

Education Platform

The People's Alliance of New Brunswick is pleased to announce what we believe are some solid ideas to enhance our education system.

Party leader Kris Austin and Charlotte-Campobello PANB candidate John Craig were at St. Stephen High School Monday morning where they spoke to nearly 40 Grade 11 and 12 students about their concerns regarding their education.

Austin said he felt it extremely beneficial to get the input from the students on what they feel needs to be fixed or improved upon in the system.

“These kids live with what our education system comes up with everyday. No one ever seems to stop and ask the students what they think about the decisions that are affecting their lives. Their input is crucial,” Austin said.

Craig added that some people simply don't give the students enough credit to participate in a productive manner.

“From the kids I know around here, that couldn't be further from the truth. They really care and they want to have a say in their education,” Craig said.

Some initiatives the People's Alliance would like to see put into the education system include re-introducing trades in the high schools, free vision screening for students entering kindergarten, fair and equitable of treatment of all education staff, tougher anti-bullying legislation, placement of early second language immersion to Grade 1 throughout the province and rebates on student loans based on academic performance.

“These are not ideas we pulled out of the sky,” said Austin. “We believe these initiatives can provide solid support to help our youth and the environment in which they learn.”

- re-introduction of trades in high schools- this would be done in partnership with industry to seek out equipment donation. The programs would be voluntary for students and would be a general overview to give them an idea of directions they may be considering in the community college system. These programs would not replace core courses such as English, Math and Science.

- free vision screening for students entering kindergarten- this is a suggestion from the CNIB. Their organization says this is a crucial age to catch and be able to correct future vision problems by up to 50 per cent. These screening are free to those students whose aren't covered by their parents private health plan.
- push for settlement with teacher's assistants- the People's Alliance will push whoever forms government to reach a fair and equitable settlement with these people as soon as possible. These people along with others in the education system help our children grow up and in order to attract quality people, they need to be treated right.
- tougher anti-bullying legislation- it's unacceptable for bullying to be allowed to happen without correction in our schools. The People's Alliance will push for tougher anti-bullying legislation to protect the victims and educate those who are inflicting on others from further actions.
- Early second language immersion- the People's Alliance would like to see early second language brought back to Grade 1 with the schools offering and the parents making the choice whether or not the students attend. Eventually after monitoring for a year or two, the program would be modified to reflect student enrolment across the entire province.
- student loan rebates- As a reward for hard work, the People's Alliance would like to see post-secondary students who maintain a certain level of academic achievement, a grade percentage, receive an automatic rebate to a portion of their student loans or lines of credit.

After speaking to the students, Austin and Craig opened up the floor for questioning and were bombarded with questions from lowering crime rate to creation of more efficient health services, to handling debt and protecting the environment.

“Those kids were very sharp this morning. They asked good, solid questions and I tip my hat to them,” Austin said. “I'd say they have a lot more grasp on the election and the issues facing New Brunswick than what many would give them credit for.”

Seniors Initiatives

The announced People's Alliance seniors initiatives include:

Increase funding for support services to help more seniors stay in their homes.

People want to stay in their homes if possible. This allows them to maintain a greater level of independence, and better quality of life.

The costs would have to be looked at within the health care system, but there are costs already associated with those in the nursing home system.

. seek to return property tax assessments for seniors aged 65 and older to 2006 levels for as long as they live in their own home.

This would lower property taxes back before these extraordinary annual increases started coming into place in recent years. This would result in significant savings to individuals on fixed incomes who could in turn re-invest that money into grocery and heating bills or even modifications to their home to suit their particular needs.

. As previously promised in our health care platform, we will pursue a comprehensive strategy to detail requirements for long-term nursing home beds not just for the present, but for the future. The strategy when complete, would be implemented in such a way that all areas of the province would receive proper coverage.

. Add funding to active-senior projects in conjunction with federal government programs

The People's Alliance would push to have our province partner with seniors groups and the current existing federal programs to provide another level of funding for any worthwhile project being attempted by hard-working, good-hearted people who only want to help their community.

Individual funding for projects would be determined on a case by case basis under a similar review structure to the federal program. Keep in mind the number of successful proposals may vary from year to year depending on the province's economic

state.

CROWN LAND AND FORESTRY PLATFORM

New Brunswick forests have been the backbone of our economy, generating exports of forest based products of nearly 3 billion dollars per year. Today, with the downturn of the economy and the loss of mills, the forestry industry is in trouble. And it must be fixed, and quickly.

Our forests are a living breathing entity and great care must be taken to ensure its continued good health. Particular care must be taken to ensure that there is adequate habitat for wild life and that our lakes, streams and rivers remain undisturbed. Clear cutting, silviculture practices and the use of forest biomass needs to be thoroughly overhauled, to ensure that our forests biodiversity is maintained and that the forest industry remains productive..

The People’ s Alliance Party New Brunswick views our now fragile economy as the most pressing problem this province has ever faced since confederation. As we enter the latter half of 2010, we are looking at a deficit unrivalled in all of the provinces history. In order to bring the provinces under control, without increasing taxes or cutting public services, we must use every resource we have at hand to pay down that debt. To do this however, we must begin to think outside the box, and develop our resources in a more fiscally responsible way.

Although the downturn in the world economy has had an impact on the forestry industry, it is not the only reason for its current decline. Legislative changes and inequitable market treatment, are giving mill owners an unfair advantage over the 30,000 woodlot owners, their employees and the people who benefit from the spin-off of their labours. This work force represents a massive economic engine and must be protected at all costs.

With the above topics in mind, the People’ s Alliance’ s platform on Crown Land and forestry is intended to stimulate the forestry industry and protect our forests well into the future.

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1. Tighten Control of Crown Forest Lands

The ownership New Brunswick's forestry resources is broken down into four areas: Crown land; private woodlots; industrial freehold land; and federal land. The Crown has the largest amount of land, which is approximately 3.3 million hectares or 51 percent of our forests, while woodlot owners have the second largest at 29 percent or roughly 1.9 million hectares.

Crown land has been divided into ten licensed areas held by six licensees.

Additionally, there are also sub-licensees and permit holders who harvest timber from crown lands.

Harvesting practices on crown land have varied over the years but today, with mechanized harvesters, the general practice has been to clear-cut an area of forest. One harvester can clear two to three acres

per day, and one company with two or three harvesters working in tandem with processors and porters can clear hundreds of acres in a month.

Clear cutting has been used as the principle harvesting practices in New Brunswick's public forests since mechanical harvesters were introduced into the industry some 20 or more years ago, but this practice is showing that it has some draw backs. The chief draw back among them is the damage to the environment.

With the trees removed from large blocks of forested areas, the root systems no longer hold the water and run off is causing many harvested sites to be stripped of top cover, and this cover, is necessary for biodiversity within the forest. Notwithstanding, the damage that run-off causes to our rivers, streams and lakes; clear cutting has a negative impact on wild life habitat areas. Finally, the more areas we cut in this manner the less divers our forest will become. We are losing more and more of our old growth forest, and to continue in this manner is folly.

The final draw back is the damage that these clear cutting practices on Crown land is doing to the New Brunswick's economy as a whole. The practice most certainly provides cheaper lumber for the large mills, but the practice is also putting small woodlot owners out of business. Since 2005 woodlot owners sales have gone from \$100 million to around \$30 million. This is an unacceptable drop for one of the provinces major employers. The drop not only affects the woodlot owners, but also the small local community businesses which are supporting them.

Finally, the practise of cutting and shipping Crown wood out of province by corporations who do not contribute to the provinces development only saps our resources and should be discontinued.

A People's Alliance government will modify clear cutting practises on Crown land and work to develop less intrusive method of commercial harvesting of lumber.

A People's Alliance government will reduce the amount of lumber being gathered from crown land to ensure woodlot owners will get an equitable market share within the industry, and that our forestry resources are not over burdened.

A People's Alliance government will stop the harvesting and export of all Crown wood by companies

not operating wood product manufacturing businesses in New Brunswick.

2. Create a Balanced Timber Royalties System

To ensure that everyone involved in the forest industry is treated equally, in respect to the fair value of the forest products harvested from Crown lands, fair market value timber royalties were imposed. These royalties are also intended to establish equity in the timber market, where timber harvested from Crown lands competes directly with timber from other suppliers.

This system however is not working and the woodlot owners find themselves in competition with cheap timber being harvested by mills from

Crown land. The timber cut from Crown land is cheaper, because of clear cutting and the speed at which mechanical harvesters can gather timber. This harvesting practice makes it less expensive than traditional methods.

Woodlot owners on the other hand use selective cutting methods to preserve their property. Using this method the ownership of woodlots has remained within family groups for hundreds of years, and tens of thousands of families have earned their living from the land.

As a result of the difference between the two harvesting methods the price of lumber has dropped and with it the amounts for royalty payments for each of the many species of tree in the province. The woodlot owners now find themselves with nowhere to sell their wood.

Projecting this trend into the future suggests that, unable to make a living, wood lot owners would be forced to sell their land and find other employment. And as the trend continues, the 29 percent of New Brunswick's forest owned by woodlot owners would then be clear-cut to recoup the cost of each block purchase. It will be a bleak future for the province if this trend isn't reversed.

The People's Alliance party believe that the people of New Brunswick would be better served by bringing back into balance the forest industry as a whole, rather than allowing this trend to continue.

To this end The People' s Alliance party will move to implement changes in regulations and legislation with the aim of rebuilding the forestry industry.

A People' s Alliance government will create an independent Timber Marketing Board whose responsibility will be:

- a. to set fair market value for all types of standing timber, and publish these values on a monthly if not quarterly basis;
- b. to investigate and rule on disputes where Crown wood is claimed to be competing with wood from private wood lots;
- c. to ensure that each allotted monthly/annual quote of both Crown land and private timber remain in balance and that none of the parties harvest more than the other.

3. Develop Community Based Forestry Industry

The small communities in New Brunswick have been going through difficult times over the past ten years and the future for them does not look promising, yet there are riches all around them, our forests.

The development of a community based forestry industry could be the answer to relieve the economic stress that small communities find themselves in as the provincial economy flounders..

Other jurisdictions both in Canada and the US have been working toward the development of small-scale community based forestry related industries, and with some success. We in New Brunswick must follow this same trend if we are to develop a more agile economy. By doing so we will create new jobs, and develop solutions for the use of timber and non-timber related forestry products.

A People' s Alliance government will work with small rural communities to develop forestry related cottage industries and give them ready access and use of the crown lands surrounding their

communities. We will also provide long-term low-interest loans to communities with a demonstrable forest industry development plan.

4. Private Woodlot, Forest Management Incentive.

The cost of maintaining anything today is becoming more and more expensive. And with the current depressed prices of lumber, woodlot owners are hard pressed to even silviculture their lands. Worst of all, forest road construction is no longer affordable for the average wood lot owner. Their timber therefore is not readily accessible, and because of this the cost of harvesting has become too expensive.

In order to ease the burden of management cost to private forest land owners, they need monetary assistance to help them lower their overhead.

A People' s Alliance government, working with the Federal government, will implement a five-year tax shelter for woodlot owners who manage their woodlots in a productive but ecologically sensitive manner.

5. Ban Spraying of Herbicides over Crown Land.

It has been clearly shown that the use of any herbicides worldwide is offsetting the natural balance of nature. Our neighbour, Quebec has banned spraying over their forests , as too have many other jurisdictions across North America and around the world. Common sense suggests that we should follow suit.

A People' s Alliance government will ban the use of pesticides spraying over Crown land.

6. Forestry End Product Development.

Many forestry mills send pulp and lumber to other countries to be finished into various product, which are then sold world-wide. This is not a practice that invites domestic growth and steps must be taken to

correct this practice and develop our own forestry related industries, large and small.

A People' s Alliance government will work with municipal governments and business development organizations to develop and promoted forest based industries.

PLATFORM – DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY – PANB on MLA salaries, pensions, and expense accounts

Your Conservative and Liberal MLAs have behaved with excessive self-interest when they raised their own compensation packages under the most suspicious of circumstances. And lately, their review timing was designed to ensure departing MLAs and those who are not re-elected will receive their inflated packages, without review. PANB will ensure that proper review occurs in the future.

1. MLA Salaries and Pensions

The People' s Alliance believes that MLAs should be compensated fairly for service to their constituents. However, the compensation package passed unanimously by the traditional parties was done so in secret, and in bad faith.

A People' s Alliance government will reverse the compensation package passed in 2008 until such a time that a proper review of MLA compensations can be performed, including consultation with the citizens of New Brunswick.

2. MLA Expense Accounts

Elected representatives in many jurisdictions have been found to be improperly expensing costs without business justification. In some cases, representatives have even charged the taxpayers of their jurisdictions for improvements to their homes. This practice is unacceptable and can easily be

remedied.

A People's Alliance government will require the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to post all MLA expense claims on the Legislature website. Additional information, such as copies of receipts, will be made available to the public upon request. No MLA will be able to receive reimbursement for expenses without a proper expense claim, including business justification.

Autism

Autism is a debilitating mental disease with a few disturbing trends.

- 1/ it's cause is found to be 2% genetic.
- 2/ the remaining 98% is unknown but believed to be environmental
- 3/ there is no known cure but there is treatment that can make the disease manageable in most
- 4/ those with autism can live a full normal lifespan
- 5/ one in 100 children born have autism the large percentage of that boys
- 6/ in the last 20 years autism cases have increased by over 60%

It can be treated and those who suffer it can live as long as a normal person.

This means that if someone has the disease and is not treated they can require constant care 24/hrs a day for as much as 70-80 years. This care would require a person trained to deal specifically with autistic patients and each carer can only deal with one person at any one time.

With treatment many of these individuals can lead lives that are close to normal and in some cases can be extremely productive. Two examples of extremely productive Autistic individuals are Albert Einstein and Temple Grandin (an animal treatment expert and public speaker). It is also believed that many comedians are either autistic or ADHD though one of the best examples who I believe is closest to autism is Adam Sandler.

So with treatment we know they can be productive and in some cases extremely productive. And yet almost all governments prefer to ignore these individuals and their disease with very few providing sufficient resources to properly treat this disease.

Treatment of Autism is done through a program called ABA therapy. A one on one behavioural therapy that in some cases can result in those treated being able to function almost fully in society.

PANB recommends

- 1/ All autistic children have access to 4 hours a day of ABA training through to kindergarten.
- 2/ All autistic children have access to 1-2 hours a day of ABA training through all school years until graduation either from high school or university as part of their standard school day.
- 3/ All autistic children should be taught in school using ABA methods by ABA trained TA' s as this is proven to improve their learning ability
- 4/ The creation of both an Adult care facility and a Youth care facility be built in Fredericton in conjunction with the Stan Cassidy Center which will care for those Autistic individuals who can no longer be cared for by the normal caregivers of these individuals. This care should focus on multiple facets but should include ABA training to create the possibility that even adults could potentially be helped by ABA be given that opportunity.
- 5/ All autistic individuals even after graduation should have access to ABA training for short term or long term if there ability to function properly in society diminishes or disappears for any reason.
- 6/ An attempt to find a further cure and treatment options should be continued through partnership with the Universities in this province, The Stan Cassidy centre and the Federal government
- 7/ As it has been determined by various parents of autistic children that not in all situations does full integration work with ALL autistic children, A program should be put in place that would allow parents and resource workers as well as TA' s to work together to create a modified part time integrated program that would better meet the needs of the individual student if the situation warrants this.
- 8/ changes to the disability benefit to allow staggering levels of benefit that recognizes the level of care required as well as the requirements to replace property increasingly due to high increase in breakage due to rocking behaviours etc common amongst autistic children.
- 9/ Summer autism camps during school breaks should be made available to allow children the ability to socialize with those like themselves amongst trained carers.

It should be realized that both the Liberals and Conservatives were made aware as far back as 2005 of the necessity of a Care Facility in this province when it was made public during the Conservative years of that time that we were being forced to send those individuals with autism that required long term care to Maine to be housed there as we had no facilities in this province. The conservatives of the time had no interest in developing a treatment center.

During this period the Liberals were vocal in their disapproval of the fact our citizens were being cared for out of country due to no facilities in this province however their dedication to this file was shown during the recent 4 years when no attempt at creating a long term care facility was done regardless of repeated requests.

John Foran was aware of a case in 2005 where a youth was housed at the Miramichi Youth Centre under the direct care of 2 carers from a private company at the cost of 700\$ a day because we did not have the facilities in this province to properly house him and from there he was transferred to Maine because the Conservatives would not address this lack of facility.

And yet during the entire 4 year mandate of the liberals not one thing was done to change this lack of care centres either.

PANB is the only party that will push for a drastic improvement to how these autistic individuals in our care are treated.

PLATFORM: PANB demands financial review and more power to Auditor General, Human Rights Commissioner, Public Utilities Review Board, Child Advocate, Commissioner of Pensions and others

People' s Alliance kicks off with election promise reality check

The People' s Alliance of New Brunswick chose to address the financial crisis facing our province as part of its official campaign kick-off in Minto on Wednesday evening.

PANB Party leader Kris Austin said at this point in the campaign nothing or very little has been mentioned about the province's growing debt and streak of budget deficits from our fellow political parties.

"I want to stress that the announcements we aren't making are just as important as those we are committing to," Austin said. "The Liberals and Conservatives are criss-crossing the province making daily promises that they cannot logically uphold and if they do, no matter who forms government will throw us inconceivably further into debt."

Austin addressed a crowd of about 120 people at the provincial campaign headquarters on Main Street in Minto.

"It's no secret our province remains under serious financial strain although you would never have guessed that to hear the speeches of the Liberal and Conservative leaders since the writ was dropped last Thursday," he said.

Austin added, with People's Alliance representatives in the legislature, we would make sure other parties are reminded of the promises made during the election and push for full public disclosure when these decisions are cancelled or significantly changed.

Our party has a position of no tax increases, but modest tax cuts in select areas to stimulate economic growth is intended to help one of the province's largest employers: small businesses.

"Rather than promise hundreds of millions of dollars in spending and tens of thousands of yet unknown jobs, our focus is on being realistic and setting New Brunswick on track to operate more efficiently by keeping the government accountable to the people," Austin said.

Ed Hoyt, PANB candidate for Fundy River Valley said to hold government accountable, the province's books need to be opened to truly show where we are financially.

“It would give a true transparency of what monies are being spent in the province of New Brunswick and where the funds are going so we can better manage ourselves,” Hoyt said. “With members of our party in the legislature, we would push the others to see this happen.”

A comprehensive review of all government spending would ensure that tax dollars are being spent wisely, Hoyt added.

Once any savings are realized, they would be divided between reinvestment in worthwhile programs and services, and reducing the deficit.

More teeth for government watchdogs

Currently in this province there are several individuals and commissions whose responsibility it is to act to protect the interest of citizens in many important areas such as but not exclusive to Auditor General, Human Rights Commissioner, Public Utilities Review Board, Child Advocate, Commissioner of Pensions, and several others.

Unfortunately for a variety of reasons these bodies are unable to do their jobs effectively. which may include lack of staff and funding, lack of legislative teeth, too much political interference, or simply an unclear mandate which will ultimately lead to poor results, said PANB York North candidate Steven Hawkes.

“In short, these government overseers are in many cases handcuffed, because of poor legislation, which takes away any chance for real change with their recommendations or reports but at best are simply able to suggest or perhaps criticize,” Hawkes said.

What we propose is that each of these bodies be given the following. 1) clear concise mandates 2) support of effective legislation that defines roles and responsibilities clearly, and allows them to operate in an effective, meaningful manner 3) ensure that once roles and responsibilities, and legislation are in place that these bodies receive the financial, and logistical support necessary to act effectively. 4) all such bodies should be able to operate without political interference and appointments to such bodies should be done in an open and transparent manner.

We would also push to set up an oversight committee to prevent abuse of power by these various watchdog groups. This oversight committee would include all official party leaders, said Hawkes.

All conversations with the oversight committee would be recorded and made public.

Following the rally, Austin added he believes promises to make government better itself and manage more for the betterment of the province should sit just as well with the public as the much larger, more expensive photo-ops happening during the election.

“We believe these platform pieces while not as splashy as other party’ s promises is nevertheless achievable and ultimately more realistic as opposed to the reckless, irresponsible promises which our opponents cannot possibly hope to deliver,” Austin said.

Platform Item: Business and the Economy

Economic growth and prosperity is essential to the future of New Brunswick. Our economic strength will attract new People to the province, will encourage our young Citizens to stay in the province, and ensure the long term sustainability of the government programs enjoyed by all.

Traditional methods of growing the economy, such as government grants, usually have only a short-term benefit. In order to build our economy in the medium and long term, we need to become more competitive and make the transition easier for those wishing to start their own businesses.

Strengthening our small business sector will also have the benefit of creating a culture of

entrepreneurship in New Brunswick. The economic diversity of a strong small business sector will in turn make New Brunswick more resilient to the effects of future recessions.

1. Income Tax Relief for New Businesses

Whether you are an independent contractor, a small manufacturer, or a retail franchisee, starting your own business can be a daunting task. Studies show, time and again, that most new businesses fail in the first two years. Although this is due to a number of reasons, Income Taxes are the single biggest burden a government can place on a new business.

A People's Alliance government will relieve new small businesses of all provincial Income Taxes for the first three years of operations.

This will assist all new small businesses, in all parts of the province, on an equal basis. The costs of this Income Tax "holiday" will be offset by reducing Business New Brunswick grants by an amount equal to the tax reduction.

This initiative will only be available to entrepreneurs one time, regardless of how many additional businesses they may start.

2. Income Tax Relief for Businesses Relocating to New Brunswick

Similar to providing a "tax holiday" for new home-grown enterprises, companies that relocate to New Brunswick may also require assistance. The cost of relocating operations is usually the deciding factor on whether a company relocates to New Brunswick. Reducing the impact of these costs will attract more businesses to our province.

A People's Alliance government will relieve businesses relocating to New Brunswick of all provincial Income Taxes for the first three years of operations in the province.

Traditionally, government grants have been used to entice companies to relocate, but once the grant runs out, many companies cease operations. Transferring money from grants to an Income Tax “holiday” ensures that profitable companies will receive help from the government. These profitable companies will not close operations after the program expires, thus creating more long term employment opportunities for the People of New Brunswick.

3. Reward People for Investing in New Brunswick Business

In addition to relieving the government burden on small business, the People’s Alliance seeks to assist those making the transition to entrepreneur with financing. This is one of the largest barriers to most People starting their own business. By enhancing the reward for People investing in New Brunswick businesses, entrepreneurs will be better able to attract individual investors.

A People’s Alliance government will eliminate provincial Income Taxes on interest income earned from companies operating primarily within New Brunswick. This tax shelter would only apply to individual investors that lend money to small companies within the province. Earnings from equity financing would continue to be taxed in the current manner.

4. Reduce the Regulatory Burden on Small Business

Especially for new entrepreneurs, the hidden costs of government regulation are prohibitive. Business New Brunswick currently is attempting to reduce the amount of “red tape” with which small businesses need to comply. This work, while noble, is missing some key elements that would enhance the process’ accountability and efficiency.

A People’s Alliance government will mandate the Minister of BNB to measure the impact of “red tape” on small business and set a goal for the reduction of this burden. Other provinces, such as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, have set aggressive goals for regulatory reductions on small business. In the case of Newfoundland and Labrador, the government eliminated or reformed more than 78,000

regulations that represented a cost to small business of \$30 million. The goal of our own regulatory review/reduction is to ensure NB will be competitive with these other provinces in the future.

5. Harassment Free Workplaces

Although usually considered a social issue, harassment in the workplace damages productivity and confidence for all employees. The majority of employers understand that a harassment free workplace helps, but many employers need the tools and government help to enforce rules against this behaviour.

The People's Alliance supports harassment free workplaces, in all sectors of our economy. We will work with employers of all sizes to seek ways of strengthening both the private and public sector laws and enforcement of workplace harassment laws.

Transportation Platform

The People's Alliance of New Brunswick would like to take this opportunity to detail some initiatives of our Transportation platform.

As much as health care and education, transportation issues are a vital part of New Brunswick's well-being and without proper care and funding can do much damage to the province.

Party leader Kris Austin said saving Department of Transportation garages, better utilizing our province's ports and taking government interference out of road construction are a few small measures the People's Alliance would support.

"We don't need our roads paved with gold, but it would be nice if we could properly pave those that desperately need them," Austin said. "New Brunswickers shouldn't be able to guess that they're driving on a road in the riding of a cabinet minister simply because of the smooth ride."

Woodstock People's Alliance candidate David Kennedy said in more rural areas, the closure and downsizing of DOT garages has had a negative impact.

"First of all it's meant job losses, which directly takes tax dollars through income and indirectly through spending," Kennedy said. "Secondly it means services such as snow ploughing in winter are not delivered in as timely a manner. That veers into what is safe for the public."

Kennedy added these rural DOT garages need to be maintained to ensure rural infrastructure is not damaged any further.

Wes Gullison, PANB candidate in Southwest Miramichi said what he would like to see is a long-term strategy to maintain and improve secondary roads.

"If we wish to grow the economy then we must have a road system in this province that will allow for the efficient transportation of goods and people between all population centers, in all parts of the province," Gullison said.

In particular, Gullison pointed out the problems of the Plaster Rock-Renous Highway, Route 108, as a perfect example of a key thoroughfare that needs government attention.

“It’s been pointed out by various people and groups that Route 108 could be a key transportation link from Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland to Quebec and the rest of Canada,” Gullison added.

“But how can we make it a success given its current state of overgrown vegetation, poor winter conditions and the fact more than 20 kilometres of the highway is a dirt road.”

Austin said it seems to boil down to is the priorities of the governing party of the day and their intent to invest in strategic government-held ridings rather than invest in areas that need it.

“When Bernard Lord was the Conservative premier, there was barely a pothole on provincial highways within 20 miles of Moncton,” Austin said. “Meanwhile after the Liberals formed government in 2006, Shawn Graham vowed to see more transportation investment in Kent County within a year or so than it saw under the entire seven-year Lord mandate.”

“The problem is these governments aren’t allowing the experts within the Department of Transportation to do their jobs without political interference,” Austin added. “We will push for the transportation officials to consider maintenance and construction needs regardless of who holds the riding and that government simply act on what is most urgent.”

The following are transportation initiatives in the People’s Alliance platform:

1) We would seek to reverse the decision to close and downsize DOT garages throughout the province. The removal of these has a negative impact on small villages, and local service districts. Maintaining these garages would better ensure that rural infrastructure is supported, which leads to more job creation in rural New Brunswick.

2) All public private partnerships involving roads in this province should be reviewed to ensure that they are in the absolute best interest of the taxpayer. If a public private partnership is found not to be providing good value to the taxpayer then it must be either renegotiated or cancelled as soon as possible. Any future such partnerships must be transparent, and clearly in the best interest of the population. The People’s Alliance would push for such reviews to be carried out as quickly as possible and suggest the public be provided details on such deals.

3) Our party supports better utilization of our smaller ports such as Belledune, and Bayside. These are valuable provincial assets that are not being used to their full potential. The use of these ports would be part of a broader economic development strategy that would be developed with local stakeholders to determine the strengths of each particular port.

4) Year-round ferry service to Campobello Island must be achieved. For the residents of that island to have to take a lengthy detour through a foreign country to connect with the mainland is an embarrassment to us all. The People's Alliance will push to make this a reality with members in the legislature. With the Liberal government pushing to close rural ferries during its mandate and residents of Grand Manan receiving a new ferry, it's time the residents of Campobello receive this long overdue service.

5) The People's Alliance wants a long-term strategy to maintain and improve secondary roads in this province. If we wish to grow the economy then we must have a road system in this province that will allow for the efficient transportation of goods and people between all population centers, in all parts of the province.

6) The issue of tolls on our main highway is very much a political hot potato. However, the People's Alliance would like to see government speak with New Brunswickers at a series of open public meetings to discuss the possibility of bringing them back. The People's Alliance would like to see all profit from the tolls go towards reducing the provincial debt. Our idea is to provide residents of our province a pass to the toll of their choice for a small annual fee. The intent is to level the playing field of every other provincial and state jurisdiction that borders New Brunswick. Nova Scotia, P.E.I, Maine and Quebec all have toll highways which New Brunswickers must pay to use, yet only New Brunswick taxpayers care for our system.

PLATFORM: PANB on Taxation

If elected into the legislature this month, the People's Alliance of New Brunswick vows to have its MLAs push for a fairer system to calculate property tax assessments.

People's Alliance party leader Kris Austin announced Sunday in Fredericton that New Brunswickers

have said loud and clear that skyrocketing property taxes need to stop.

“It’s our belief that the people of our province are taxed to the point of financial exhaustion so we have come up with what we believe are practical and achievable solutions to ease this burden,” said Austin. “With People’s Alliance representatives in the legislature, we will push for a freeze on property tax assessment increases for one government mandate.”

During this time, municipalities will retain the right to increase tax rates under their own mandate.

While assessments are frozen, the People’s Alliance will push for a policy to be developed in consultation with the citizens and the municipalities in order to more equitably assess the value of real property in New Brunswick for taxation purposes.

“Over the last decade, home owners have lived through excessive assessment value increases, pushing some people to sell their homes,” Austin added. “It’s our hope this legislation would stop the unjustified increases that have been realized in the last number of years.”

John Craig, Mayor of the Town of St. Andrews and PANB candidate in Charlotte-Campobello, said ever-increasing property taxes is something he knows too well.

“I’ve seen this first hand in my community of St. Andrews where wealthy people from the States, who are certainly welcome additions to the area, have come in and purchased property for higher and higher values,” Craig said. “Recent years of neighbourhood tax assessments have seen residents who have lived in the area all their lives struggle to pay their taxes because they wished to keep the home they’ve had for decades than sell it.”

Removal of double taxation on rental properties

The People's Alliance will also push for the removal of double taxation on rental properties. Currently, rental properties in New Brunswick are taxed at twice the rate as primary dwellings. This unfairly increases the rent for many citizens, especially those who are in the lower income bracket.

This measure will come into effect only once the deficit is eliminated. To do so prior to that may cause significant financial strain on the province, as municipalities may demand compensation for the reduced revenue.

Middle class income taxes would be frozen

When one looks at the demographics of our province, it is abundantly clear that the largest income segment is our middle class working citizens, Austin said.

Any People's Alliance MLAs will push legislation forward to freeze middle income tax rates until the deficit has been eliminated. Although this will not help to offset the cost of living increases to which the people have been subject, it will ensure that government does not make life even more difficult on the largest segment of our population.

Unfortunately, Austin added, it is not realistic at this time to lower middle class income taxes due to the unprecedented debt financing the current government has used.

Democratic Accountability – The MLAs and their constituents.

In the last number of years, the people of New Brunswick have witnessed many examples of the decline of our democratic institutions and ideals. Your MLAs have behaved with excessive self-interest, such as the manner in which they raised their own compensation packages, and with disregard to the interests of their Constituents, such as the NB Power sell off and dealing with punitive property tax increases. It is obvious that our democracy needs reform to return control to the Citizens of this province.

At the very foundation of the Peoples Alliance of New Brunswick is the concept of “Free Votes”

and “Constituency Consultations” which PANB defines as follows:

1. Free Votes for all MLAs

The NB Legislature is a representative council. As such, each member needs the ability to represent his or her Constituents interests. This cannot be done within the current conventions of party discipline.

Each People’ s Alliance MLA will have the right to vote in the best interests of their Constituents, without repercussion from the party leadership.

Free votes will ensure that cabinet will need to consider the needs of all parts of New Brunswick when drafting legislation and, more importantly, budgets. This will ensure that the wishes of the voters are better acted upon in the Legislative Assembly.

2. Consultation with Constituents

Many parties promise to consult the People of New Brunswick. This usually takes the form of government paid consultants touring the province and providing recommendations to the government. The People’ s Alliance feels that it is the responsibility of MLAs to represent their Constituents, and that the hiring of consultants undermines this essential role.

To ensure that the People of New Brunswick are properly consulted on matters before government, all People’ s Alliance MLAs will hold a minimum of two town hall style meetings per year with their Constituents. The People’ s Alliance will also utilize technology, such as interactive websites, to maintain constant communication with their Constituents.

Social Justice

The People's Alliance of New Brunswick believe in all people being treated equally regardless of race, culture or financial stature.

With intentions to create a work program for those on social assistance, push to stop benefit reductions to those on social assistance and old age pensions

Party Leader Kris Austin said the most vulnerable in our society are usually the ones that face the most financial hardship.

And while government programs can help, often times they leave people in an endless cycle of poverty and despair.

“Instead, the goal of government's social safety programs should be to restore people to a position where they can enjoy the same prosperity of all citizens,” Austin said.

In particular, Austin said he recalls the NB Works program from the McKenna government in the early 1990s which paid social assistance recipients for work rendered.

“A program like this would give people more money in their pocket which it turn would go back into the community for groceries, rent and other necessary amenities,” he said.

Lisa Cromwell, the People's Alliance candidate in Saint John Portland said she believes ending disruptions or reductions to the benefits of those on social assistance is an important step in moving people forward.

“When people get a modest increase in Canada Pension, old-age benefit or social assistance and it throws their benefit coverage out of whack, they can end up worse off than if they didn't receive a raise,” Cromwell said. “This isn't a logical approach to a serious problem.”

Wendy Coughlin, the People's Alliance candidate in Saint John Lancaster added she has heard from people that an important oversight in the social justice system is a lack of support for people with disabled adult dependents.

Coughlin said there is financial aid available for parents or guardians with disabled children, but those caring for disabled adults do not have such a network of support.

“There is drug coverage available when a family can prove financial hardship, but barring that, these people are left to fend for themselves, sometimes taking second jobs to make ends meet,” she said.

“I think more should be done to help them.”

The following are the platform planks under the People's Alliance social justice platform:

1. Work Experience for those on Social Assistance

Like education, on-the-job experience is essential to securing long term employment. In addition to the financial benefits, allowing Social Assistance recipients the opportunity to work also builds confidence and bestows greater dignity.

People's Alliance MLA's will work with the federal government to develop a program where social assistance recipients can voluntarily work for additional money and build job experience.

In the mid 1990's, such a program existed. The results of that experience will be used to build, and improve, a similar program today.

2. End the “claw back” of Social Assistance

Several situations, most notably single mothers receiving child support or senior citizens receiving Canada Pension, the Social Assistance program “claws back” or reduces the benefit to recipients. This essentially leaves the recipients in a worse position, as interruptions in these other payments can occur.

The People’ s Alliance will seek to eliminate the claw back of social assistance benefits for those citizens receiving child support or Canada Pension Plan benefits.

3. Equal Parenting

The current family court system lends itself to lengthy legal battles involving lawyers and issues over the rights of parents to raise their children. If divorced couples were presumed to carry equal rights and responsibilities for the care of their children, this burden would be lifted from the court system, the parents, and the children themselves.

The People’ s Alliance would amend the Family Services Act to include the presumption of equal parenting. Only in cases where abuse is alleged, would the family court system be required to intervene for the protection of the children.

4. Health Coverage for the Working Poor

Many People that work currently do not have health coverage through their employers, and are unable to afford their own private health plan. This includes many families and single parents, who are unable to pay for the essential health services required by their children. In some cases, this lack of health coverage is a determining factor when someone is considering working or remaining on social assistance.

The People's Alliance will develop a medical coverage program for employed people that cannot afford their own coverage. To ensure that the program is not abused, the earnings threshold for qualification to this program will be established at \$30,000/year.

5. Allowance for adult dependants

The People's Alliance feels that government should assist people with the costs of caring for a disabled adult dependant. Currently, the only assistance a person receives is for drug coverage if they can prove that the costs of which are creating a hardship on the family.

The People's Alliance will push for changes to the social assistance program so that people caring for a disabled adult dependant will receive assistance. The maximum amount received would be equal to the medical amount for long-term assistance, less 25%. There would be a financial cap in place for household income along the same guidelines as caring for children with disabilities.

Proportional Representation

Our current first-past-the-post system of electing representatives sometimes produces uneven election results. A growing number of People have suggested that MLAs be elected based on the number of aggregate votes that a party receives. This system of proportional representation is used in several nations with success.

A People' s Alliance government will hold a referendum on a number of proportional representation proposals, in order to determine what method, if any, is preferred by the People. This referendum will be held in concurrence with municipal elections held after forming government.

Recall of MLAs and Citizen Initiated Referendum

Further reform of our democratic institutions may be desirable for the People. Many have proposed many ideas such as recall and citizen' s initiated referendum but a consensus is far from established.

The People' s Alliance will continue to study these ideas through consultation with the People. The resulting policy proposals will be available in detail in our next election platform. The Citizens of New Brunswick will have an opportunity to vote on such proposals prior to their implementation.