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New Ways for New Brunswick!

Elizabeth Weir
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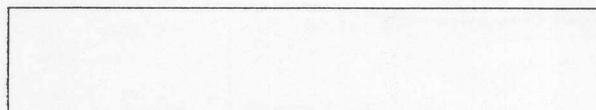


*New***Democrats**

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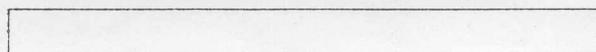


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Authorized by Gary Waite the Official Agent for the New Brunswick New Democrats

New Ways For New Brunswick !

I believe that New Brunswickers are ready for something new. Not just a change in people or parties, but a change in the ideas and values that guide our governments. A change back to the community values that make New Brunswick a special place to live

I've spent a lot of time listening to New Brunswickers and learning from them. And what I'm hearing is that people feel that something just isn't right. We know it's a new world out there, with new rules and a new economy. Governments have been telling us that there's not much we can count on – that our jobs can't be guaranteed, that our kids may not find work here at home, that our schools and hospitals can't count on government funding, and that the new global economy means that our communities can't be sustained.

Governments have been telling us that's the way it is. But I do not believe that's the way it has to be. I don't believe it's radical or unrealistic to want to preserve New Brunswick's identity and culture. I think it would be radical to just give those up.

For a long, long time, New Brunswickers have been told to rely on others for our success. To rely on money coming from Ottawa. To count on big companies from Toronto and New York and Vancouver to throw us a few jobs, if we ask them for nothing in return.

New Democrats believe that the 21st century is a time when New Brunswick can stop being dependent upon outsiders. New Democrats believe that the answer is to trust New Brunswickers more.

Our vision isn't about getting all the answers from Bay Street or from Parliament Hill. It isn't about getting all of the answers from government. It's about giving people, their families, and their communities the tools we need to have a strong economy without sacrificing the values that make New Brunswick the best place to live.

If you're like me, you choose New Brunswick as your home because of our people. The way we like to live in communities where people know their neighbours. The way we pull together to help out those in our communities when they're down on their luck. The way we have always worked together to sustain our schools, our hospitals, and the institutions that make our towns feel like home. And the way we've always taken responsibility, through our own spirit and drive, to make a living in a place outsiders told us would never work.

As we approach the new millennium, it's time to build a new vision, accepting the changes the outside world brings us, but accepting them on our terms – in a way that uses New Brunswick values to maintain a New Brunswick way of life. Our plan asks people, in their communities, to take responsibility for sustaining our unique way of life. Our plan makes sure that government gives them what they need to do it. It's about people meeting government halfway to make all of our lives better.

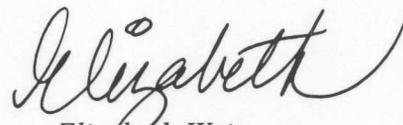
When we say New Democrats offer new ways to make New Brunswick a better place, we mean that we can find new ways to tap into the talents of New Brunswick's greatest resource - its people. Here's how.

- ▶ We will give communities and citizens a real say in how our health care system responds to their needs. In return, they will find innovative ways to help their citizens have access to preventative care and a wide-range of health resources.
- ▶ We will ensure that a New Brunswick Medicare Card means access to the care people need, and stop the whittling away of drugs and services covered by Medicare. In return, citizens will help us find alternatives to costly hospital care.
- ▶ We will give the private sector the tax relief they need to create jobs. In return, they will agree to make this tax relief dependent upon their ability to deliver good wages, secure jobs, health benefits and good working conditions to New Brunswickers.
- ▶ We will give teachers and local schools more freedom, and more resources, to find the best way to inspire our kids to learn. In return, they will prepare our kids with the lifelong learning skills they need to succeed.

- ▶ We will offer New Brunswickers of all ages access to the education and training they need to find work. In return, they will agree to make the most of that opportunity, and to use their skills to make New Brunswick a better place.
- ▶ We will offer New Brunswick entrepreneurs the help they need to get their small or home-based business going. In return, those who succeed will employ New Brunswickers and help us make those resources available to new entrepreneurs.
- ▶ We will give New Brunswickers more direct say in how government works. In return, citizens will have a greater responsibility for becoming informed about the issues.
- ▶ We will provide hope and opportunity to our young people with programs and policies specifically designed for them. In return, they will stay in the province and contribute to the building of healthy communities.
- ▶ We will put more resources into sustaining our artists and our cultural institutions. In return, our artistic community will help us share our spirit with the world.

We won't build a better New Brunswick with sweeping pronouncements or empty rhetoric. We'll build it one person, one community, one idea at a time. The ideas in this platform will be a personal checklist for each and every NDP MLA. They're the practical things we want to accomplish to make life a little better for everyone. They'll give you a sense of the priorities we would bring to the next five years, offering services as we can afford them without adding one red cent to the debt.

The new millennium can belong to New Brunswick, if a new government will believe in New Brunswickers. We can once again succeed where others have predicted failure. We simply have to believe in ourselves, believe in each other, and most of all, believe New Democrats offer new ways to make New Brunswick a better place.



Elizabeth Weir
NDP Leader

New Ways to Ensure Quality Health Care

There is no more important responsibility of government than to provide quality health care to citizens. In many ways, our health care system reflects our community values — that when someone is sick and needs our help, we come together to help them and their family through their time of need. That's why our country built a Medicare system Canadians have come to count on. That's why so many New Brunswick communities pooled their resources to have a community hospital that was there for everyone.

It's because health care matters so much that New Brunswickers know there's a problem. They know it when they see long waiting lists in hospitals, when they see communities without enough doctors to meet their needs. New Brunswickers know that when hospital corporations are mired in debt, when patients have to demonstrate in the street to get the medicine they need, and when sick people are sleeping in corridors due to a lack of beds, that somehow we've lost sight of what matters in our health care system.

It's time to put an end to the political malpractice in health care. New Democrats believe in returning some core principles to improving our health care system — bringing local communities back into the decision-making process, ensuring funding that lets New Brunswickers count on the system again, and developing health care services that are flexible and personal, giving choice and dignity to patients and their families.

New Democrats will bring local communities back into health care decisions

- We will allow citizens to elect the members of their regional health boards, and give municipalities more input into setting their local health care needs.
- We will expand and enhance the role of community health centers, providing them with the resources to offer health counseling and support, preventative care, and to tailor their services to the health needs of the local community.
- We will create regional health boards, creating stronger links between all local health care resources for better patient care in a variety of fields -- preventative care, home care, community groups, support networks and chronic care facilities.
- We will allow regional health boards greater input in choosing which services and facilities they should offer, and in determining the health needs of their community.

New Democrats will return financial sanity to our health care system

- We will make a long-term funding commitment to our health care system, and will consult with front-line health care providers to ensure that the money budgeted matches the services citizens expect the system to provide.
- We will join with other Canadian provinces in the ongoing legal fight to make big tobacco companies reimburse taxpayers for the cost tobacco-related illnesses have taken out of our health care system.

New Democrats will expand the care options available to New Brunswick families

- We will increase the quality and availability of home care by offering wage replacement benefits and support resources to family care givers, by hiring 200 new nurses to help provide home care support, and by allowing families a tax deduction for home care expenses.
- We will invest in an Internet Health Library, operated by the Department of Health, which will give professional assistance in finding quality advice and support resources available on the world wide web, making it easier for patients and their families to get the information they need.

New Democrats will invest in preventative health care, spending money today to make New Brunswickers healthy tomorrow

- We will make it a funding priority to make preventative care services something all New Brunswick families can afford.
- We will invest new funds in providing school nutrition programs and public health workers to New Brunswick schools.

New Democrats will ensure fast access to necessary medical services

- We will reduce hospital waiting times by expanding the role of nurse practitioners to offer initial care for routine complaints, by expanding the role of community health centres to offer basic, face-to-face medical advice, and by introducing a better, more effective physician remuneration schedule geared towards faster patient service.
- We will assist New Brunswick universities in developing advanced nursing certificate programs, and make it a priority to end nursing shortages throughout New Brunswick with quality, full-time nursing jobs.
- We will follow the lead of other provinces and hire a full-time recruiter, to begin filling the vacancies for doctors and nurses in New Brunswick communities.

New Democrats will stop the Liberal chipping away of the value of your Medicare card

- For too long, the Liberal government has begun off-loading services once covered by Medicare onto private health insurance plans, driving up the cost of these plans and driving down the number of New Brunswickers who can access basic services. New Democrats will declare an end to this off-loading and conduct a full, public review of the list of covered services and medications.

- We will introduce prescription drug coverage for all New Brunswick children and those with chronic conditions, and increase New Brunswick's efforts to call on Ottawa and the other nine provinces to introduce a national pharmacare plan to ensure universality of access to medication. We will strive to make this goal affordable by coordinating medical purchases into a single buyer system, giving us leverage to take on multinational drug companies and their skyrocketing drug costs.

New Ways to Invest in Education for the Future

Too many rules, not enough results. Too many memos, not enough money. Too much tinkering, not enough teachers.

That sums up the Liberal record in our education system. Driven by an agenda that puts controlling expenditures ahead of inspiring kids, they have taken too much freedom away from the teachers who should be finding new ways to make our children love to learn and dare to excel. We believe it's time to stop this Liberal version of distance education — where the bureaucrats the greatest distance from the classroom make all the decisions.

New Democrats know that the greatest learning happens when good teachers have the resources to find new ways to reach the kids in front of them. That's why we believe in local schools, local communities and local families finding the best ways to do better. Our plan is simple — put more teachers in the classroom, give them the freedom to do the job, offer resources for innovation and results, and make sure that New Brunswick children know that if they

learn, they will be given the opportunity to go as far as their mind — not their wallet -- can take them through higher education.

New Democrats will put trust and resources back in our local schools

- We will hire 1,000 new teachers over the next five years, giving keen young teachers a chance to stay in New Brunswick and contribute. We will give teachers and local schools more freedom to choose curriculum, materials and innovative teaching methods.
- We will create an annual Education Innovation Fund, offering rewards for new programs to schools who excel at teaching critical thinking and problem solving skills.

- We will work with teachers in implementing – and enforcing – a Healthy Learning Environment Program which will reduce violence and bullying in our schools.
- We will give local school boards stable, long-term funding guarantees so communities have the security to plan hirings, classes, and programs.

New Democrats understand that good schools are part of strong communities

- We will declare a moratorium on the closure of schools in rural communities, and work with local communities to maximize the use of school facilities.
- We will return elected local school boards to communities.
- We will ensure that high schools have peer counselling programs to provide a network of support for young people.
- We will introduce citizenship education in all public schools, giving every young person a chance to learn how the system of government works and how to make their voice heard.
- We will amend the History curriculum so that New Brunswick and Canadian history is once again mandatory for all high school students.

New Democrats will ensure opportunity for all New Brunswick youth

- We will create a Hope Scholarship Fund, which will offer tax credits to New Brunswick families equivalent to the first two years of university or college for qualified students. The fund will be supported by a new sports lottery.
- Too many working families are seeing higher education as a luxury they can't afford. We will implement a debt load cap to ensure that no student is denied a higher education because they can't afford one.
- We will return the mandate for effective funding and tuition fee levels to the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, ending years of silence about government underfunding.

New Ways to Create Jobs and Opportunity

The past ten years have seen a wrong-headed approach to creating jobs by the Liberal government – contracting out jobs to big outside companies and then throwing taxpayer dollars at them in the hopes that they come to New Brunswick. We have seen too many failed public-private partnerships which are little more than a chance to use public funds to reward the government's friends in the private sector.

New Democrats believe that a new approach can work. While it's true that the workplace is changing, and we can't turn back the clock, we can still find ways to return job security and good wages to New Brunswick families – by creating new partnerships with the private sector based on responsible capitalism, by giving workers real opportunities to upgrade skills and knowledge, and by doing more to make small and home-based businesses work, so that every New Brunswicker has career options and the freedom to realize their potential here at home.

New Democrats will work to create the right kind of jobs for New Brunswickers

- Attracting companies who make a real commitment to New Brunswick and its people is a good investment – throwing money at fly-by-night companies is not. We will forge a new kind of partnership with private enterprise, one which offers lower tax rates for companies who score high in areas like job security, fair wages, employee benefits and fair management practices.

- We will launch a new capital fund making loans available to workers who want to buy viable plants in their community which are moving or closing.
- We will bring in legislation which guarantees first contract arbitration to protect the right of workers to choose, democratically, whether or not to be represented by a union.
- We will ensure equal access of all regions to natural gas and the means of providing it.

New Democrats will create opportunity for New Brunswick companies and New Brunswick business

- Too many jobs are contracted out of province when we could save money giving work to New Brunswickers. We no longer need to have our toll booths built in Spain or our toast made in Toronto. We will assist in the development of a New Brunswick consortium of companies to seek contracts, and end preferential treatment of outside companies for government contracts.

- We will work with credit unions, banks and municipalities to create an Access to Capital Fund for entrepreneurs, to give individuals the real option of becoming their own boss. We will set up a Small Businesses Assistance Team designed to give hands on assistance to individuals starting out, and create an Entrepreneur Transition Fund designed to offer wage subsidies to promising new entrepreneurs.
- We will invest new money in providing electronic commerce infrastructure for home-based businesses to offer New Brunswick goods and services over the Internet.

New Democrats will empower citizens by giving them access to life long learning

- We will end discrimination against people returning to school by allowing laid-off workers to retain eligibility for income assistance while attending college or university.
- We will work with Ottawa to return a portion of the E.I. surplus to workers in the form of a fund allowing people to draw benefits to upgrade skills or gain new ones.
- We will offer tax incentives to companies who work together with their unions to offer continual upgrading of workers' skills, particularly in technology and literacy .

- We will establish www.keeplearning.ca, a site offering links and assistance in obtaining credible and high-quality distance learning opportunities. We will make resources available to colleges and universities in New Brunswick to gain the technology to offer degree and certificate programs on-line, and amend the student loans program to assist New Brunswickers in purchasing the hardware and materials to access distance education

New Democrats will keep New Brunswick youth in New Brunswick

- Too many young people are forced to leave the province in order to find their first job. We will launch a new First Job program, bringing together government, the private sector and community organizations designed to ensure that any young person without a first job can be placed in the province.
- We will launch a Youth Job Corps, allowing recent graduates with a desire to serve their fellow citizens a chance to earn release from student loan debts and gain job experience by working in such public interest sectors as literacy training, environmental protection, legal aid, and small business assistance.

New Ways to Help Hard Working Families

Too many families are working hard, being good parents, and still having trouble making ends meet. New Democrats believe that government has ignored for too long the little issues that may not interest spin doctors or politicians, but would really make a difference.

We believe that the conversation around the cabinet table should sound more like the conversations around people's dinner tables. Instead of worrying about the reaction of outside companies and big multinational corporations, government should be concerned with the price of necessities, the fairness of our tax system, and how to help parents find time to put food on the table and still be there when their kids need them.

New Democrats will give hard working families a break - on taxes and the cost of living

- Too often governments ignore the best way to put money in the pockets of those who need it most — leave it there in the first place. We will create a “made in New Brunswick” tax system which will double the amount of money exempt from taxation over five years, and index tax brackets to the rate of inflation to avoid hidden tax increases.
- We will phase out the HST on family necessities such as home heating, local phone service, and children's clothing. For too long governments have sat idly by and allowed oil companies to get away with artificially high prices. We will proclaim the *Fair Gas Prices Marketing Act* into law – and enforce it so that New Brunswick consumers benefit from competition and choice, and

so independent small retailers have a fighting chance to create jobs.

- We will offer an annual Tenants' Tax Rebate, to reimburse renters for the costs their landlord passes on to them for property taxes. We will offer renters the option of depositing the tax rebate in a high-interest account designed to help renters save for their first down payment on a home.

New Democrats will help families get the fair treatment they deserve

- No parent should be forced to choose between the child they love and the job they need. We will introduce the *Family Leave Act*, which gives working parents a day off without penalty when a child is sick, and provides an extra week of vacation time for an employee with over five years of service.
- Too many families live an accident or injury away from financial disaster. We will amend the *Insurance Act* to extend income replacement benefits for those injured and waiting for a settlement, and impose stricter court cost penalties on insurance companies who delay settlements to force a better deal.
- The justice system is “off limits” to too many working families. We will work with lawyers and unions to help provide basic legal service plans to working families.

New Ways to Build Strong Communities

If there is one belief which unites New Brunswickers, it is our shared view that this province is the best province in which to live. If you ask a New Brunswicker why that is, they will invariably say, first and foremost, that it's the people who make our province special.

That's why the values we find in our communities are the key to preserving the way of life that makes New Brunswick so unique. Communities are where people know each other, help each other and rely on each other. It is the community around us that defines who we are. Because New Democrats understand the importance of communities, we are determined to preserve them, by making them safer, and cleaner and more prosperous, and by enhancing the values that make our communities what they are — our home.

New Democrats will help communities come together to improve their quality of life

- Too often, worthy local initiatives have their fate rest on political decisions about government funding. We will institute a system of rewarding local volunteer projects in community recreation, services and infrastructure that makes sure that financial contributions reward the volunteer work of citizens, not the pork-barrelling of politicians.
- We will help preserve local schools and hospitals in small communities, and help expand their use as cost-free facilities for a range of community groups.

New Democrats will support communities in their work for a clean environment

- We have seen too many recent environmental disasters in communities like Waweig, which could have been avoided if government and industry had taken due care to assess risks to the environment. We will amend the *Rules of Court* to allow communities to launch class action suits to recover damages for loss of property value and quality of life when environmental damage takes its toll.
- We will support local communities in appointing people to watchdog their rivers and other natural attractions to raise public awareness of threats to their future.
- Our long term economic hopes rest with preserving our natural resources and natural tourist attractions. We will create the Office of the Scientist-General, a non-partisan, all-party appointment of a respected scientist who can review government actions and policies to ensure that long-term survival of our resources is not sacrificed for short-term political gain.

New Democrats will appoint an Ombudsman to help youth in our communities

- Keeping our communities healthy includes, providing a positive environment for our young people to grow up in. This environment depends on many factors; including proper health care, a good education, opportunities for jobs, and stable healthy family situations. All of these factors are important to the well being of our young people and cannot be dealt with in isolation from each other. To this end, New Democrats will appoint a Youth Ombudsman. This individual would be independent from government. They would be provided with a broad mandate to review and make recommendations on the impact of government social and economic policy on youth in our communities. They would also be directed to look outside of government for strategies that encourage young people to stay in New Brunswick.

New Democrats will work with communities to make them more prosperous

- More and more local municipalities and businesses are tapping into the tourism market. We will assemble a team of cultural and literary workers to create a Tourism Assistance Team, which will help these groups offer artistic and cultural enhancements from theatre to craft shows to literature which enhances the tourist appeal of their destination.
- We will follow the advice of small business representatives and enhance the access of local businesses to the highway signage promotional program.

- We will offer additional assistance to cultural industries in New Brunswick regions and offer programs to expand the audience for New Brunswick culture. We will invest funds in the infrastructure for film locations and theatre facilities in the province.

New Democrats will make safer communities by being tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime

- The best justice system is one which always remembers that it deals with human beings and real lives. We will institute programs which make it possible for non-violent offenders to make amends and restitution to their victims.
- We will amend the *Compensation for Victims of Crime Act* to make it easier for judges to order civil damages as part of criminal sentencing, and to make victim advocates available to victims of crime to assist in getting their concerns before the court.
- We will work to provide alternative counselling and volunteer experience programs for non-violent young offenders, including mentoring programs for at-risk children in the school system and peer sentencing circles for young offenders.
- We will create a domestic incident database making it easier for family services staff and law enforcement officials to have access to necessary family history and risk assessments, similar to systems which exist to protect children.

New Ways to Manage Our Democracy

The most important place in which citizens come together remains our democratic institutions, such as elections and the legislature itself. Too few people still count on these institutions to make a difference or to treat them fairly. They see too many closed-door decisions, too small a voice for their local representative, too many political games, and too many partisan stunts. As a result, people are becoming cynical about their ability to really make choices about the direction of our province.

New Democrats believe that closed door meetings and back room deals have no place in New Brunswick politics. We will open up government to the best ideas and as many voices as possible.

New Democrats will stop the back room giveaways of your hard-earned tax dollars

- New Brunswickers are tired of their leaders emerging from closed rooms announcing giveaways to their cronies. We will end the practice of public-private partnerships and work with the non-partisan Office of the Auditor General to develop an honest way of making capital expenditures like highways and schools, and reflect these costs honestly on the books.
- Balanced budget legislation means very little if a government can keep changing the accounting rules. We will toughen up the Balanced Budget Act to require government to meet the accounting standards of a non-partisan office such as the Auditor-General.

New Democrats will give local MLA's of all parties a role once again

- We will allow more free votes in the legislature and hold public caucus meetings which will give voters a better sense of the positions their MLA is taking on their behalf.
- Every New Democrat MLA will hold regular town hall meetings and electronic town halls.
- We will amend the legislative committee structures to allow for more input from MLA's in recommending courses of action, instead of simply having to endorse legislation drafted by cabinet. We will ensure respect for all points of view by allowing minority reports from committees.

New Democrats will restore the voice of the citizen in government

- The size and bureaucracy of government often frustrates people trying to be heard. We will establish regional Citizen Advocates offices with non-partisan staff to help citizens with questions or problems identify and access the appropriate government avenue to respond to their needs and concerns.
- We will amend the Human Rights Act to outlaw discrimination based upon social condition.
- We will amend the Municipalities Act to allow for citizens to force plebiscites on important local issues.
- Too many MLA's forget that their seat belongs to the people, not to them. We will introduce legislation requiring MLA's to seek permission of their constituents or face a by-election before crossing the floor.
- Government should be open not only about what it does, but who it serves. We will enact legislation requiring the registration of lobbyists who influence government policy and contracts.



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