

PLATFORM 2006:

# Clear Voice, Clear Choice!

*Clear Voice, Clear Choice!*



*Pour une voix claire, mon choix est clair!*



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# MESSAGE FROM the Leader

New Brunswickers deserve a government that works for them. Bernard Lord's Conservatives have lost control of their agenda. As a result, support for education, seniors, small business, pay equity and consumers has disappeared.

The Liberals are not interested in anything more than power. They turned the Legislature into a circus trying to force an unnecessary and unwanted election.

## **New Brunswickers deserve better.**

The NDP will bring a balanced voice to the Legislature and will continue to fight to make government work for all New Brunswickers. A strong NDP presence in the Legislature will keep the other parties honest and focused on what really matters: jobs and opportunities for your children, dignity for our seniors, HST relief on family essentials, and support for small business.

**On September 18th send a clear voice and a clear choice to Fredericton.**

*Allison Brewer*





# CLEAR CHOICE FOR YOUR Pocketbook

Hard-working New Brunswick families deserve good value for their money. Whether it's tax dollars, insurance premiums, or paying for the necessities of life, New Brunswick families want to know that they will get their money's worth.

## Public Automobile Insurance

Allison Brewer and the NDP will provide a public automobile insurance system to ensure the best coverage, lowest premiums, and most efficient claim settlement process for New Brunswick drivers, using the recommendations of the 2004 all-party committee chaired by the NDP. Drivers will no longer be penalized for age, gender, marital status, region, payment history or lapses in insurance.

## HST Relief

Consumption taxes like the HST are hard on pensioners and working families with low incomes. Allison Brewer and the NDP will phase out the provincial portion of the HST on family essentials such as children's clothing, infant supplies, school supplies and medical supplies within four years. The NDP will also phase out the provincial portion of the HST from all funeral services and products.

## Energy Savings

The NDP will help New Brunswick families handle the rising cost of energy by:

- Consulting with gas retailers, wholesalers and consumer groups for a three-month period to improve the flawed system of gas regulation set up by the Lord government.
- Permanently removing the provincial portion of the HST from home heating.
- Increasing resources for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Corporation including implementing grants to help homes and businesses complete energy efficiency retrofits.

## Pay Equity

The NDP will enact pay equity legislation for both the public and private sectors.

Families need to know that their public healthcare system will be there for them when they need it.

The NDP has a plan to improve our public healthcare system.

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# CLEAR CHOICE FOR A Stronger Healthcare System

## Stable, Adequate Funding of Public Healthcare

The NDP will make a long-term funding commitment to our healthcare system and will consult with front-line care providers to ensure that the funding is sensible and efficient and that all New Brunswickers can access care when and where they need it.

## Reducing Wait Times

The NDP will:

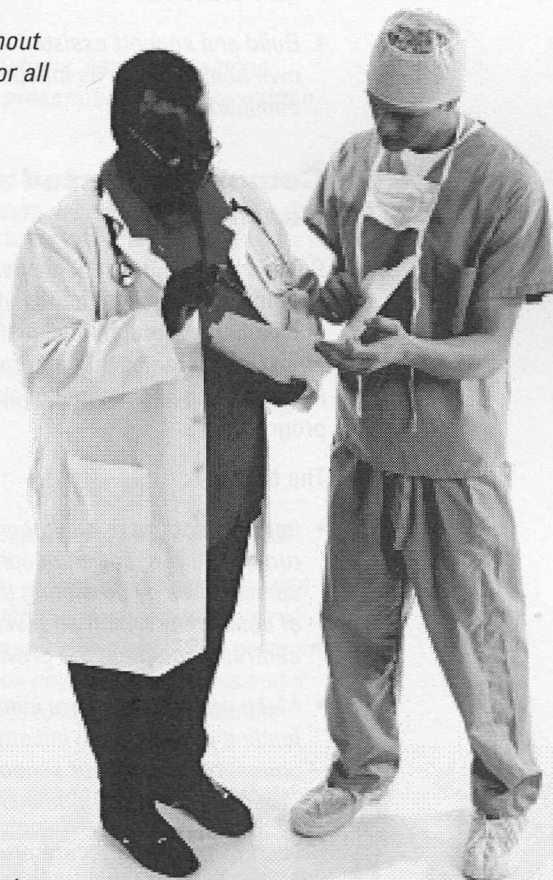
- *Expand the role of nurse practitioners and other health professionals such as paramedics, midwives and Licenced Practical Nurses to provide primary care in all communities and to help ease pressures at emergency rooms.*
- *Create more community health and wellness centres throughout the province, offering multi-disciplinary primary healthcare for all New Brunswickers outside the emergency room setting.*
- *Introduce a better, more effective doctor payment schedule and expand the use of alternate funding agreements to improve patient care and help attract more health professionals to our province.*
- *Assist New Brunswick universities to develop advanced nursing certificate programs, expand the training opportunities for medical laboratory and X-ray technologists and other health professionals.*
- *Address nursing shortages throughout New Brunswick with more quality, full-time nursing jobs.*
- *Legislate and publicly fund midwifery care in the province.*

## Care for Seniors at Home, in the Community and in Nursing Homes

Our province is behind the curve in planning for the rising needs of a growing population of seniors. It is time for a long-term, comprehensive strategy that includes seniors' housing, wellness and home-based and nursing home care for those who need it.

To help meet the needs of seniors, the NDP will:

- *Build 300 new nursing home beds in the next four years and plan for another 200 beds before 2015 to help meet the needs of our growing senior population.*





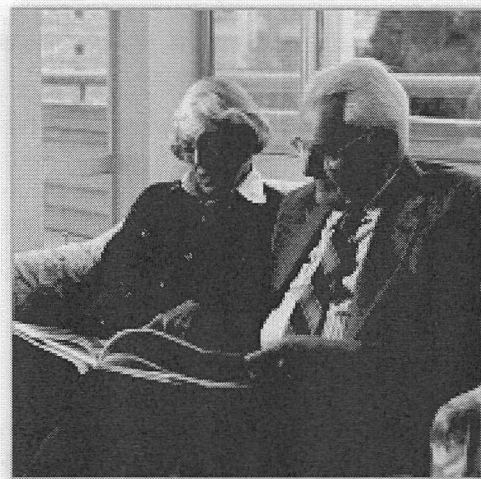
- *Increase the number of hours of care in nursing homes.*
- *Develop a publicly funded and administered home care program where home care workers are employed by the Department of Health and Wellness and have access to adequate wages and benefits.*
- *Work with the New Brunswick Community College system, nursing homes and our proposed provincial home care program to offer more training opportunities in rural settings for home care and nursing home workers such as Palliative Care Workers, Licensed Practical Nurses and recreational and dietary staff.*
- *Follow the lead of other provinces by adopting a Protection of Persons in Care Act that creates an ombudsman and a toll-free line which is staffed 24 hours, seven days a week to address complaints regarding the treatment of seniors in nursing homes. Front-line staff will be protected from retaliation for reporting neglect, abuse or poor conditions in nursing homes.*
- *Fully cover the healthcare costs for seniors in nursing homes. We will also ensure that spouses and dependents in the community are not forced into poverty as the result of a loved one requiring nursing home care.*
- *Work with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and other advocates on a stroke strategy for New Brunswick.*
- *Build and support assisted living housing that helps seniors who cannot manage in their own homes to live as independently as possible for as long as possible in their own communities.*

## Community-based Healthcare

Community health and wellness centres respond to the unique needs of their communities through local comprehensive wellness strategies that incorporate recreation and social and health programming.

The NDP will:

- *Improve access to healthcare services in rural, northern, and francophone communities by promoting the expansion of community health and wellness centres throughout the province.*
- *Make preventative care initiatives a funding priority. Such initiatives include public education campaigns, bringing physical education back to our schools, promoting healthy lifestyles, increasing funding for smoking cessation programs and increasing access to health counselling.*
- *Work with all healthcare professionals to permit them to use their full scope of practice including advanced practical nurses, licensed practical nurses, paramedics and personal care workers.*



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- *We will invest new funds to provide school nutrition programs and public health workers to New Brunswick schools.*

## Addiction Services

When a person is struggling with an addiction, the whole family is affected. The NDP is committed to addressing alcohol, drug, tobacco and gambling addictions. We will:

- *Provide additional funding for Addictions Services to increase the number of treatment options and expand the methadone program.*
- *Aggressively pursue businesses that sell tobacco to youth and enact legislation to ban point-of-sale marketing of tobacco products in retail outlets.*
- *Work with gambling addiction advocates and experts to reduce the harm from VLTs in New Brunswick, including banning any new machines from the province and making existing machines less addictive, working toward a future phase-out of VLTs.*

## Affordable Prescription Drug Coverage

- *Bring in a prescription drug coverage program for all New Brunswickers. This program will have no user fees for the lowest income members, and modest premiums for residents who can afford it.*
- *Work with physicians and pharmacists to prevent drug interactions, especially among seniors, and to address the higher-than-average numbers of prescriptions that are written for New Brunswick seniors.*
- *Ensure that the Pharmacare program covers as many new and innovative treatments as possible and lobby the federal government for a nation-wide catastrophic drug plan for all Canadians.*

## Services for People Living with Disabilities

The NDP recognizes the unique challenges that people living with disabilities face on a day-to-day basis. We want to create a province where all New Brunswickers have equal rights and access to services and employment.

The NDP will:

- *Provide stable funding for self-help or advocacy groups for people living with disabilities.*
- *Establish an Independent Living Program modeled after similar programs in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This would provide persons with disabilities with the free long-term use of necessary equipment and would help with the costs of other specialized aids. The program would have a mandate of employing persons living with various physical challenges and it would work in conjunction with community-based organizations to identify and meet the needs of all New Brunswickers who are living with a disability.*
- *Establish a program to help reimburse employers for the costs of adapting their workplaces to accommodate a person with a disability.*
- *Provide grants to municipalities to increase the accessibility of their public transit systems for persons living with disabilities.*
- *Build and support assisted living housing for people living with disabilities.*



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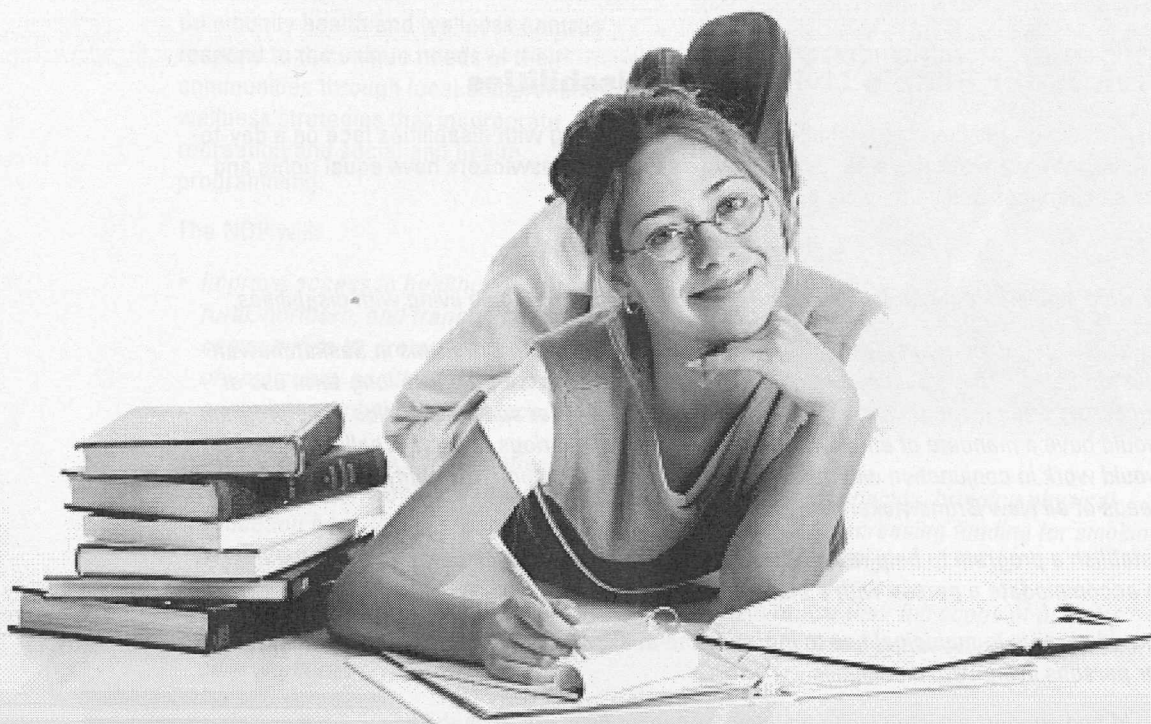
# CLEAR CHOICE FOR Education and Training

New Brunswick's future will be in the hands of today's children. We need to prepare them for their futures and allow them to explore their potential to the fullest. We need an education system that can meet their needs today, so that they can build our province tomorrow.

## Early Childhood Education

Young working families need childcare options for their children. The NDP will ensure that all families have access to an affordable, not-for-profit childcare system by:

- *Supporting accreditation, staff training, improved salaries, upgrading programs and direct operating support to not-for-profit community childcare centres that meet or exceed the requisite standards.*
- *Creating 1,000 more subsidized childcare spaces in non-profit centres within four years to expand access to high quality, affordable early childhood education for low-income families.*
- *Ensuring that any federal funding for early childhood education is not put into the pocket of big-box, for-profit childcare corporations.*



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## Kindergarten to Grade 12

The NDP's plan for a fully funded public education system will:

- *Ensure that schools have the necessary staff to provide the support that our classroom teachers need, including librarians, physical education, trades, art and music instructors, counsellors, special needs teachers and support staff such as clerical and maintenance workers.*
- *Work to reduce classroom sizes.*
- *Eliminate fees and fundraising for all school essentials, including computers and learning resources and make certain that schools have the funds necessary to provide these essentials to all students.*
- *Finance the timely repair or replacement of school infrastructure and ensure that schools can incorporate green initiatives and energy efficiency into their renovations and upgrades.*
- *Provide school districts with stable, long-term funding guarantees so that communities have the financial security to plan hirings, classes and programs.*
- *Better integrate schools into their communities by encouraging community use of space not used for classroom instruction*
- *Declare a two-year moratorium on the closure of schools in rural communities and work with local communities to maximize the use of school facilities.*
- *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 voices heard.*

## Post-Secondary Education

The NDP will be the first government in this province's history to take the concerns of students seriously.

The NDP will:

- *Implement a funded tuition freeze within two years and we will follow up with an independent review of funding for our post-secondary education system.*
- *Enhance bursaries and needs-based grants for low-income students, lowering the need for loans.*
- *Increase the base budgets of post-secondary institutions.*
- *Address the infrastructure deficit that most post-secondary institutions face.*
- *Ensure that public funds are distributed only to public institutions.*
- *Allow recent university or college 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 legal aid, small business assistance, public health and environmental protection.*



## Training and Apprenticeships

The NDP will work toward achieving a higher standard in trade programs and will ensure that all materials used by students are current.

The NDP will:

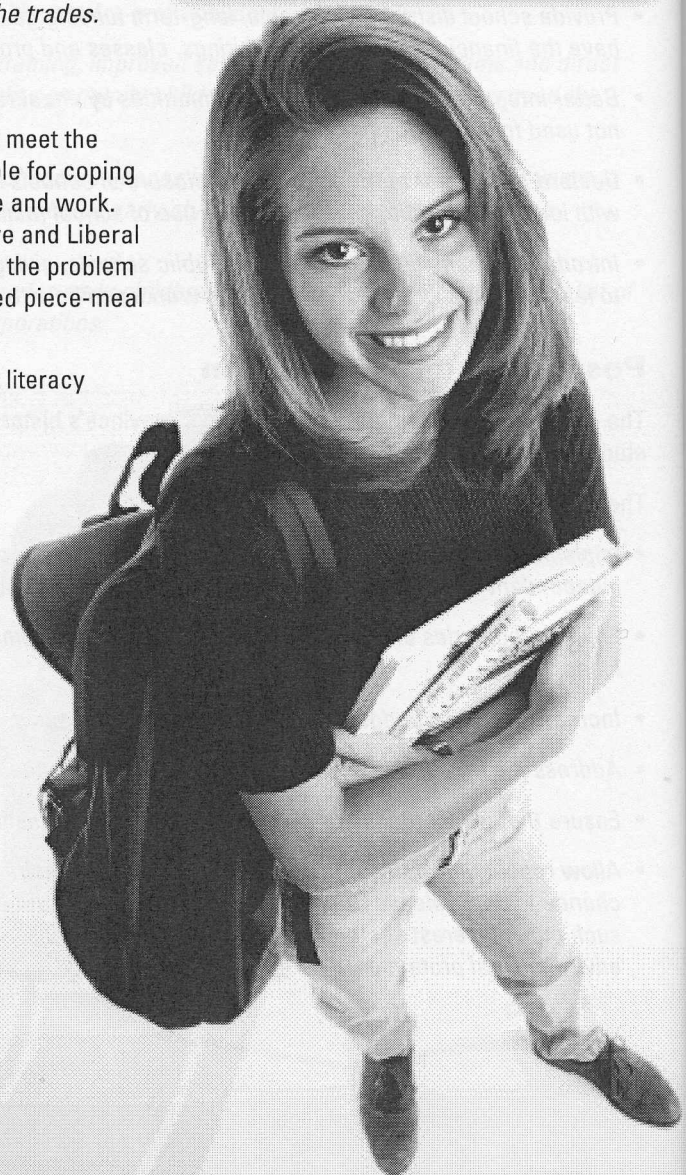
- *In cooperation with industry, finance training programs at the high school and post-secondary levels.*
- *Work with industry, trades organizations and unions to provide more apprenticeship opportunities closer to home for our young adults, in the trades.*



## Adult Literacy

56% of New Brunswickers do not meet the minimum literacy skill level suitable for coping with the demands of everyday life and work. The past Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments have all but ignored the problem of illiteracy and have only provided piece-meal solutions.

The NDP will introduce free adult literacy education courses through the Community College system.



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# CLEAR CHOICE FOR A Sustainable New Brunswick

New Brunswick needs a comprehensive, long-range plan for energy that aims first and foremost to secure the future rather than make a profit today.

## Sustainable and Renewable Energy

New Brunswick lags behind other provinces in encouraging the development and use of tidal power, wind power and solar energy. We must ensure an attractive and affordable market and tax regime for the creation and expansion of greener energy sources in New Brunswick.

The NDP will:

- *Work with sustainable energy developers and consultants to address the present regulatory and taxation framework to ensure there are not any barriers to the development of alternative energy in New Brunswick.*
- *Ensure access to the NB Power grid by alternative energy producers through legislation following the European models that have led to a vibrant alternative energy market.*
- *Offer homeowners and businesses grants to help them conduct energy efficiency retrofits or to switch to renewable energy sources from fossil fuel-based sources.*
- *Offer incentives for the industry sector, such as pulp and paper mills, to move to co-generation and away from the need for electric power.*
- *Provide the necessary resources to create a fuel-efficient provincial public transportation system, within and between cities*
- *Enact provincial gasoline and diesel fuel efficiency standards, like California, that will make our cars and trucking industry more fuel efficient*
- *Push forward the existing agenda of NB Power to have 400 MW of wind power by 2016 and work to surpass that figure.*

We need to do our share to combat climate change while at the same time protecting New Brunswickers from rising fuel costs and electricity rates. We need a comprehensive strategy on energy to reduce our reliance on electricity generation, and real government support for more fuel-efficient vehicles as well as a viable public transportation system that is easy and convenient for people to use



## Regional Environmental Issues

- Immediately fund the Saint John Harbour clean-up.
- Immediately clean up all the affected areas in Belledune and order a public inquiry into the Belledune cover-up.
- The NDP opposes LNG tankers in Passamaquoddy and will work with the federal government to ensure that the Bay is protected.

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# CLEAR CHOICE FOR Strong Communities

Because New Democrats understand the importance of communities, we are determined to preserve them by making them safer, cleaner and more prosperous.

## Arts and Culture

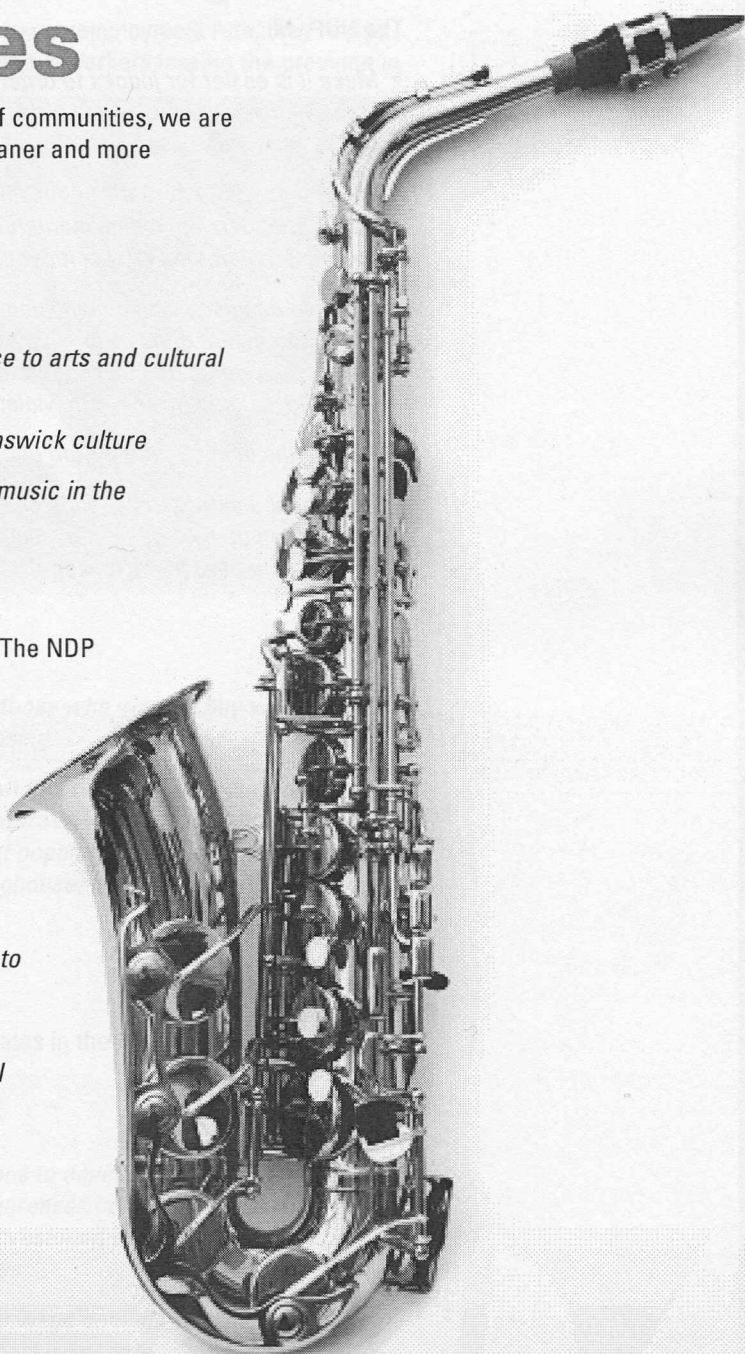
The NDP will:

- *Continue and increase funding for financial assistance to arts and cultural industries throughout the province*
- *Offer programs to expand the audience for New Brunswick culture*
- *Invest funds in the infrastructure for film, drama and music in the province.*

## Multiculturalism

As New Democrats we believe in celebrating diversity. The NDP will:

- *Adopt and promote a multiculturalism policy for New Brunswick.*
- *Establish an official advisory council on multicultural issues to promote intercultural understanding and celebration and to make our province attractive to new Canadians.*
- *Work with immigrant organizations and communities to identify gaps in services for immigrants.*
- *Recognize the important contribution of the Acadian people to our province by making August 15, National Acadian Day, a statutory holiday in New Brunswick.*





# CLEAR CHOICE FOR Safe Communities

The NDP will:

- *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 them in getting their concerns before the court.*
- *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.*
- *Create a domestic violence incident database to make it easier for family services staff and law enforcement officials to have access to necessary family history and risk assessments, similar to systems that exist to protect children. We will also implement mandatory reviews of deaths caused by domestic violence.*
- *Revoke the license for a period of one year of any driver caught street racing.*
- *Implement a safer streets and communities Act. Under this Act, citizen complaints would be followed up by a dedicated investigations unit and could result in court orders to close locations that are home to illegal activities.*

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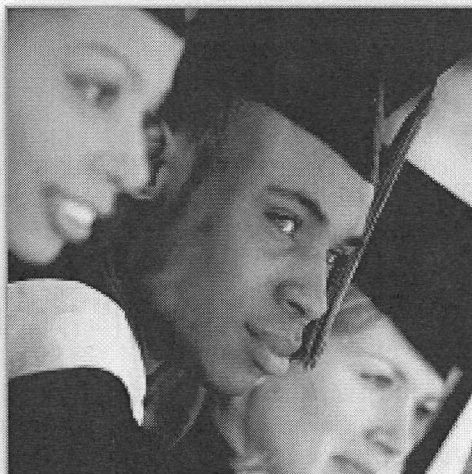
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# CLEAR CHOICE FOR A Strong Economy

While the Progressive Conservatives take credit for the low unemployment rate, they refuse to acknowledge that the lowered rate is a direct result of our workers leaving the province in droves. Industry is facing a worker shortage and young New Brunswickers cannot find meaningful employment. Government has a role to play in providing incentives to create well-paying, long-term employment.



## Job Creation and Small Business Development

The NDP will attract companies that make a real commitment to New Brunswick and its people. We will forge a new kind of partnership with private enterprise, one which offers lower tax rates for companies that score high in areas like job security, fair wages, employee benefits and fair management practices.

In addition, the NDP will:

- *Launch a new capital fund making loans available to those who want to buy viable plants in their communities to prevent them from moving or closing.*
- *Create Entrepreneurship New Brunswick, a foundation that will help build our economy by supporting the development and growth of small businesses. The fund will have devoted programs for Northern New Brunswick, the immigrant population, and rural communities. The program will act as a mentor, information clearinghouse, and funding source for small business.*

## Minimum Wage

New Brunswick has one of the lowest minimum wage rates in the country at \$6.70 an hour. The NDP believes all workers should earn a living wage.

The NDP will:

- *Work with the business sector and labour organizations to develop a strategy that allows small businesses that need support to adjust to the increases in the minimum wage. This could include short-term tax measures that support investment in equipment and employee training to improve the productivity of small businesses.*
- *Establish an independent body to review the minimum wage annually, making recommendations to government regarding the minimum wage rate. This will take the politics out of the minimum wage and create an open and transparent process.*



## Investing in Young Workers

Too many young people are forced to leave our province in order to find meaningful employment.

The NDP will:

- *Launch a new First Job program, designed to ensure that any young person without a first job can be placed in the province by bringing together government, the private sector and community organizations.*
- *Work with industry, trades organizations and unions to provide more apprenticeship opportunities closer to home.*
- *Allow recent university or college 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 legal aid, small business assistance, public health and environmental protection.*

## Natural Resources: Forestry, Fisheries, Agriculture and Aquaculture

New Brunswick has a wealth of natural resources that have sustained our economy for centuries. While we need to continue developing these resources in order to sustain our province, we must also be good stewards of the environment.

Whether it's forestry, the fisheries, farming, or aquaculture we must follow sustainable practices and get the most from our resources by adding value-added business opportunities.

The NDP will:

- *Provide incentives for existing sawmills, pulp and paper mills, as well as new facilities to produce value added forest products prior to export and provide assistance to market value-added forest products locally, nationally and internationally.*
- *Create New Brunswick solutions for our agricultural industries hit hard in recent years by the BSE crisis and weather events.*
- *Lobby the federal government for farm disaster relief programs that work for small mixed farms found in Atlantic Canada.*
- *Find ways to support New Brunswick farmers by developing the Buy Local model in our province.*
- *Eliminate the provincial capital gains tax for the transfer of farms within families.*
- *Work with fishing communities to address the issues facing the sector, including the elimination of the provincial capital gains tax for the transfer of fishing licenses within families.*
- *Build a New Entrants program for agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors to help our young people enter these important sectors.*
- *Create a regulatory environment that favours environmentally sustainable fishery and aquaculture practices.*
- *Promote private woodlots as a source of timber for the forest industry.*

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## Rural Development

Sustaining our rural communities will require a variety of approaches in the fields of education, health, economic development and infrastructure.

To help our rural communities, the NDP will:

- *Immediately engage in consultations and develop a rural strategy for New Brunswick, starting implementation within two years.*
- *Set minimum standards for services to every rural community including maximum distances to access primary healthcare, specialized healthcare, elementary and secondary education, and other essential infrastructure.*
- *Declare a two-year moratorium on the closure of schools in rural communities and work with local communities to maximize the use of school facilities.*

## Tourism

More and more municipalities and businesses are tapping into the tourism market. There are many ways we could better develop our tourism industry in New Brunswick.

The NDP will:

- *Promote environmentally sustainable tourism options such as bicycling, canoeing and photography tours.*
- *Assist tourism operators to develop a strong Web-based presence, devoting a unit of Tourism New Brunswick to provide expertise.*
- *Expand provincial marketing funding, targeting western Canada and European markets in order to offset the unstable United States based market.*



# CLEAR CHOICE FOR Democracy and Accountability

The most important place to which citizens come together remains our democratic institutions, such as elections and the legislature itself. Too few people count on these institutions to make a difference or to treat them fairly. They see too many backroom deals, political games and partisan stumps. As a result, people are becoming cynical about their ability to truly influence the direction of our province.

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

## Open, Accountable and Transparent Government Spendings

New Brunswickers are tired of their leaders emerging from closed rooms announcing giveaways to their cronies. Balanced budget legislation means very little if a government can keep changing the accounting rules. The media, opposition politicians and the general public need improved, easier more transparent access to government information.

To create a more open and transparent government the NDP 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 to reflect these costs honestly on the books.*
- *Toughen up the Balanced Budget Act to require government to meet the accounting standards of the office of the Auditor-General*
- *Every elected New Democrat MLA will hold regular face-to-face and electronic town hall meetings.*

## Electoral Reform

A year and a half after the final report of the Commission on Legislative Democracy was released, the Lord Government finally responded by calling for fixed election dates and reduced political contribution limits. But before these reforms could be introduced, the Lord government decided to call an election a year ahead of schedule.

The NDP will:

- *Support fixed election dates and a reduction in political contributions and spending limits during elections.*
- *Introduce legislation requiring MLAs to sit as independents or face a by-election before crossing the floor.*
- *Support a regional, mixed member proportional representation electoral system.*