

# Speech from the Throne

Fourth session of the 58<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

The Honourable Jocelyne Roy Vienneau,  
Lieutenant-Governor

October 24, 2017

*An agenda that works for New Brunswickers*

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## General Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and most importantly the people of New Brunswick, welcome to the opening of the fourth session of the 58<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

This session marks the final legislative session of this government's current mandate. This session will build on the positive momentum of the past three years of a government that is listening to the concerns of New Brunswickers and getting things done to grow the economy, strengthen education and improve health care. Through hard work, your government is restoring hope in our people, our province and what the future holds for all New Brunswickers.

Over the course of the last three years, your government has been faced with difficult choices.

During the Strategic Program Review process, the government could have chosen deeper cuts to services like education and health care to achieve a balanced budget more quickly. However, it chose differently. Instead, your government chose to add more teachers to schools, pledged to keep all rural hospitals open, and committed to reach balance at a slower pace than advocated by some.

Some believe it is necessary to choose between lifting up workers and families or keeping business costs low and competitive. Your government believes it can do both and found the balance between the two. When there was a choice on whether or not to raise the minimum wage, of whether or not to bring forward a family day holiday, your government put working families first. Improving the lives of families helps produce a happier and more productive workforce who will both start and support businesses in this province.

Some have argued that the right way forward is to lower taxes on the richest of society. They argue with more money to spend, big businesses and the rich will invest and create jobs. Some call this trickle-down economics. Your government has argued for a different choice. Your government has chosen to increase taxes on the richest one per cent of society and to increase taxes on large corporations, in order to fund things like lower taxes for small businesses and a tax rebate for the most vulnerable in society.

New Brunswick is witnessing positive economic trends and recent successes that will position our province for future growth. Over the last three years, we have seen the best economic growth in our province in a decade. In 2015 the New Brunswick economy grew at the third fastest rate of all the provinces in Canada. In 2016 the New Brunswick economy grew above the Canadian average rate, with real GDP growth reaching 1.4 per cent. The New Brunswick economy is estimated to grow again in 2017.

Private capital expenditures have rebounded, exceeding 2013 levels in each of the last three years. Most notably, in 2015 capital expenditures reached almost \$2 billion, a level not seen since 2011.

Average weekly earnings were up by 2.3 per cent in 2016 – following 2.8 per cent growth in 2015 – and above the national result of 0.4 per cent. Tied with Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick had the highest growth in average weekly earnings countrywide in 2016. The New Brunswick unemployment rate has been in single digits for all of 2017.

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In addition, since Standard and Poor's, a global credit rating agency, downgraded New Brunswick to an A+ credit rating with a stable outlook in 2012, our province has maintained that rating. The rating highlighted modest improvements in budgetary performance, a predictable and well-managed institutional framework, and slow but positive economic growth. The fact that we have been able to maintain this is encouraging.

We also must recognize the important role that workers play in enabling this economic growth. Your government recognizes that a strong partnership with the labour movement is a key component of a successful economic growth strategy. That is why your government has established a joint steering committee made up of senior government representatives and senior representatives of the labour movement to advance workers' priorities while enabling economic growth and social progress. Since the first meeting late this summer, this steering committee has made significant progress which will be seen this session with the introduction of legislation on first contract arbitration and regulations on workplace violence.

## **Congratulations / Recognition**

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

In August, David Adams Richards, known best for his literary work, was appointed a member of the Senate of Canada.

We congratulate federal MP Ginette Petitpas Taylor of Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe for her appointment to the federal cabinet as Minister of Health.

Ten New Brunswickers were named to the Order of New Brunswick, including Normand Caissie, Raimo Kokkonen, Susan Chalmers-Gauvin, Jacqueline Webster, Dr. Michael Perley, Measha Brueggergosman, Léopold Thériault, Donat Lacroix, Erminie Cohen and Richard J. Currie.

Four New Brunswickers joined the Order of Canada. Playwright Norman Foster of Fredericton was named an Officer of the Order of Canada. Wesley Armour of Moncton became a Member of the Order of Canada, as did Rothesay's Gerald Pond and Gregory S. Kealey of Fredericton.

Many talented and caring New Brunswickers have also been recognized this past year for their contributions and achievements.

Three New Brunswick educators were among 40 honoured by the Learning Partnership as Canada's Outstanding Principals. They were Wayne Annis from Keswick Valley Memorial School in Burtt's Corner, Matthew Bedard from Seawood Elementary School in Saint John, and Nancy Matthews from Riverview Middle School.

Barry Freeze, Charles Levasseur and the Bathurst Employment Services and Training Group received Disability Awareness Week Awards.

Cathy Wright of Saint John received the Legacy Award and the Business Champion Award was presented to Saint John's Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative at the Poverty Reduction Summit.

Six new members were inducted into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame, including Kimberly Adams-Tattrie, Brian and Henry Flood, Paula Keating, the late Ernest Quigley, Jeffrey Scholten and Team Hanlon, consisting of Heidi Hanlon, Kathy Floyd, Jane Arsenau and Judy Blanchard.

Team New Brunswick brought home 16 medals from the 2017 North American Indigenous Games. Jada Levi-Ward, Madison Wilson and Brandon Robichaud won gold. The silver medalists were Monique Francis-Savoie, Amber Solomon and Lindsey Anne Tenass, Mathew Dedam, Madison Wilson, Brooke Sacobie, Seth Peter-Paul, Keith Dennis and Jacob Tenass. Jannah Levi-Ward, Jacob Tenass, Keith Dennis and Jacob Labillois won bronze, as did relay team members Emily McCafferty, Sylvie Bartlett, Madison Wilson and Karissa Price.

Team New Brunswick won five medals at the 8<sup>th</sup> Games of the Francophonie. Shelley Doucet won gold, Émilie Lavoie and Gabriel Robichaud won silver, and Annie France Noël and Samantha Stewart won bronze.

We were inspired by the participants in the 2017 Invictus Games including Arron Victory, Dwayne Thorpe, Master Corporal Jason Israel, Karyne Gelinias, Katherine Heath, Marc Comeau, Master Corporal Mark Hoogendoorn, Melissa Smith, Michael Reist, and Michel LeBlanc.

We congratulate Fredericton's Calvin Ross who captured the Canadian Junior Boys golf championship. Ross paired with Sam Reid of Moncton and Stuart Earle of Woodmans Point to lead New Brunswick to second place in the team competition at the same event.

Team New Brunswick returned from the 2017 Canada Summer Games with 24 medals. The gold medalists were Veronica Coombes and Chris O'Toole. The silver medalists were Brooklyn Douthwright, Laura Dickinson, Jesse Canney, Tania Blanchard, Jasmine Thebeau, and Justin Shannon. The bronze medalists were Brooklyn Douthwright, Liam Turgeon, Christel Robichaud, Jacob LeBlanc, Jesse Canney, Jacob Gallant, Annabelle Boudreau, and Alex Cormier. The men's golf team and the women's volleyball team also brought home bronze medals, and Team New Brunswick placed second in the Centennial Cup.

As growing our economy is a priority, it is important to recognize the business leaders who distinguished themselves over the past year.

The winners of the 2017 New Brunswick Export Awards were G.E. Barbour Inc., Mrs. Dunster's (1996) Inc., SimpTek Technologies Inc., Lizotte Machine Vision, Corruven Canada Inc., and Boise Cascade Alljoist.

The winners of the 2017 KIRA Awards included Bulletproof, EhEye Inc., The Institute of Biomedical Engineering, Soricimed Biopharma Inc., Northern Hardwoods Research Institute, and Integrated Service Delivery for Children and Youth.

Our 2017 Start-Up Awards winners were Jordan Kennie, Dr. Ali Ghorbani, Dhirendra Shukla, Bibi Lyn Designs Inc., and Remsoft.

Thirty-eight New Brunswick acts were nominated for the 2017 East Coast Music Awards, with Tristan Horncastle, Les Hôtesses d'Hilaire and The Motorleague taking home awards.

Also in music, Jamie Comeau & The Crooked Teeth won the 2017 Rising Star Competition at the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival.

Rebecca Schofield from Riverview continues to inspire with her campaign for kindness after being diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. The province celebrated the first Becca Schofield Day on September 16.

## **Condolences**

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

We remember Ruth Stanley, recipient of the Order of New Brunswick and wife of the late George Stanley, former lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick.

We pay tribute to Ann Sherman, dean of the faculty of education at the University of New Brunswick, a long-time advisor to all levels of government.

This past year we also lost Wendy Robbins, a professor at the University of New Brunswick and a recipient of the Governor General's Award.

We honour Eldon Hay, minister, tireless activist for the LGBT community and recipient of the Order of Canada and the New Brunswick Human Rights Award.

We pause to remember Christian Brun, executive director of the Maritime Fishermen's Union.

We celebrate the life of Shirley Dysart, former MLA and the second woman in the province's history to win a seat in the Legislative Assembly.

We pay tribute to former MLA Thomas Gilbert; Gérard Haché, a former MLA and recipient of the Order of New Brunswick; André Robichaud, former MLA; and William (Bill) Malenfant, former MLA and former mayor of Dieppe.

Also in our thoughts is Jean-Guy Rioux, former president of the World Acadian Congress.

We honour Raymond Murphy, former executive director of the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick.

We also pay tribute to Nova Scotia RCMP Const. Francis (Frank) Deschênes, a native of Sainte-Anne-de-Madawaska.

## **Job Creation and Economic Growth**

Your government is overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities to restore hope for workers.

Your government is disappointed by the decision by TransCanada, based on market conditions, to withdraw the Energy East pipeline project. Your government is also disappointed by the ongoing softwood lumber dispute, but remains hopeful that our efforts will ensure fair treatment for New Brunswick. However, your government is encouraged by other positive economic trends and the advancement of other projects in its economic growth plan.

Since 2015, our economy has been growing. In fact through 2017, GDP growth is forecast to be 4.5 per cent over that three year period. This compares to negative 1.4 per cent over the previous three years from 2012 through 2014. By bringing forward measures like pay equity and a higher minimum wage, your government has ensured that this economic growth does not benefit just the wealthiest.

In this session of the legislature, your government will bring forward additional measures to benefit small businesses which will build upon the success of our previous reductions to the small business income tax rate and our enhancements to the small business investor tax credit.

Your government recognizes that businesses small and large rely on a ready workforce. In addition to educational investments, your government will continue to seek to grow the labour force by increasing our population and will launch a new strategy aimed at maintaining and growing New Brunswick's population.

Tourism continues to be a major component of your government's economic vision and it is committed to developing this important sector. Your government has been working hard with

tourism partners to boost the industry. Your government has listened to New Brunswickers who want economic growth in the tourism sector to be a priority and now we are seeing results.

Through the New Brunswick Economic Growth Plan, your government is pursuing and developing opportunities in a broad range of areas including cybersecurity, smart grid technology, business support services and boosting new farmers. These are just a few of the areas that were identified as part of the first round of growth opportunities. Your government will continue to work to identify and pursue new growth opportunities and keep moving New Brunswick forward.

As well, your government will invest more in innovation. It will also implement its platform commitment on regional economic development by restoring a provincial presence in each region responsible for linking local businesses and local governments with provincial and federal economic development programs and funding.

Your government also recognizes the importance of responsible investments in infrastructure to boost the economy and make our roads, schools and hospitals better and safer for New Brunswickers. In this session, your government will continue to advance the Strategic Infrastructure Initiative and leverage federal infrastructure spending to the benefit of New Brunswickers. Some have argued that we cannot afford these investments in infrastructure, your government sides with others who say we cannot afford the consequences of skipping these critical investments.

Ensuring the safety of the people of this province encompasses a lot of areas, including the places New Brunswickers work. Your government is aware of the decisions made at WorkSafe New Brunswick. In respect of the Meredith Principles, government has avoided overruling this arms' length agency, but has grave concerns about the current state of the system. Over the past several years, rates were allowed to dip too low, which created the current situation where massive rate shock is required to make the fund sustainable. As a result, both workers and employers are dissatisfied. Your government has created a task force to review the situation and make recommendations to strike a better balance between reasonable rates and reasonable benefits. Your government is pleased that the auditor general has agreed to perform a value-for-money audit of the commission. Your government stands with representatives of the labour movement who are protesting a decision to draw down the accident fund to a level that may not be sustainable.

In this session of the legislature, your government will introduce legislation to prepare for the legalization of recreational cannabis. Your government is pleased to be a national leader in preparing for this reality announced by the federal government over two years ago. We all want to get cannabis out of the hands of youth and get the proceeds out of the hands of criminals. This legislation will first ensure that public safety is respected by having strong regulations for production, distribution, and sale of cannabis coupled with the necessary awareness programs and enforcement. While government puts all of this in place, it will also ensure that New Brunswick is taking full advantage of the economic opportunities offered by this new industry.

Your government will also introduce legislation on climate change and carbon pricing in this session. Your government will build on the framework laid out in *Transitioning to a Low-carbon Economy*, the climate change action plan tabled last year. Our mechanism will respect New Brunswick's economic realities and challenges while playing a role to combat climate change, which is this generation's largest challenge. The legislation will establish a carbon price that minimizes the impact on consumers, calls on large industry to reduce emissions or pay its fair share, and establishes a climate change fund with dedicated investments to combat the effects of climate change.



Unlike some who want to avoid the climate change challenge, your government believes that this is an opportunity to leverage new investments in new technologies to create sustainable economic growth for our province.

## Investing in Education

Your government is making investments that restore hope in our education system. In fact, your government's investments in education have been nothing short of transformational.

For the first time in history, New Brunswick has 10-year, non-partisan education plans built with the guidance of stakeholders, educators and parents from all corners of the province. These plans are supported by record investments in education, including the hiring of hundreds of additional teachers.

New Brunswickers from families who need the most help can now benefit from the free tuition program if they attend a New Brunswick public college or university. New Brunswick families can also benefit from the tuition relief for the middle class program. These programs are making post-secondary education an option for more New Brunswickers.

Your government has created nearly 3,000 additional day care spaces, and is well on its way to achieving its platform commitment of 30,000 spaces by 2020. Too often, paying for child care is a challenge for families. Improving accessibility and affordability will not only help ensure that children can experience quality care that helps them reach their full potential, it allows more people to access the workforce, which in turn will strengthen the province's workforce. Your government has signed a new agreement with the federal government to make day cares more accessible and affordable. Further details on this partnership will be announced during this session of the legislature.

Your government has removed a stain from New Brunswick's reputation in the country by restoring French immersion to Grade 1. This is the right approach for our children and it follows the recommendation of the review of the entry point of early French immersion commissioned in 2011. The new Grade 1 program has been enhanced based upon the most recent research on French learning. Early French immersion is being offered at 68 schools around the province, including at seven schools that are offering it for the first time. On top of this, French language pilot projects have been implemented to improve access to French learning in rural schools as well, with one taking place in each Anglophone school district. The pilot projects provide extended opportunities for students in kindergarten to Grade 3 to learn to speak, read and write in French. These steps will ensure that Canada's only bilingual province once again has first-rate bilingual education.

Improving literacy rates is crucial for New Brunswick's economy and it is even more important for improving the quality of life of children and families in our province. That is why your government launched *Unleashing the power of literacy: New Brunswick's Comprehensive Literacy Strategy*. We will continue to work together to improve literacy skills in our province.

Your government has also expanded the Integrated Service Delivery model for providing mental health, addiction, intervention and social services to children and youth to all public schools in the province.

Since 2015, nearly \$300 million has been invested in our public school infrastructure to create safer schools with better learning environments across the province and build new schools in regions where they are needed. This includes the first new school built in the Anglophone sector in Saint John in nearly 40 years. Your government has also invested \$111 million in university and college infrastructure by working together with our federal partners.

Your government will soon sign memoranda of understanding with our public universities which will lay out government funding and a predictable tuition for students for the next four years, funding for pilot projects at the universities to increase enrollment, increase population, and pursue research and development opportunities, and an agreement for the universities to appear annually before the Legislative Assembly.

## **Educated People and Healthy Families**

Your government is taking action to restore hope for families in this province.

Your government's family plan lays out a roadmap for services that will continue to build a province which is the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Your government is making strategic investments and entering new partnerships to get the health care people need, when they need it and where they need it. This includes a partnership with the New Brunswick Medical Society for better access to family doctors outside of normal business hours. This includes expanding the role of allied health professionals like nurse practitioners and paramedics. And this includes a partnership with New Brunswick-based non-profit Medavie to integrate the services of Ambulance New Brunswick, the Extra-Mural Program and Tele-Care 811, in one seamless system to assist all New Brunswickers, particularly seniors in their homes and in their communities. In this session, your government will also move forward on its platform commitment to provide benefits to financially assist seniors and their informal caregivers so they can stay independent longer.

Your government is committed to making the necessary investments in infrastructure to provide quality health care to New Brunswickers that is effective, efficient, and supportive to positive health-care outcomes. Government is also committed to making these investments where they are needed in both urban and rural New Brunswick, further evidence of its commitment to protect rural hospitals from closure.

Supporting those with addictions and mental health challenges is one of the pillars of the New Brunswick Family Plan. A report stemming from stakeholder engagement which was released in the spring highlights the development of the Enhanced Action Plan on Addictions and Mental Health as a priority initiative as it will address continuity of care and access issues for a broader segment of our population. This plan will focus on ensuring evidence-based, person-centered services. Good mental health is fundamental to the resilience of individuals, families and communities. Your government is committed to taking steps to improve mental health in our province, as doing so will increase productivity for our businesses and economy. Record investments in mental health will be possible in part thanks to an agreement with the federal government that will provide our province with targeted funding of \$104.3 million over 10 years. As a result of these investments, it is expected that wait times for mental health services for children and youth will be shortened considerably.

Fostering healthy aging and support for seniors is another pillar of the family plan and an area where your government is getting things done. This includes expanding the Seniors Health, Well-Being and Home Safety Review, a program aimed at helping seniors remain independent longer, as well as building nursing homes in different areas of the province to ensure these services are there when they are needed.

Your government will continue to advocate for New Brunswick to be chosen as a site for a national healthy seniors pilot project where we can build and test innovative solutions to the challenges presented by an aging population. By doing this, our province will serve as an example for the nation, while determining best practices to keep New Brunswick seniors healthy and in their homes.

Your government is also investing in initiatives to provide better mental health outcomes, better wellness and health determinants and reduce poverty. Government is investing \$10 million over five years to create the Social Innovation Fund. This fund, a strategic partnership between government and Living Saint John, will support innovation projects and initiatives that strive towards ending generational poverty in Greater Saint John. Saint John will serve as a testing site for new approaches to reducing poverty and strengthening social conditions vital to economic growth. What we learn there will have positive impacts for the rest of the province.

Your government is working to expand the Family Division Case Management model, which provides streamlined access to services and expedient resolutions of family law disputes prior to being dealt with by a judge. This model has worked well in Saint John and will soon be expanded to other jurisdictions in the province.

Your government recognizes that a society that treats all persons equally is more likely to succeed not just from a social justice perspective but also from an economic perspective. In this session, your government will continue the implementation of initiatives to better protect against intimate partner violence, along with improved access to family law, improved access to reproductive health and broader implementation of pay equity.

## **Fiscal Responsibility**

Your government is restoring hope in New Brunswickers that our finances will be dealt with once and for all.

Your government is proud to have exceeded all of its financial targets and is on course to balance the budget by 2020. In fact, since 2014, your government has cut the province's deficit by 67 per cent, all while growing the New Brunswick economy and investing more in education and health care. This is a responsible plan, as to achieve balance any faster would have required deep cuts to important social services like education and health care. These were not cuts your government was willing to make.

Government will continue the MLA pay freeze and introduce legislation to ensure there is no dispute that this pay freeze will remain in effect until at least 2021 when New Brunswick enters its first full fiscal year of a balanced budget. The same freeze will apply to the reduced salaries implemented in 2015 for the premier and ministers.

## **Conclusion**

Over the course of this session, ministers will provide details regarding the initiatives contained in this Speech from the Throne.

Amendments to a variety of Acts of the Legislative Assembly will be introduced and debated in order to ensure your government continues to improve services offered to the public.

Our provincial motto, Spem Reduxit, is translated as "Hope Restored". The theme of restoring hope has been applied to a number of speeches from the throne in this Legislature over the years. In truth, hope was never lost among the people who lived here. New Brunswick has always been a place to come for refugees, those looking for a better life. The province's motto originally referred to those who moved here because they opposed the American Revolution. They were looking for hope and turned to New Brunswick. Newcomers from around the globe have been starting anew in New Brunswick for more than 300 years. The Mi'kmaq and Maliseet saw Europeans arrive in the 17th century, the Loyalists and Acadians in the 18th century.

Victims of the Irish potato famine found a home here in the 19th century. And last year, New Brunswick took in the largest per capita share of Syrian refugees of any province.

We can take great pride in the fact that New Brunswick is a place where hope has been restored for so many. Your government believes its job is to ensure all New Brunswickers can live with the promise of a better future.

Over the past three years, your government has proven that we can have economic growth in New Brunswick. We can afford innovative investments in education and health care. We can lead the country in things like free tuition and health care delivered in our communities and homes. And we can do all of that while getting our budget back in balance.

It is about investing in our people. New Brunswickers will always be our greatest asset and it is only with their help that we will continue make things happen.

It is about investing in what matters most to New Brunswickers, investing in the things New Brunswickers need, and investing in opportunities for New Brunswickers. This is how your government will create an agenda that works for our province and realize a better future for everyone who lives, works and makes their home in New Brunswick.

It is about restoring hope for all New Brunswickers.

May divine providence continue to bless New Brunswick and its residents, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.