

Speech from the Throne

Third session of the
58th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick
The Honourable Jocelyne Roy Vienneau,
Lieutenant-Governor

Listening and getting things done

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www.gnb.ca

ISBN 978-1-4605-1156-5 (bilingual print edition)
ISBN 978-1-4605-1157-2 (PDF: English edition)
ISBN 978-1-4605-1158-9 (PDF: French edition)

Cover photo: Hopewell Cape, Demoiselle Beach (Kevin Snair, Creative Imagery)

10858 | 2016.11 | Printed in New Brunswick

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General Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and all New Brunswickers. Welcome to the opening of the Third Session of the 58th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We are now just past the midway point of this current government's mandate. This government has listened closely to the concerns of the people of this great province. New Brunswickers have provided this government with guidance by bringing many ideas to the table that will help improve this province and the lives of our residents.

Your government recognizes that New Brunswickers expect their leaders to listen to their concerns, understand their needs, and then deliver results. This has been the approach of your government.

Your government understands that New Brunswickers want more economic growth and a stronger health care system. To accomplish economic growth and a vibrant health care system your government's main focus over the next year will be education.

Your government understands the importance of a strong workforce for New Brunswick businesses and industries to compete in a globalized economic world. Your government understands that the best way to strengthen our workforce is to invest in our people through education.

Your government understands that, to have a strong health care system, we must improve the social determinants that impact our well-being. Your government understands that it is through education that we will lift people out of poverty into better situations that lead to living healthier lives.

Education will be the number-one focus of government for this session as we work to improve the economy and our health care system to complement initiatives such as our Economic Growth Plan and the establishment of a proactive health plan.

Your government has consulted widely with business and industry leaders on how to create economic growth. It has listened to educators, parents and students to build a plan for improved education systems. Seniors and experts are guiding government on the development of an aging strategy. Health care workers are helping guide government in finding new ways to improve how health care services are provided to all New Brunswickers. Civil servants are engaged to help government improve the way we serve the public.

The more people are engaged in finding new solutions to age-old problems, the more chance the government has of delivering better services to all.

The priorities of your government remain the same as they were in the previous session: helping grow the provincial economy to create new jobs; and making New Brunswick the best place to raise a family through stronger education and health care systems.

Through its Strategic Program Review that ended earlier this year, your government is well on its way to the goal of eliminating the deficit by the end of the decade. New Brunswickers recognized that, in order to provide better programs for families and individuals, the province's finances had to be in order. New Brunswickers had their say on how best to achieve the difficult goal of balancing the books. People said they preferred a balanced approach of reduced spending in some areas and increased revenue. They asked government to focus on priority areas when investing. Government was told it was important to protect health care and keep rural hospitals open, to invest in education and the economy while eliminating the deficit.

Your government listened, and the results are starting to be seen. The deficit has been reduced by close to half of what it was two years ago. Government has done this while continuing to invest more strategically in health care and education. The goal of Strategic Program Review was to balance the books by 2020 following years of deficit financing by provincial governments. Government remains very much on track to meeting that goal. It is hitting its targets and credit agencies have taken note that there is a plan and that it is being followed.

Like the previous two years, government will remain committed to finding ways to grow the economy as we move forward together. Creating jobs remains a challenge in a difficult national and global economy. The challenges remain, but there have been encouraging signs. The province has been among the country's leaders in increases in weekly earnings, GDP growth, and capital investment. Again, government listened to New Brunswickers, holding economic summits in different sectors in all corners of the province. This has helped government better understand the challenges at a local level and develop an Economic Growth Plan that has been built by New Brunswickers and for New Brunswickers. Moving forward, your government will continue these discussions with business and community leaders on economic growth to help us keep at the forefront as we compete in an ever-changing global economy.

Growing the economy and creating more jobs will allow government to invest in the critical services we provide to our residents. New Brunswickers want government to invest in better education systems that improve the outcomes for our students. They want more of our young people to have access to a strong post-secondary education so that more people have a chance of success. New Brunswickers have been clear that they want government to protect and improve our health care system. And they have asked that government focus on helping families who need help the most.

That is where government will focus much of its efforts in the upcoming session of the legislature.

Congratulations / Recognition

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

Last week, two New Brunswickers were named to the Canadian Senate. Nancy Hartling of Moncton, who is known for operating a support group for single parents in Moncton for 34 years, was appointed along with René Cormier, president of the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, the lead organization for the international strategy for the promotion of Acadian artists.

Ten New Brunswickers were named to the Order of New Brunswick. I offer congratulations to Kenneth Barlow, John P. Barry, Judith Chernin Budovitch, Phil Comeau, the late Abraham Gesner, the late Gérard Friolet, Nancy Hartling, Deborah Lyons, Sheldon Rubin and Jean-Guy Rioux.

Another five New Brunswickers received the Order of Canada. They include my predecessor Graydon Nicholas; Madeleine Delaney-LeBlanc, the province's first chair of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Ilkay Silk and Timothy Borlase, who have both contributed greatly to the arts; and Robert Campbell, president of Mount Allison University.

I also recognize Blaine Higgs, the member for Quispamsis, as the new Leader of the Official Opposition. I also thank those who put their name forward to lead their party, including Mel Norton, Monica Barley, Mike Allen, the member for Southwest Miramichi-Bay du Vin, Jake Stewart, the member for Fredericton West-Hanwell, Brian Macdonald, and Jean Dubé.

I also offer thanks to the member for Riverview, Bruce Fitch, who has served as Leader of the Opposition for the past two years in this house.

A number of talented and caring New Brunswickers have also deservedly been recognized in the past year for their contributions to society and outstanding achievements in their field.

Anne Huestis Scott was honored with the 2016 Human Rights Award.

Five New Brunswickers were given the Order of Military Merit for their service to our country. They include: Warrant Officer David Timothée Berube, Chief Warrant Officer Edward Joseph John Curtis, Master Warrant Officer Dana Robert Eagles, Master Warrant Officer Thomas Kincaid Neill, and Major Jaime Phillips.

Disability Awareness Week award-winners included Doug and Donna MacKenzie of St. Andrews, Jack Brien of Rothesay, Kelley Flowers of Fredericton and Danny Soucy of Grand Falls.

The New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame inducted six new members this year. They included Darren Ritchie, Eldridge Eatman, and David Foley of Saint John, Kevin Foran of Dalhousie, Patty Blanchard of Moncton, and Bernard DeGrâce of Shippagan.

Six New Brunswickers made the trip to Rio to compete in the Olympics and Paralympics: Danielle Dorris of Moncton. Campbellton's Shayne Dobson and Simon Richard of Dieppe took part in the Paralympics. Geneviève Lalonde and Mandy Bujold, both from Moncton, took part while Harvey Station's Catharine Pendrel did her province and country proud, overcoming an early crash in the mountain biking event to bring home a bronze medal.

Peter Bowmaster and Jean-Charles Richard were two New Brunswick recipients of the Council of the Federation's literacy awards.

As the province looks to its entrepreneurs to help grow our economy, it is important to recognize the business leaders who distinguished themselves this past year.

New Brunswick companies receiving honors at the 2016 Export Awards included: Leading Edge Geomatics, Approach Navigation Systems, Corey Nutrition Company, Systemair and Cooke Aquaculture.

Winners of 2016 Kira Awards included Keith McIntosh of PQA and PLATO Testing, Eigen Innovations, Mycodev Group, Groupe Savoie, Horizon Health Network's NB Telestroke and Malley Industries.

Our 2016 Start-Up Award winners included John McLaughlin, Laura O'Brien, Natasha Dhayagude, and Resson.

Three of the province's top applied researchers were recognized at the R3 gala. They were the University of New Brunswick's Liuchen Chang, Amber Garber of the Huntsman Marine Science Centre, and Alain Doucet of Collège Communautaire du Nouveau Brunswick.

The New Brunswick Community College honoured four alumni for contributing to the province's prosperity: Bernice Lanigan, Bill Ward, Arthur Tucker and Gary Hall.

Anya Forestell of Fredericton, currently studying astrophysics at the University of Waterloo, was invited to speak at HeForShe, the UN-sponsored program that promotes gender equality for girls and women by including men and boys in a global campaign.

The Canadian Red Cross named Dr. Mahesh Raju its 2016 Humanitarian of the Year and Jessica Brennan its Young Humanitarian of the Year for 2016.

In music, 19 New Brunswick acts were nominated for East Coast Music Awards. City Natives were named Aboriginal Artist of the Year while Joey Robin Haché won top prize in the Francophone Recording of the Year category. It should be noted that Saint John will host the East Coast Music Awards in 2017.

And finally in music, the band CHIPS won the Rising Star Award at Fredericton's Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival.

Also, I offer congratulations to Kerry Lee Powell of Moncton who was nominated for the Governor General's Literary Award for her short-story collection *Willem de Kooning's Paintbrush*.

Condolences

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

We pay tribute to Elsie Wayne, who made her mark in politics first as the long-time mayor of the City of Saint John and then as the Member of Parliament for the port city.

We pause to remember Dr. Jim Parrott, who served as a member of this legislature between 2010 and 2014. Dr. Parrott was also a surgeon who saved the lives of countless New Brunswickers during his time as head of the Saint John Regional Hospital's cardiac care unit.

Another former member of this legislative assembly we lost this past year was Moncton's René "Pepsi" Landry, who was also a member of the province's Human Rights Commission.

We also pay tribute to Doug Moore, a former deputy speaker of this legislature who represented the riding of Victoria-Tobique for 11 years. Mr. Moore was also a former mayor of Perth-Andover.

We pay tribute to Norbert Thériault, a former minister of municipal affairs and minister of health under Premier Louis Robichaud's government. Mr. Thériault went on to serve in the Canadian Senate.

Another former New Brunswick senator, John G. Bryden, died this past year, and we note his contribution to the province.

Also in our thoughts is Gerry Cormier, who passed away earlier this year while serving his third term as the mayor of the City of Miramichi.

We celebrate the life of Richard "Sonny" Polchies, a former chief of St. Mary's First Nation.

We also remember the New Brunswick Liberal Association's so-called "Mother Superior", Tony Barry, who spent seven decades organizing and advising her chosen political party.

We also pay tribute to Wendell Fulton, a former employee of this legislature and another long-time advisor to the Liberal party.

We celebrate the life of Fred Hazel, a former editor of the New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, who continued to contribute to his paper until shortly before his passing.

Also from the field of journalism, we pay tribute to David Malcolm, a former radio broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation who specialized in covering issues related to agriculture.

We also remember Patrick "Hoppy" Dunn, the voice of sports on the Miramichi.

The province will miss Vic Fitzgerald, who contributed so much as a community builder in Saint John.

We also pay tribute to Carolyn McNulty, who also contributed to the social fabric of Saint John as the founder of Romero House, the Saint John soup kitchen.

We remember former Moncton city manager Al Strang, who helped make several big projects possible in that city.

We also celebrate the life of Henry "Hank" Murphy, a well-respected lawyer from Moncton.

We also remember Dr. Daniel O'Brien, a former president of St. Thomas University and a member of the Order of Canada.

It was with sadness we learned of the passing of Dr. Daniel de Yturralde, a surgeon and founder of the Moncton Oncology Centre.

We remember Shediac's George Gallant, a long-distance runner who is in the New Brunswick, Moncton and Shediac sports halls of fame.

We also pay tribute to Derek Hatfield, a sailor who became the first Canadian to complete two around-the-world solo sailing races.

We celebrate the life of George Routledge of Renous, known as the "Man at the Mouth," and a legend in the province's salmon fishing community.

We also remember Neil Michaud, founder of the music department at the Université de Moncton, and a member of the Order of Canada.

Your government is committed to listening to the leaders in our communities throughout the province. It is the people of New Brunswick who set the priorities of government. It is government's responsibility to act on those priorities, including improving education, health care, the economy, and the lives of the people who are proud to call New Brunswick home.

When we spoke to New Brunswickers about getting our finances in order, they were clear on one thing: they wanted us to protect services that have the biggest impact on the quality of life of New Brunswickers. Those services include poverty reduction, better social programs and health care. All of these things will be better served if we can elevate our education systems, as research shows that the more educational opportunities we provide for our people, the less pressures there will be on our social programs.

Education

Over the past two years, your government has heard time and again that New Brunswickers wanted more invested in education. Your government understands how important education is and how interlinked it is to the success of New Brunswick's other priorities. Better educated people are better prepared to find and succeed in jobs, growing the economy. And better educated people are more likely to make healthy choices and avoid chronic illnesses and hospital care.

That is why your government committed before it was elected to develop a long-term, non-partisan education plan. Your government worked hand-in-hand with experts and stakeholders to develop this plan. This is a plan that sets goals and leaves it to teachers to deliver in whatever way is best for the circumstances of their schools and their students.

Through the 10-year education plan, your government will invest more in education than any government before. More investment, though, is not enough by itself. That is why government will rely on our educators to innovate and help improve the outcomes for our students.

New Brunswickers told government they wanted better access to post-secondary education for all New Brunswick families, not just those who can afford it. That is why, starting this year, every New Brunswick undergraduate student at one of our publicly funded universities or community colleges whose family makes \$60,000 or less is going to school for free. Your government believes this free-tuition program will have a long-term positive impact on this province by providing greater access to post-secondary education for young New Brunswickers who might not otherwise be able to afford to go to university or college.

Your government has also listened to parents of young children who are concerned about early childhood education in the years before kindergarten.

One of the big issues is access for those who struggle with the cost of daycare. To address this in the coming year, your government will increase the amount it provides New Brunswickers to help pay for the cost of daycare.

Also, government is developing a training strategy to support increased training requirements for early childhood educators. It has also introduced a 30-hour online curriculum orientation course aligned with each of the curriculum frameworks at no cost.

Your government will also explore initiatives to reduce the gap in young learners, and increase competencies that will enable pre-schoolers to be successful in school and in life.

New Brunswickers also had their say in helping build a new education plan for the province.

The 10-year education plan for each linguistic sector is the product of a comprehensive engagement process led by co-chairs Karen Power and Gino LeBlanc between September 2015 and March 2016. It provided all New Brunswickers the opportunity to voice their views on the future of education in our province.

Those who participated in the public consultation included experts, First Nations, educators, learners, parents, community and business leaders, school district personnel, district education councils and others through a series of open houses, one-on-one meetings, workshops and opportunities to comment online. This non-partisan and open approach validated that lifelong learning is fundamental to the residents of New Brunswick, and that there is a need for a clear vision and greater stability within the system.

The education plan is organized around key objectives that must be accomplished to realize our vision. These objectives are centred on the learner, who is at the heart of everything we do.

The plan establishes clear expectations on standards and performance to be achieved collaboratively.

Prioritizing our efforts in a co-ordinated approach is essential. The focus areas for the first year of implementation are literacy, numeracy, early childhood, and career and life readiness.

The successful execution of the plan is dependent on striking the right balance between setting the standards and expectations for the early learning and education system and empowering educators, parents and students to continually improve. The plan concludes by highlighting the conditions from a system's perspective that must be strengthened to achieve the learner-centred objectives.

The current definition of the education system values and integrates learning inside and outside of the system of schooling – from birth through public school and transitioning through post-secondary and into the workforce. It is important to enhance opportunities for children and students to connect learning to the larger world through real-life learning experiences, either through the arts, science, trades and technology, in an integrated and seamless continuum of learning.

Your government will look to increase opportunities for students to learn things such as software coding and the trades, two areas that New Brunswickers have pointed to as opportunities to grow the skill set of our students to prepare them for areas of need in the labour market.

Our educators will also look to improve outcomes in language skills, including the introduction of French Immersion at the Grade 1 level beginning in September 2017. Your government has paid attention to those who have spoken up on this issue to say the earlier a child can learn a second language, the better.

Your government agrees and will move forward with Grade One French Immersion this coming year.

There are also adult learners in the province who perhaps did not get the opportunity to learn a second language, and your government will be enhancing the opportunities for adults to learn a second language as well.

Moving forward, your government will continue to work with our post-secondary education institutions on providing an environment for students that can help close the skills gap that is being noticed by business leaders in this province. It is also important that our post-secondary institutions be accountable for the public money that is invested in this critical area. This will be examined by your government in the coming year as well.

Investing in Jobs

New Brunswickers from all corners of the province have told government that economic growth and better jobs are their priorities and the key to a better future. Economic growth is the top priority for New Brunswickers. This is why the economy continues to be the top priority of your government. Your government will continue working with the private sector and industry leaders to create the right conditions for businesses to start up, expand, and invest, so they can thrive and succeed here in New Brunswick.

It is clear that having a labour force that meets the demands of the private sector is critical to get our economy growing, and something that government can directly influence. The long-term solution for our labour force is improvements in education. This is why education is such a priority for your government; it delivers on key social and economic needs for New Brunswick society.

One of the reasons the economy has jumped to the top of the priority list for New Brunswickers is because the province has struggled for many years on the economic front. Between the years 2006 and 2014, the New Brunswick economy grew by a mere two percent. Atlantic Canada's growth rate over the same period was double that of New Brunswick. The economies of Ontario and Quebec grew five times more quickly than New Brunswick's. Western Canada did 10 times better than New Brunswick over that same period. That is why your government has placed such importance on turning this trend around.

While much work needs to be done, we are starting to see some positive signs in our provincial economy. In 2015, New Brunswick's GDP grew by 1.9 per cent, the fourth-best rate of growth in the country and the biggest growth in the province since 2010. Statistics Canada reported in August of this year that New Brunswick was the second-best province in the country in year-over-year growth in weekly earnings, showing an increase of 2.7 per cent. Spending was up in major investment projects in the province by a robust 29 per cent in 2015, and further growth of five per cent is expected in 2016. This government committed to creating 10,000 jobs during its mandate, and since the mandate began government has already helped support the creation of 8,500 jobs, largely through partnerships with the private sector.

Much like the education plan, government needed to build a new economic growth plan. And, like the education plan, it had to be built by New Brunswickers and for New Brunswick. A total of 22 economic summits were held in all corners of the province. Each one focused on a different sector, from traditional industries like farming, forestry and fishing, to established sectors such as our world-class business service industry, to emerging sectors like cybersecurity.

Beyond the economic summits, your government listened to chambers of commerce, regional service commissions, representatives of various interest groups, labour, and businesses, all interested in creating more jobs in the province.

The Economic Growth Plan released in September of this year is built on five pillars: people, capital, infrastructure, innovation, and agility. These pillars will guide government in its economic growth efforts in the future.

On the people front, your government will work this coming year to fill the skills gap that our businesses have identified as a hindrance to economic growth. This is why improving our education systems is so important for the province's future. This includes investing in training programs and capital investments in our universities and colleges.

Your government will continue to collaborate with the federal government, the private sector and industry to address the labour shortage needs of the province. Government is confident that, together, we can overcome these challenges and enhance our skilled workforce.

Growing our population is an important goal. That is why we are so focused on keeping our people here and bringing home those who have left. But another way to do that is through increased immigration.

Through the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Project, we have the opportunity to potentially double the number of immigrants settling in New Brunswick.

We are proud of the success we have had in welcoming and resettling 1,500 Syrian newcomers throughout the province. New Brunswick, per capita, has welcomed more Syrians than any other province, and New Brunswickers can be proud of the way they have opened their arms to welcome newcomers making a difficult transition to a new life in a new country.

On top of our success story with Syrian newcomers, another 2,500 newcomers and their families will call New Brunswick home by the end of the year. New Brunswick has experienced a record year for welcoming newcomers, as it saw close to 2,000 immigrants arrive in the first quarter of 2016 alone, resulting in the greatest population increase in the province in six years.

Your government will continue to promote New Brunswick as a destination of choice for newcomers and their families. As a government, we will also continue to help integrate them into our communities through a variety of outreach, language and job-training programs.

On the capital front, government will continue to support our businesses in the coming year. Your government has already increased the investor tax credit for small businesses from 30 to 50 per cent. In the coming year, the government will move forward with its commitment to reduce the small business tax to three per cent to help our business owners so they can reinvest and create jobs.

Investments in strategic infrastructure, often in conjunction with our federal and municipal partners, will continue to help support our province's economy. In the current fiscal year, your government is investing more than \$650 million in capital projects.

Your government is working with the Trudeau government and other partners to invest \$98.6 million in infrastructure on our public university and college campuses. Another \$158.9 million is being invested in clean water and wastewater projects to help communities grow, and \$56.6 million is going to affordable housing which will help those who need it the most find a home to call their own. These investments will support projects that matter to New Brunswickers.

Your government is also working to ensure that it can maximize its spending by leveraging other sources of funding. The government's focus is on developing funding

partnerships for infrastructure projects that strengthen New Brunswick's economy through the renewal of New Brunswick's aging infrastructure, with an emphasis on investments that promote trade corridor development, economic growth, innovation and diversification.

On the innovation front, your government will look to grow on the success the province has had in emerging industries such as the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

Successive governments recognized the importance of providing the infrastructure to support this industry and, as a result, today New Brunswick is recognized as the province with the best connectivity in the country, a critical element as your government continues to foster growth in this sector.

In the coming year, government will continue to support this sector through partners such as the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation and nb+.

Through the Smart Province Initiative, your government will work to build the first truly digital government in North America.

The province will deliver the best and most cost-effective services to residents, while providing a platform on which private-sector companies can build cutting-edge products and services which they can then sell in other markets.

Modernizing the way government business is conducted will make everyday things better for New Brunswickers through things such as the Digital Lab, Open Data Policy, and Digital ID. Legislation and initiatives to support this will be introduced in the coming year.

Your government will also continue to work to be more agile in support of our economy. That means, among other things, increasing efforts to reduce red tape, harmonizing regulations, and making government decisions on a timelier basis. It is important that your government makes it as easy as possible for job creators to do business in the province.

In the Economic Growth plan, your government also identified a first round of growth opportunities. A growth opportunity is somewhere we can see short-term growth that would include investment, job creation, GDP growth and increased tax revenue.

Global leader Siemens established a smart grid development centre in Fredericton several years ago as part of a partnership with NB Power. A "smart grid" is an electricity supply network that integrates digital technology to detect and react to local changes in electricity demand. Based on this foundation, New Brunswick is working to become a

hub for smart grid development by attracting start-ups and national and international firms to do their testing and development work in New Brunswick.

The attraction of farmers from abroad has a long history in New Brunswick. Many of New Brunswick's current farmers are close to retirement and do not have a proper succession plan. Some are retiring on their farms and letting the farmland go fallow. Others would like to sell but there is not a ready pool of new farmers ready to take over. In addition to helping young farmers, this opportunity involves attracting a new round of farmers from abroad (local people can also access the new entrant program). Hundreds of new farmers would boost economic activity and strengthen our important agriculture sector.

Cybersecurity has the potential to create hundreds of new, high value jobs in New Brunswick. The global cybersecurity market is estimated at \$75 billion and expected to grow to \$170 billion by 2020. New Brunswick is home to several world-class cybersecurity firms, including IBM which is boosting its significant cyber-related activity in Fredericton. We have the opportunity to take advantage of the emerging cybersecurity talent shortage expected to reach 1.5 million people by 2019.

There are areas in New Brunswick that are ideal microclimates for the production of blueberries. In the past decade, total blueberry production has more than tripled and become far more productive. With the large Oxford investment and the allocation of additional Crown land to other players, the industry is expected to grow even larger. New Brunswick will soon be the largest producer of blueberries in the world. This opportunity requires a strong ecosystem which includes smaller local producers being given opportunity to fully participate.

More firms in diverse industries – from information technology support to financial services and graphic design – are building distributed workforces. This opportunity involves the provincial government developing an inventory of people interested in this type of work, along with the skills and home-work environment (home office, broadband, etc.) and matching them with potential employers in New Brunswick and across North America. If there are gaps in skills or home-work environment, existing training programs could be used. This is a great opportunity for more employment in rural New Brunswick.

The business support services industry (contact or call centres) had its beginnings in New Brunswick more than 25 years ago when an available, skilled and bilingual workforce was leveraged by the provincial government to attract global companies such as IBM, Xerox, ExxonMobil, Purolator Courier, Federal Express and the Royal Bank of Canada. Importantly, the sector generates more than \$1 billion in annual export revenue for New Brunswick. This opportunity involves finding ways to help the sector grow. Other initiatives such as home-based work and the new immigration pilot project will boost the available workers for the industry. We need to assess new opportunities such as social media interaction and the development of technologies to support the industry. This was also identified as a priority through the opportunities summit process.

New Brunswick has struck a committee of key stakeholders to study the public safety challenges. This committee will also explore economic development opportunities stemming from marijuana. The legalization and control of marijuana will significantly expand the industry across Canada. Some provinces will take advantage of this opportunity to foster the creation of new production activity and value-added, specialized product development. In addition, there are numerous supply chain opportunities such as testing, R&D and other services. New Brunswick already has one marijuana production facility, another in the development phase, and other potential opportunities. Fredericton-based RPC is the country's leading tester of medical marijuana and has additional testing capacity. Federal-provincial research facilities in New Brunswick have capabilities that could be leveraged to help maximize the potential of this new industry.

New Brunswick households spend \$2.6 billion on food purchases each year. Much of the food consumed in New Brunswick is produced elsewhere (the total GDP contribution from food – wholesale/retail/restaurants – is about \$1 billion per year). Efforts to promote locally produced food and beverage consumption can contribute to GDP growth due to import substitution.

A successful tourism industry requires attractions, service providers and promotion. Investments in tourism infrastructure will help boost the number of tourists and their satisfaction rates. The Bay of Fundy and its surrounding parks, trails and attractions is New Brunswick's most sought-after tourism offering. Fundy National Park already attracts 230,000 visitors per year. With strategic infrastructure investments, industry collaboration and a comprehensive development strategy, we plan to co-create a unified Fundy Coast experience that will increase visitor traffic and tourism revenues.

A significant number of tourism service providers around New Brunswick (inns, cottages, motels, tours, outfitters, guides, campgrounds, artisans, gift shops and stores) are small, often family-operated, independent businesses. They must be supported with their succession challenges. The return on investment in promoting New Brunswick is significant and must be increased, creating a need for better signage throughout the province and more promotion to bring tourists to New Brunswick year-round.

The provincial government is focused on developing complementary economic opportunities from its vast forests. A good example is maple syrup. Revenues from this sector rose from \$3 million in 2000 to nearly \$32 million in 2015, and they are poised for additional growth as a result of an expansion of Crown land for maple syrup production. The Department of Energy and Resource Development allotted an additional 4,400 hectares for maple sugar production last fall, bringing the total Crown land allocated to 13,500 hectares. New Brunswick is the third-largest producer of maple syrup in the world, after Quebec and Vermont. The industry creates about 2,300 seasonal and part-time jobs each year and that number is set to rise significantly. Plus, there are lessons to be learned on how to turn this industry into a tourism draw as Vermont has done.

Energy East is a large-scale oil pipeline transmission project that would bring western Canadian oil for export through Port Saint John. It also involves investment in a new marine shipping terminal and oil storage facility. It could also enable other secondary processing opportunities. Government is pursuing multiple opportunities to ensure maximum economic benefit should the pipeline pass all regulatory hurdles. These include helping determine supply chain opportunities for New Brunswick firms, maximizing the benefits to New Brunswick's existing trades and heavy construction workforce, training young and First Nations workers on the skills needed to work in the heavy construction sector, and seeking other opportunities such as monitoring and dispatch activities.

Mining is a high-value industry offering high-wage jobs and royalty revenues to government. The Sisson molybdenum/tungsten Mine would be a large-scale investment in New Brunswick. It is one of the largest deposits of tungsten in North America. The mine would involve a \$600 million initial investment and create 300 ongoing jobs at the mine and several hundred more in the supply chain and through induced impacts.

New Brunswick's agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors provide opportunities for economic growth, especially in rural and coastal areas. Your government is committed to working with its partners to ensure that these sectors continue to create jobs and advance New Brunswick's growth and long-term prosperity.

Your government will launch the 2016-20 New Brunswick Shellfish Aquaculture Development Strategy, with updated initiatives and options that will ensure the ongoing sustainable development of the industry to support our Economic Growth Plan.

These are some of the priority areas for economic growth and job creation in the coming year for your government. Others will emerge and government will identify these by continuing to listen to the job creators and workers in all corners of the province.

Foremost, your government recognizes and values the relationship it has with First Nations in New Brunswick and is undertaking internal changes to better address First Nations' interests in the province. It is essential that we move forward with a common understanding of our mutual interests, and further develop partnerships to allow for First Nations to fully participate in the economy of the province.

Addressing climate change is another priority area for New Brunswickers as we work together to build a province with sustainable economic growth. Your government formed a multi-party Select Committee of the Legislature on Climate Change and it has done extremely important work in this area. The committee visited many communities around the province and recently completed and tabled its report to government. Your government will respond to this report in a timely manner and finalize the province's revamped climate change strategy in the coming year in order to transition to a low-carbon economy.

Your government will also receive and respond to recommendations on electoral reform during this session.

Health Care

Your government knows the priority that New Brunswickers place on health care. Your government believes that better education is the key to better health care results. Quality education is one of the primary determinants for a healthy life and lifestyle. Health care represents the government's biggest budget pressure. It is also perhaps the one service that has the biggest impact on the quality of the lives of people living in the province.

It is important that we aggressively pursue a proactive approach to health care. Through education, government will encourage New Brunswickers to live healthier lives. The healthier we are, the less stress we place on our hospitals, medical clinics and the professionals who treat us when our health falters.

Helping educate New Brunswick families in order to live healthier lives is one of the most important opportunities for our province. This is why your government wholeheartedly supports the recent challenge put forth by physicians in our province through the New Brunswick Medical Society to become one of the three healthiest provinces within 10 years.

Your government remains committed to accelerating the integration of proactive primary health-care services in communities across the province. In the coming year, a series of initiatives will be introduced that will reinforce our capacity to support families in their health-care choices and ensure better and more meaningful access to health professionals.

Obesity and smoking are areas in which government believes we should do much better as a province. If we do not address the root causes of these public health epidemics, we will never be able to manage our health-care costs in the future. In 2017, this will be a priority across government departments, and comprehensive measures will be introduced to drive a generational shift in our population. Through its Strategic Program Review, your government listened to New Brunswickers and chose to invest more strategically in health care. This includes the decision to protect rural health care. No rural hospitals will be closed under this government.

However, hospitals on their own are not enough to improve the health of New Brunswickers. For those who need treatment, there will continue to be challenges delivering health-care services in a largely rural province. Your government will continue to explore new ways to improve primary care by maximizing the use of our talented health-care professionals and adopting a collaborative approach to health care.

Building on our success in introducing advanced care paramedics in our communities, government will develop innovative frameworks to maximize the use of other allied health professionals like nurse practitioners and midwives.

Your government will work closely with the province's physicians to reinvent the role of the family doctor and create new models that will increase access and ensure that patients with chronic conditions receive the care and support they require to improve their quality of life and health outcomes.

Your government will enhance support for those struggling with addictions and other mental health issues with a strong focus on addiction services, ensuring that approaches are modernized to help families regain control of their future together. Much progress has been made in ensuring youth have access to integrated mental health services; we now need to make sure the same applies to New Brunswick's adult population.

Along with its health-care partners, your government will ensure that implementation of the federal legislation on medical assistance in dying in our province is done in a sensitive manner, ensuring all proper safeguards are in place. In parallel, palliative care services will be reinforced through a dedicated strategy with additional capacity that will support families in their most difficult times.

Your government believes we should have better alternatives to emergency rooms and after-hours clinics across our province. We should have more appropriate care for our seniors than alternate level of care beds. Your government believes that the last place anyone wants to be is in a hospital bed, unless it is absolutely necessary. That is why reducing hospitalization will become an important objective of the province's health-care initiatives.

The glue that binds our capacity to offer better and more integrated health care to New Brunswickers remains the Community Electronic Patient Record. In 2017, your government will re-energize its efforts through a Community ICT Strategy that will guide health care ICT investments in years to come.

Another example of your government listening to New Brunswickers is the approach to improving the way we care for and treat our seniors. While government would like to reverse the trend, the reality is New Brunswick has an aging population. As our population of seniors grows, we need to find ways to better address the issues New Brunswickers face in their later years.

This is why your government called together a Council on Aging. The council is expected to put forward a strategy on aging in the coming months. This will help guide new programs and policies to improve the lives of seniors living in New Brunswick.

Your government will introduce a program that will provide financial assistance to individuals who provide care for seniors or family members with mental illness in their own home.

Your government also recognizes that we have far too many New Brunswickers living in poverty; too many families that scrape by from paycheque to paycheque. Your government understands that we need to give them more help. Initiatives such as your government's Free Tuition Program and efforts to grow the economy present some much-needed long-term solutions for our residents. There are also ways government can help ease the daily struggle of making ends meet.

An example of this would be this government's HST credit that provides approximately \$100 million in direct financial support to New Brunswickers. In the past month, approximately 268,000 eligible New Brunswickers would have received their first two quarterly payments under this program. In January, people will receive another single quarterly payment. The New Brunswick sales tax credit is one of the most generous credits of its kind in Canada.

Your government also recognizes the importance of programs introduced under previous governments, such as the Home Energy Assistance Plan, designed to help low-income New Brunswickers with their heating bills. That program is due to expire at the end of this year, but your government will not only continue with the program, it will enhance it.

Housing is also a concern for low-income New Brunswickers. In the coming year, your government will consult with and listen to New Brunswickers as we develop a new long-term housing strategy. We will also continue to work with our federal partners as they develop a national housing strategy.

Other measures to reduce poverty in the province will be undertaken through various policies and investments.

Conclusion

The people of New Brunswick want a government that listens to its concerns. More importantly, they want a government that acts on those concerns. The initiatives and actions laid out for the coming legislature session are focused on responding to the concerns and ideas we have heard.

New Brunswickers and their government share three overarching priorities: jobs, education and health care. Education is the priority that links the other two.

A major focus this coming year for government will be taking action in the area of education. This includes improving and providing better access to our education systems, but also better educating New Brunswickers so they are prepared to contribute to the workforce, and so that they have a better understanding in areas such as wellness and healthy living, which is critical to helping manage our ever-growing health-care costs.

New Brunswickers have asked their government to continue to focus on setting the right conditions for economic growth and job creation. Government will do this in the coming year by focusing on its new economic growth plan and, specifically, growth opportunities in areas where there is real opportunity for some short-term payoff for New Brunswickers.

Your government will focus on getting things done this coming year based on what it has heard to date from the people of New Brunswick that this Legislature serves.

Government needs to be responsive to the ever-shifting priorities of New Brunswickers. They want a government that acts on the concerns of its educators, parents, seniors, health care workers, professionals and job-creators. Your government will strive to do that in the coming year.

Government agendas cannot be created in a vacuum. The only way for a government to deliver on what people want is to pay close attention to what people are telling it. The agenda of this coming legislative session has been very much set by New Brunswickers. Now it is important that your government focuses on what it can do better for New Brunswickers.