Work with community and federal partners to establish a retraining program for young workers
- Encourage the certification (professionalization) of fish plant workers

- Provide for a viable, stable fish processing industry
- Promote investment in the aquaculture sector
- Encourage innovative projects that focus on exports

Since 1995, \$7.5 million has been invested under the Shrimp Fleet Revitalization and Rationalization Program for the construction of four shrimp boats. The New Brunswick shrimp industry generates annual economic spinoffs of about \$30 million for the province, which translates into close to 225 direct jobs for northeastern New Brunswick. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture has been diligently working in partnership with stakeholders on a number of other initiatives specific to aquaculture.

Your Liberal government will implement a new Bay of Fundy Marine Aquaculture Site Allocation Policy to guide decisions on the allocation of marine lands for aquaculture and outline a management regime for the aquaculture sector.

Your Liberal government will implement strategies for the development of oyster aquaculture, freshwater aquaculture and commercial fisheries renewal.

Your Liberal government will continue to fund research and development of value-added processing and packaging.

Your Liberal government will develop the New Brunswick Fish Health Policy to ensure high standards and reduce risks associated with disease.

Your Liberal government will develop a comprehensive market promotion and quality assurance program in collaboration with industry.

Forestry

Forestry is one of New Brunswick's most important economic sectors, generating nearly one job in every eight. Business cycles influence forest-based industries profoundly. Unstable market conditions, combined with constraints on wood supply and increased automation, require the industry to maximize the value of what is harvested.

Each year, enhanced silviculture programs are conducted on more than 30,000 hectares of Crown forest. By thinning overcrowded trees and planting non-forested areas, New Brunswick foresters are able to more than double the production of lumber and value-added products.

“So why has New Brunswick so thoroughly out-paced Nova Scotia in recent years? The quality of governance and effectiveness of government policy turn out to be far more important than natural resource endowment or the amount of aid received. In fact, aid can actually weaken, rather than strengthen, growth when a jurisdiction is badly governed.”

Fred McMahon

Senior Policy Analyst, AIMS

April 1999

The results of New Brunswick's value-added policy for forest industries are clear. In 1997-98 alone, forest companies in New Brunswick launched more than 90 value-added projects, representing more than \$160 million in new investments and 1,750 new jobs.

Your Liberal government will encourage product diversification by adopting a wood allocation policy that favours directing surplus wood to value-added manufacturing and brokering alliances to facilitate project viability.

Your Liberal government has also developed innovative approaches to encourage private woodlot owners to manage their property in a sustainable manner.

Your Liberal government will ensure the sustainability of private woodlots by fully implementing a strategy of allowing property tax deferrals on private woodlots that operate under approved management plans.

Your Liberal government recently purchased 156,000 hectares (390,000 acres) of forested land in Charlotte and York counties near McAdam. The land will be managed to assure the sustainability of timber and non-timber values. Its future use will reflect a balance between environmental, social and economic needs. The land includes several lakes and rivers and represents an excellent opportunity to enhance New Brunswick's recreational activities and to increase the ever-growing potential for eco-tourism.

Your Liberal government is committed to implementing a Protected Areas Strategy that will, in conjunction with efforts by other provinces, protect representative samples of the many mixes of vegetation, soils, topography and climate in our ecosystem. In 1997, your Liberal government commissioned Dr. Louis LaPierre to lead the development of this comprehensive strategy. Many New Brunswickers have participated in public consultations following the release of the LaPierre study. A final report is expected later this year.

Recognizing that ecosystem protection and a healthy forestry industry are both important priorities to New Brunswickers, your Liberal government will strike an equitable balance between these two values when implementing a Protected Areas Strategy.

Mining

New Brunswick is blessed with an abundance of mineral deposits. For many years, mining has been a leading export industry in New Brunswick. It is also, however, a sector that is very sensitive to market fluctuations and global commodity prices. As world markets realign themselves, New Brunswick's mining industry is facing some major challenges.

To boost innovation and exploration in the face of these challenges, your Liberal government introduced a 25% tax credit as an incentive for research and development of improved extraction processes. Several other programs and incentives have been initiated to support the exploration and development of new mines in the province.

Your Liberal government will help to stabilize the mining industry by undertaking the following initiatives:

- conduct geophysical surveys of northwestern New Brunswick
- active promotion of wider use of our geoscience database
- continued research and development of new technologies, such as the zinc fuming process which increases the flexibility and longevity of the smelter at Belledune by enabling it to accept concentrates from off-shore.

THE ENERGY SECTOR

NB Power

New Brunswickers enjoy one of the best electricity systems in the world. Since 1922, NB Power has provided reliable, reasonably priced electricity to the province. In recent years, the utility has taken steps to ensure that the electrical energy needs of the province will be met at competitive rates in the next century. These initiatives include: a new energy centre at Marysville; six combustion turbine units at Grand Manan, Mill Bank and Ste-Rose; a new 450-M coal-fired generating plant at Belledune; conversion of the Dalhousie Generating Station from oil/coal to orimulsion; and a Spacer Location and Relocation (SLAR) maintenance project at Point Lepreau.

At present, the electrical energy industry in North America and Europe is experiencing a period of change. In this process, the question of deregulation is an important factor. As costs increase, many jurisdictions are reviewing their energy policies and considering a restructuring of publicly owned electrical utilities to allow for varying forms of competition.

These changes, combined with others, such as the availability of natural gas and improved generation technology, mean that there may be opportunities for NB Power to use its strategic position to market electricity in the US. However, to compete in those markets, NB Power would have to abide by the rules of that market. Among other things, that means that the electricity market in New Brunswick would have to be open to outside utilities and that NB Power may lose the benefits of exclusivity.

New Brunswickers have made it clear that they want decisions affecting the future of NB Power to be very prudent. They want secure, reliable, reasonably priced electricity for all. To ensure open and transparent discussions about the future of NB Power, your Liberal government asked an all-party Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly to identify specific options and make recommendations to government. The Select Committee's report has been received recently. Your Liberal government values the work of the Select Committee and will give thoughtful consideration to every aspect of the Report.

Your Liberal government will preserve NB Power's presence in New Brunswick as a viable public utility, providing secure, reliable, competitive and reasonably priced electricity to all New Brunswickers.

Natural Gas

Maritimes & Northeast Pipelines is currently building a pipeline that will run from Nova Scotia through New Brunswick and into Maine. New Brunswickers from all regions have told us repeatedly over the past few months that natural gas must be widely available across the province. Your Liberal government is going to great lengths to ensure that natural gas will be available to as many communities as possible. For example, plans are currently in place for a lateral pipeline to the Saint John area. In addition, your Liberal government has clearly stated its commitment to ensuring the construction of two northern lateral pipelines.

A Liberal government will ensure that its decisions on natural gas uphold the vital interests of all New Brunswickers and all regions of the province, including the Northeast, the Northwest and the South.

With respect to the awarding of natural gas distribution rights in New Brunswick, an all-party Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly worked hard during the fall and winter, holding public hearings and recommending a policy framework to the government.

The right to distribute natural gas to New Brunswickers will be awarded to the proponent whose proposal best satisfies the following criteria: maximum availability of natural gas in the province; timely development of infrastructure; development of an effective regulatory framework for gas distribution; increased competition in the energy market; access for indigenous natural gas; regional price equity; maximum economic benefits for New Brunswick.

This new source of energy offers exciting new prospects for New Brunswick and will have a direct impact on the competitiveness of companies already located here, leading to new investment and more jobs. We expect many important sectors to be revitalized. All in all, access to this alternative source of energy will act as a strong stimulus to the New Brunswick economy in both the short and long terms.

Your Liberal government is committed to ensuring that New Brunswickers realize the maximum overall benefits of access to natural gas.

ENSURING EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

New Brunswickers enjoy an enviable lifestyle. Safe, supportive communities, wide-open spaces, rich traditions and friendly faces all contribute to New Brunswick's appeal. Each region of New Brunswick is home to hard-working people with an unshakable determination to preserve and enhance their way of life.

Historically, New Brunswick's economy depended largely on natural resources: wood, fish, and minerals. While these resources are plentiful, they are not limitless. Also, they are vulnerable to fluctuations of international markets that can lead to instability, especially for the rural communities in our province.

Recognizing the tremendous potential of rural communities, your Liberal government embarked several years ago on a threefold development strategy. First, we invested in people, helping more rural New Brunswickers to accept new jobs or start their own business. Second, we diversified the rural economy by aiding the development of non-traditional industries, such as tourism. Finally, we encouraged entrepreneurs to add value to their products before shipping them worldwide. As a result, many New Brunswickers now ship wooden pallets or furniture in place of planks and boards.

“Who would ever have dreamt 10 years ago that New Brunswick would not only be the call centre industry headquarters for Canada but for North America ... It really takes a vision and a political will and commitment to make it happen.”

Peter Rankin

President of Honeywell Limited

Canadian Division

January 1999

“New Brunswick’s per capita disposable income will be over six per cent higher than it was in 1989. It’s a very solid performance. New Brunswick has fared better in the 1990’s than any other province.”

Mary Webb

Senior Economist, Scotia Bank

April 1999

Was the strategy sound? Yes. Is the job done? Not yet. That is why your Liberal government is ready to intensify its efforts and take bold new steps to unleash the immense potential of rural communities.

Regional Economic Development Commissions

Regional development is currently facilitated by 12 Regional Economic Development Commissions (REDCs) whose activities include departmental program promotion and delivery at the local level, including project evaluations under the Small Entrepreneur Capital Assistance Program.

Your Liberal government will strengthen the role of Regional Economic Development Commissions by securing their funding and will expand their mandate in the area of entrepreneurship, particularly youth entrepreneurship.

Gaudet Commission

Another important step was to commission an economic review of the Acadian Peninsula. The Gaudet Report goes to the heart of challenges facing that region. It has been received favourably by local communities. Your Liberal government is equally committed to the report and has already announced a number of measures in direct response to it. These include:

- designation of an Acadian Peninsula Economic Renewal Zone for a period of five years
- hiring an economic renewal commissioner to oversee the implementation of the Gaudet Report
- designation of a regional minister responsible to the premier on economic renewal matters
- establishment of up to five communities of interest and the creation of an Economic Enhancement Fund of \$1 million per year for five years
- enhancement of the mandate of the Commission for the Economic Expansion of the Peninsula
- launch of a three-year marketing campaign
- creation of a global initiative dealing with arts, culture and tourism
- examining regional governance in collaboration with the community
- supporting the creation of five regional investment clubs
- supporting a five-year plan for the development of road and industrial infrastructure
- recognizing the rural nature of the region in formulating government policy

- creating specific programs and initiatives to support employment and mentoring for economic agencies
- accepting the concept of a three-year transition period

Your Liberal government announced that a more in-depth analysis would be conducted on all other aspects of the Report.

During the next mandate, your Liberal government, in partnership with stakeholders in the Acadian Peninsula, will proceed with an orderly and effective implementation of the Gaudet Commission Report.

Regional Decision Making

Numerous New Brunswick businesses have suggested that regions and communities need more autonomy in steering their economic development efforts.

Your Liberal government will initiate two pilot projects to enhance the decision-making power for private-sector projects under \$300,000 by using appropriate local service delivery agents in the Acadian Peninsula and the Charlotte County area. Other regions will be added over the course of the mandate.

Community Leadership

Vibrant communities need strong leaders. Your Liberal government recognizes a need to help build community leadership capacity by developing the ability of individuals to identify community problems, set goals, encourage community interaction and bring groups together to respond to a wide range of economic development, human resource development and quality-of-life issues.

In response to this need, your Liberal government will work with the community college network to establish the New Brunswick Community Development Institute.

The main objective of the Institute will be to provide a forum where community leaders and planners, mayors, chamber of commerce representatives and others can further their knowledge base in the techniques of modern leadership and the management of community development efforts. The Community Development Institute’s faculty will be comprised of corporate, academic and government development professionals throughout New Brunswick.

Business Retention and Expansion Program

Community leaders have often expressed the need for appropriate tools to help them keep and expand local businesses, create consensus around common issues and develop a drive for collective action.

In a renewed effort to help rural communities retain and expand local businesses, your Liberal government will unveil a new community-based initiative called the Business Retention and Expansion Program. This Program, which will be introduced initially as a pilot project in Albert County, Sussex, and Dalhousie, will adapt an existing rural development model to help communities build capacity, growth and employment.

New Brunswick Community Network

Your Liberal government believes that fostering leadership and strategic partnerships within communities will result in renewed vitality and energy. Your Liberal government also believes that communities can learn a great deal from one another. Most communities have success stories to tell and are willing to share them. Therefore, more must be done to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among communities in New Brunswick.

Building on its network of Community Access Centres, your Liberal government will create the New Brunswick Community Network. This Internet-based network will create virtual linkages between communities by allowing individuals and organizations to share ideas and knowledge.

Downtown Development

It has long been recognized that communities derive many benefits from healthy downtown areas. Citizens come downtown to work, shop and be entertained. Downtowns serve as meeting places, contributing to a sense of community pride and strengthening social bonds. Your Liberal government has a strong record of assisting the private sector in downtown projects. Now, new methods of raising public funds are needed that may be different from the traditional grant programs. One such method is called tax increment financing. This system would allow governments, under certain conditions, to earmark a portion of the increased tax revenue resulting from the downtown project to help offset the public's contribution to the project.

Your Liberal government will work cooperatively with municipalities to find innovative ways to help finance private-sector projects in downtown areas.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation (Roads and Highways)

Good infrastructure is critically important in building a dynamic economy and a better society. Modern infrastructure encourages private investment, which in turn encourages employment and productivity. This results in higher profits and increased government revenue that can be reinvested in social programs.

Your Liberal government has put considerable emphasis on infrastructure. Our investments mean that we can now drive safely on more than 320 kilometres of new four-lane highway in the province compared to 94 kilometres in 1988. In addition, we have completed more than 160 kilometres of new two-lane controlled-access highways and have made extensive improvements to other roads throughout the province. Proof that this investment was justified can be seen in the fact that international exports leaving the Atlantic region by road nearly doubled from 1991 to 1997, from \$2.2 billion to \$4.1 billion.

The building of the Confederation Bridge has brought investment and industrial/economic benefits to the region. More recently, your Liberal government has partnered with the private sector to step up the construction of the four-lane highway between Moncton and Fredericton. More work is planned on the Trans-Canada Highway between the Quebec border and Woodstock. Also, a Rural Roads Initiative was announced which will allow rural roads to keep pace with advances in the collector and arterial roads of the province.

"Toll road development favours economic development, new corporate investments and jobs ... the infrastructure improvements of New Brunswick's highways, like the toll road, are a very favourable circumstance as it relates to providing efficient and safe highway transport."

John Boyd

President of The Boyd Company of Princeton, N.J.

“Given the fact that the government was able to ramp up health-care funding, provide a tax break and still have a surplus, I think on balance this is quite a positive set of results ... New Brunswick remains a fiscal hawk. I still think New Brunswick is above average.”

Douglas Porter
Nesbitt Burns
December 1998

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will:

- continue the twinning of Route 1 from Lepreau to St. Stephen
- continue the twinning of Route 2 from Longs Creek to the Quebec border
- continue upgrading routes 3, 7, 8, 11, and 17 including :
 - the Newcastle-Douglastown Bypass
 - the Squaw Cap Diversion on Route 17
 - Marysville-South Portage on Route 8
 - Welsford-Nerepis on Route 7
- continue the Rural Roads Initiative, critical to the maintenance of a good network of rural roads to support agriculture, forestry and other resource and rural industries
- continue roadway improvements in the Acadian Peninsula and confirm priorities for the rural network to Bathurst

In the last few years, the federal government has drastically reduced its role in national infrastructure programs. As the volume of exports and the tourism industry continue to grow in the future, the demands placed on New Brunswick's transportation infrastructure are expected to increase. The role of the federal government in funding infrastructure projects will therefore become an issue of increasing strategic importance for New Brunswick.

A Liberal government will vigorously pursue the federal government to introduce a new national highway program and to renew a national infrastructure program.

Shipbuilding

The tradition of shipbuilding in New Brunswick is a long one. From the wooden boats that sailed the St. John River, to the Marco Polo, fastest clipper in the world, to the high-tech frigates built recently for the Canadian Navy, the shipyards of Saint John have played an important role in our economy.

Regrettably, this important industry has not benefited from Canada's participation in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As well, other nations have put policies in place to help their respective shipbuilding efforts, leaving the Canadian industry at a competitive disadvantage.

Your Liberal government will continue to vigorously promote the establishment of a Canadian shipbuilding policy with the Government of Canada.

Strategic Infrastructure

Industrial parks play a vital role in the province's economic development efforts, providing an environment in which companies can operate efficiently while meeting environmental and other industry standards. Your Liberal government's current policy is to expand infrastructure in industrial parks as new projects emerge. An important factor in attracting world-class companies to locate in New Brunswick is the availability of industrial-serviced land that meets their needs and expectations.

Your Liberal government will maintain a supportive policy on industrial parks and will provide funding to assist projects that offer long-term economic benefit to the province, that provide reasonable return on investment and address regional development issues.

With the withdrawal of the federal government from administration of ports and airports, there is a renewed emphasis on local control and management. While this is generally seen as positive, there is a definite need for orderly and systematic development in these areas.

Your Liberal government will work in close collaboration with key stakeholders and communities to develop a viable ports and airports strategy that complements our economic development efforts.

A NEW ERA IN HEALTH CARE

Over the past decade, Canada's health-care system has undergone enormous change. Across the country governments have had to come to terms with the phenomenal growth in health-care costs. Because of your Liberal government's planned and perceptive approach to the crunch in health-care funding, health care in New Brunswick has not suffered the massive budget cuts and closures experienced in other jurisdictions. Having restructured our health-care system in line with the recommendations of the McKelvey-Levesque Report and having implemented the Health and Community Services Plan for New Brunswick, we are now well positioned to enter a new era in health care – an era in which the focus is shifting from structures and systems to people and their care.

Your Liberal government recently received the report of the Health Services Review. The report is the product of a comprehensive consultation with New Brunswickers about health-care services and their delivery in the province. It contains more than 100 recommendations on many aspects of health care in New Brunswick.

In response to the Health Service Review Report, your Liberal government recently announced initiatives in health care that address some of the key issues raised in the report. Your Liberal government has adopted a holistic approach to the needs of the health-care system. These initiatives announced are:

- enhancements to community care
- increased staffing levels in nursing and other professional staff
- additional funding to retain and attract physicians
- additional funding to maintain the integrity of our ambulance services
- improvements in homemaker working conditions
- reduced emergency room waiting time
- improved staffing levels in nursing homes

However, more must be done.

Your Liberal government will continue to adhere to the principles of the Canada Health Act. Health services must be portable, comprehensive, universal, accessible and publicly administered.

Further to our commitment to these principles, your Liberal government will be guided by the following fundamental tenets:

- Quality patient care must be at the centre of health-care policy
- Government policies must support the physical, mental and social well-being of New Brunswickers
- Human and financial resources must be used efficiently and effectively
- The health-care system must be funded in a sustainable manner with proper accounting for expenditures at all levels.

Health-care Professionals

New Brunswickers are fortunate to receive care from a very dedicated and hard-working group of health professionals. Our physicians, specialists, nurses, technicians, pharmacists and health administrators are among the finest in the world. These committed individuals have endured the brunt of the changes to our health-care system. Your Liberal government is committed to easing some of the pressure points directly affecting health-care professionals and,

consequently, the quality of patient care in New Brunswick. Already, over 160 new nursing positions have been added to the health-care system this year.

Over the course of a new mandate, your Liberal government will create 250 new nursing positions. This is in addition to the anticipated 800 nurses to be hired because of a historic annual attrition rate of five percent. Therefore, overall, 1,050 new job opportunities will be created for young graduating nurses. A significant proportion of the new nursing positions will be assigned to the Extra-Mural Hospital system.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will institute a Nurse Practitioner Program which will result in nurses playing an increasingly important role in emergency rooms and the community health-care system. This Program will include specific training measures.

Your Liberal government will continue to honour its commitment to move nurses from casual status to full-time and permanent part-time positions.

Your Liberal government will increase the number of other health-care professionals in our hospital and extra-mural systems, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech language therapists and audiologists.

Your Liberal government, in conjunction with representatives of the nursing profession and the province's post-secondary institutions, will vigorously promote the nursing profession as a desirable career for young New Brunswickers.

Community Care

New Brunswickers in rural areas have particular health-care concerns. While increasing the number and enhancing the role of nurses will help reduce bottlenecks in the system, access to care in rural communities needs further attention.

Your Liberal government will initiate a mobile community health clinic service to deliver blood pressure clinics, vaccinations and other public health programs to rural New Brunswick.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government, in consultation with rural communities, will develop and implement a Physician Recruitment Plan to attract physicians to the more rural regions of the province. The plan will include measures for student debt relief, quality-of-life considerations, housing, access to technology, and administrative and nursing support services.

“Only two or three other provinces showed a decline and overall in Canada there was an increase, so [the New Brunswick health-care system] did something right in 1997.”

Fraser Institute
August 1998
on New Brunswick's
improvements on waiting lists.

“This is certainly a step in the right direction ... It’s encouraging to see the government has been listening.”

Jean-Claude Cormier

AEEFNB, on the

December 1998

Throne Speech

Your Liberal government will purchase additional seats at Canadian medical schools for students who agree to establish rural medical practices in New Brunswick.

Your Liberal government will implement a pro-active Physician Immigration Program to attract more physicians and specialists to practise in New Brunswick.

Your Liberal government will continue to enhance the province’s community health centre network.

Wellness

Increasingly, New Brunswickers are seeking ways to improve their own health and the health of their families. As individuals, we make choices about our diet, lifestyle, physical and mental well-being. Governments can provide useful education and prevention programs to help citizens make the right choices for continued good health. Governments also have an important role to play in ensuring that the policies they develop, in all areas, do not adversely affect the health of citizens. Your Liberal government is committed to promoting good health, prevention and wellness.

Your Liberal government will substantially increase its efforts in disease prevention and its capacity to conduct health inspections.

Your Liberal government will establish a Wellness Branch in the Department of Health and Community Services. The Branch will oversee the development, communication and implementation of wellness programs in the areas of nutrition, early intervention, family and mental health. It will also ensure that government policies support the health of New Brunswickers.

Health-care Funding

Your Liberal government is committed to ensuring that New Brunswickers get the most out of their health-care investments. As funding for health care represents the province’s largest single budget item, we must be vigilant in ensuring that the funds are available, well managed and used in the best way possible.

Your Liberal government will continue to pursue the federal government vigorously to ensure that funding restored through the Canada Health and Social Transfer is maintained.

Your Liberal government recently enacted the Health-Care Funding Guarantee Act, a unique piece of legislation that guarantees, at a minimum, that funding for health care grows with the economy. Funding the health-care system in a manner that guarantees its

sustainability is of prime importance. As our demographics change, our health-care system must also change. We must be able to provide New Brunswickers with quality care for generations to come.

Your Liberal government recognizes that the health-care system in New Brunswick is comprised of components that vary in size, level of sophistication and geographic location. Your Liberal government also believes that funding for health care must reflect equity and fairness.

Your Liberal government will continue to fund the health-care system in a manner that is sustainable and responsive to the evolving needs of all New Brunswickers.

Support for Seniors

A valued and growing group of citizens in our province, seniors have particular care requirements to which your Liberal government is sensitive. Because the demographics of our province are changing and our population is aging, government policy decisions must be made with greater attention to the needs of seniors. Your Liberal government has appointed a Minister of State for Seniors. The minister has begun an important dialogue with seniors across the province and brings their concerns to the cabinet table.

We have already reversed the policy that considers the home, or principal residence, as an asset when calculating a senior’s contribution to the cost of residential long-term care services. Seniors can remain confident that their homes are safe. Some seniors and their families are concerned with access to nursing homes and the level of care they are receiving there. Your Liberal government has taken measures to address these concerns and is committed to further improvements.

Your Liberal government will further increase the staff complement in nursing homes.

Your Liberal government will improve the working conditions of homemakers.

Your Liberal government will streamline the entry point process, ensuring that it is timely, fair and that all health-care workers are appropriately consulted.

Your Liberal government will exempt the income of seniors living with family members who are receiving social assistance when calculating household income.

EDUCATION: PREPARING NEW BRUNSWICKERS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In September 1992, your Liberal government launched a major Excellence in Education initiative. It touched on many aspects of the education system, including: testing; early intervention initiatives; curriculum development; mentoring and tutoring assistance; summer institutes for teachers; and a host of other components.

In addition, a significant effort was made to foster partnerships between schools, parents and the community. The school year was lengthened. Administration costs were reduced by lowering the number of school districts from 42 to 18. Changes were made in the standards for certification of teachers.

A massive effort was initiated to establish an electronic network linking all the schools in the province to each other and to the Internet. Steps were taken to integrate technology with the curriculum and to meet a new requirement that all graduates be computer literate. All these initiatives are now in place.

In 1996, your Liberal government announced a renewed education system for New Brunswick. Extensive changes were made to the system of school governance. A new landmark Education Act was proclaimed on December 29, 1997.

In the past year, your Liberal government has announced several new initiatives, including a major investment to reduce teacher/student ratios in grades one, two and three. Additional resources have been allocated to improve the learning and teaching environment at all grade levels. A new Positive Learning Environment Policy was announced to ensure our schools are safe, peaceful environments where learning is the main focus. Under the new policy, provisions have been made to hire 200 additional staff, including professionals, to work with teachers and parents to help children function socially and academically in the school environment. They will also provide alternate services for students who need out-of-class intervention. Support was strengthened for students at risk. Steps were taken to improve working conditions and pay rates for supply teachers. Your Liberal government announced a major plan to upgrade schools and community colleges.

Last November in Saint John, more than 400 New Brunswickers came together at the Premier's Forum on Education to help shape the future direction of our education system. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, entrepreneurs, public servants, and elected officials agreed that there is still more to be done. They reminded us that learning is about much more than literacy and numeracy. It is a continuous endeavour that can be a source of immense personal gratification and reward. It is also a collaborative process that involves not only students, teachers and parents, but the community as a whole. Your Liberal government is prepared to act.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will use Premier's Forum participants' comments as a guide as it builds on the achievements of the past.

Class size

Many New Brunswickers have told us that the early years at school are critically important in determining how well a child fares in education and throughout life. Creating a classroom environment in which teachers are not overburdened by large classes can do much to ensure quality education, especially in the earlier grades.

Your Liberal government has taken steps to address the issue of class size. Beginning in 1999-2000, maximum class size in grade one will be reduced from 28 to 25. In the following year, the maximum class size for grade two will be reduced from 28 to 25. In year three, grade three maximum class size will be reduced from 32 to 30.

We will do more. Although the number of students enrolled in New Brunswick schools is expected to decline, your Liberal government will increase the number of new teachers in the public education system in New Brunswick. In addition, specific measures will be taken to address the needs of special needs children in the classroom.

During the next mandate, your Liberal government will create 160 new teaching positions at all levels. This is in addition to the expected 1,440 teachers that will be hired because of natural attrition, resulting in a total of 1,600 new job opportunities for young graduates. As enrolments decline, the student/teacher ratio will be improved.

Your Liberal government will invest in a renewed Learning Associates Program, giving 200 young university graduates valuable work experience and teachers the assistance they need in the classroom.



“We believe, with proper and continued consultation with parents, teachers, students, community members and SPAC’s, steps such as class-size reduction, the Positive Learning Environment Policy, the physical modernization and upgrading of schools, and particularly the planned improvements to the governance structure of the school system together will help advance educational opportunities for our children.”

McAdam Avenue
Elementary SPAC

The Three R’s – Building Blocks for Learning

New Brunswick parents have told us repeatedly that they want us to spare no effort in ensuring that their children have the literacy and numeracy skills to deal successfully with the job market and to adapt to an ever-changing world. They want us to ensure that their children’s education measures up to the highest standard, wherever they live in New Brunswick.

Your Liberal government will strengthen the focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills in schools and will emphasize them throughout the curriculum.

The role of technology in the learning process has been a source of debate in the past few years. Some have raised convincing arguments that placing too much emphasis on computers in the early grades contributes to a decline in basic skills, such as reading and writing.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will ensure that computers will be used first and foremost as complementary teaching tools and will not detract from the focus on basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

Governance

In 1996, school boards were replaced with parent-focused structures at the school, district and provincial levels. School Parent Advisory Committees (SPAC’s) were established at every public school. District Parent Advisory Councils were established in each of the 18 school districts, and two Provincial Boards of Education (one anglophone and one francophone) were established.

After two years operating under the new structure, a Parental Governance Structure Review Committee was created to assess this new parental governance structure in New Brunswick’s public school system and to make recommendations for improvement. After carefully reviewing the recommendations of the Parental Governance Structure Review Committee, your Liberal government opted not to make substantial changes to the original structure.

Based on numerous consultations with parent committees and other groups, it is our belief that parents play a more significant role in our education system than ever before. New Brunswickers want stability in the education system and, to this end, several recommendations of the Parental Governance Structure Review Committee are being implemented. For example,

there will be an increased emphasis on communications and the provision of training for members of the parental governance structure.

While your Liberal government is committed to the basic governance structure established in 1996, we will consult with stakeholders and consider ways to adjust and improve the system. Consultations will include at least one district-level annual meeting of all stakeholders involved in local education.

As well, SPACs will hold annual meetings with their parent constituents to review the school improvements plan and school performance report.

Co-op Education

There is widespread agreement that co-op programming is an effective tool to prepare young New Brunswickers for the world of work. Co-op programs allow students to gain valuable experience in the work environment.

Your Liberal government is committed to co-op programs and will improve their coordination and delivery. More specifically, your Liberal government will encourage wider use of co-op programs by educational institutions and by the business community.

Your Liberal government will initiate a Co-operative Education Scholarship Fund to which it will contribute matching funds with the post-secondary education institutions and the corporate community.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES FOR A STRONGER NEW BRUNSWICK

Modern Social Policies

Strong communities are the foundation upon which we build healthy and productive societies. All New Brunswickers – anglophones, francophones, aboriginal people, younger, older, people from every region of the province and every walk of life – play a role in building their communities. Volunteering at the local library, caring for our families, helping out our neighbours in need are all examples of ways that we contribute to stronger communities. The role of government is to sustain an environment in which citizens are able to engage in these activities and contribute in these ways.

We often assume that the strength of a community is measured by its wealth. While wealth is one factor, it may mask other values. As we undertake our Social Policy Renewal process, we are being reminded of the links between economic prosperity and social justice. Effective economic development cannot happen when the contributions of some citizens are not valued. Everyone, including those who have been marginalized by poverty or by traditional attitudes that separate the "haves" from the "have-nots," can make positive contributions toward a better and stronger community. Failing to recognize this will limit our success.

Our Social Policy Renewal process transcends political boundaries to enable all New Brunswickers to play an important role in the reshaping of our society. The challenge is to ensure that the ideas, hopes and dreams expressed in the process are heard and reflected in the policies that will drive your Liberal government in the future.

Your Liberal government is committed to Social Policy Renewal and to ensuring that individual citizens can play an active role with their government in building a better society.

Families

Your Liberal government recognizes the importance of healthy families and has implemented a number of programs and initiatives to support them. In 1995, the Minister of State for Family and Community Services identified key priority areas in a framework for family policy, including parenting, family-focused communities, prevention of family violence, prevention of teen pregnancy, gambling and substance abuse. Work continues in all of these key areas and further emphasis has been placed on preventing abuse.

Your Liberal government has initiated a complete review of the province's child welfare system and is committed to acting on its recommendations to the greatest extent possible.

Your Liberal government will continue to encourage and support policies and programs that promote healthy families.

In conjunction with labour groups, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and community-based family organizations, your Liberal government will establish a series of family-focused workshops to be delivered in the workplace and in communities.

To address the concerns of lower-income New Brunswickers, we introduced the New Brunswick Child Tax Benefit Program and the New Brunswick Working Income Supplement. Both are refundable tax credits.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will retain the Child Tax Benefit Program and the Working Income Supplement and will index both to the cost of living as a means of protecting their real value.

To help offset the increase in taxes on home heating fuel, we implemented the Low-income Seniors Benefit of \$100 per senior who receives the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Your Liberal government will continue to help low-income seniors adjust to the introduction of the HST. Accordingly, the Low-income Seniors' Benefit will be retained and indexed to increase with the cost of living.

Your Liberal government also introduced the New Brunswick New Home and Home Renovations Tax Credit, a measure introduced as part of the Harmonized Sales Tax Act. Credits up to a maximum of \$1,500 were allowed under the program for new housing construction and home renovations.

In a new mandate, your Liberal government will retain and index the New Home and Home Renovations Tax Credit to increase with the cost of living.

These adjustments will put a minimum of \$1.6 million dollars into New Brunswickers' hands over the mandate.

People with Disabilities

New Brunswickers who are living with disabilities make a meaningful contribution to society and to the economy in New Brunswick. While many challenges remain for persons with disabilities, we have already made substantial progress in this province to better meet their needs. Together, stakeholder groups, the Premier's Council on the Status of the Disabled and your Liberal government are working at improving outcomes for persons with disabilities. Over the years, your Liberal government has introduced a number of measures including, in the past year, the implementation of a new policy on access to government information and meetings in alternate formats. Upon request, the province can now provide government documents in braille, large print, computer diskette or audio cassettes. The province can now also provide sign-language interpretation for media-advertised public meetings

"It's a year where we seem to be doing good things in education ... And that's good for us."

Diane Gillett

NB Teacher's Federation

November 1998

“... may I express gratitude to you (Premier Thériault) for attempting to put a kinder, more compassionate face on government.”

C. Keith Lewis
Salisbury, November 1998

Your Liberal government will pursue a meaningful partnership with the federal government, the community and private sector resources to maximize positive outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Volunteers

Volunteers provide valuable services to thousands of New Brunswickers. From literacy training to respite programs for parents of children with disabilities, volunteers enrich and strengthen our communities. Your Liberal government is committed to working with volunteer groups. We are particularly proud of our Community Academic Service Program (CASP). Since 1991, more than 1,000 CASPs have been established, providing the opportunity for 20,260 adults to upgrade their literacy skills. This unique program partners government, volunteers and the private sector in a joint effort that is of great value to the community and the province.

Your Liberal government will use the CASP model as a basis for further community enrichment in the areas of cross-cultural awareness, family health and community safety.

Your Liberal government will develop a province-wide volunteer recognition program to acknowledge the great contribution volunteers make to our province and to keep the spirit of volunteerism alive in New Brunswick.

A New Partnership with the Aboriginal Community

In recent months, New Brunswickers have become more aware of the issues and challenges facing aboriginal people. Growing populations, limited resources and cultural barriers are just a few of the areas of concern for aboriginal communities. The Task Force on Aboriginal Issues recently released its report and your Liberal government is committed to working with aboriginal leaders in implementing its recommendations.

Your Liberal government will take active measures to improve the relationship between the aboriginal community and the provincial government.

Your Liberal government, in conjunction with aboriginal communities and Dialogue New Brunswick, will develop a cross-cultural awareness program.

Your Liberal government along with the aboriginal communities and the federal government will participate in an economic development package for aboriginal people.

An area of particular concern to aboriginal people in New Brunswick is the justice system. The cultural differences between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities are greatly magnified in the courtroom.

Your Liberal government will encourage the Department of Justice to use restorative justice approaches in aboriginal communities.

Libraries

Our provincial library service is of great importance to our communities. Libraries play a significant role in helping New Brunswickers pursue lifelong learning and in providing an accessible public meeting place in many communities. Libraries across the province have met the technology challenge and New Brunswick is the first jurisdiction in which all libraries are connected to the Internet. While many improvements have been made, rural communities are not as well served by the library system as our more urban areas.

Your Liberal government and its funding partners will increase funds to the New Brunswick library system to provide significant enhancement to its collections, points of service and staffing.

The Environment

New Brunswickers value the clean air and water we enjoy. Your Liberal government has taken far-reaching action on the protection of our environment.

We introduced the Clean Water Act in 1990. This progressive legislation ensures the high quality of our water sources.

Following extensive public consultation, the Clean Air Act is now in place and specific measures to deal with air quality in Saint John have been introduced. In particular, operating approvals for major industries have been tightened.

We also introduced innovative beverage container legislation and have virtually eliminated unsightly and environmentally unfriendly dumps across the province, having replaced them with state-of-the-art landfill sites.

Your Liberal government established the Environmental Trust Fund that has helped hundreds of community groups play an active role in projects such as waterway clean ups and roadside beautification.

Building on the solid environmental policies we have enacted, we will continue to protect the interests of New Brunswickers by protecting the environment.

Your Liberal government will develop an integrated water quality and water quantity management approach, featuring public participation, province-wide watershed management by community groups, improved monitoring, reporting and management.

Your Liberal government will develop tools and structures to help New Brunswick communities play an effective role in sustainable resource management, focusing on watershed management, environmental assessment and air resource management.

Your Liberal government will help communities integrate resource management into economic and social policy decisions.

Your Liberal government will develop effective land- and water-use policies that will be implemented through planning for New Brunswick communities. These policies will include guidelines and standards for coastal zone management, controlling development in flood plains and protecting provincial wetlands.

Regional Co-operation

Historically, New Brunswick has played an important role in promoting co-operation between the Atlantic Provinces. For more than a decade, your Liberal government has led the way in improving the regulatory environment, developing economies of scale and ensuring that Atlantic Canadians benefit from cooperative efforts.

Atlantic Canadians work cooperatively to educate young physicians and farmers, train police officers and deliver specialized health care to gravely ill children. Our main telecommunications companies have recently merged and, most recently, the four Atlantic Provinces together undertook a trade mission to New England. In general, these co-operative efforts work well and must continue.

Your Liberal government will continue to champion regional co-operation and to play a leadership role in working co-operatively with other provinces.

Language

As citizens of Canada's only officially bilingual province, New Brunswickers are positioned to share their unique perspectives in the Canadian federation. Your Liberal government believes that New Brunswick's linguistic makeup contributes to the province's vitality and diversity. Moreover, our strong bilingual capabilities constitute a significant advantage in attracting national and international firms to our province. It has been shown time and time again, for example, that strong linguistic capabilities, combined with a world-class telecommunications infrastructure, are a winning formula. We will continue to build on such winning formulas.

Your Liberal government will continue to uphold the principle of equality of the two linguistic communities as entrenched in the Constitution of Canada.

Commitment to Federalism

The Canadian federation can be proud of its numerous accomplishments. Of this vast territory, we have built one of the best countries in the world in which to live. Canada is the envy of the world because of its prosperity, its geography, and its tremendous ability to accommodate diversity in all its forms. Your Liberal government is committed to doing its part in building an even stronger Canada.

Your Liberal government will help coordinate the implementation of the Social Union framework so that it improves the overall functioning of the Canadian Social Union while protecting a strong but flexible union.

Your Liberal government will vigorously promote the benefits of the Canadian federation at home and abroad.

Your Liberal government is resolutely committed to the principles of federalism and the unity of Canada.

