

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

*Second session of the
56th Legislative Assembly
of New Brunswick*

NOVEMBER 27, 2007



The Honourable
Herménégilde Chiasson
Lieutenant-Governor

Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and all New Brunswickers. Welcome to the opening of the Second Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We welcome our new Speaker who will preside over this Chamber with great respect for the Legislative process. As well, we thank the member from Grand Lake-Gagetown who brought decorum and integrity to the Speaker's chair during the First Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly.

Since this House last convened, there have been new appointments made to the Executive Council and new responsibilities assumed by many Ministers. To all Cabinet members, I wish prudence, wisdom and courage as we enter this period of transformative change.

To all members of this House, I welcome you back to the Chamber and urge you to carry out the affairs of this province in the best interest of New Brunswickers. This session marks the beginning of one of the most transformative periods in our province's history as we set New Brunswick on the road to self-sufficiency by 2026. With great change comes great debate. Let us all conduct ourselves in a manner befitting the significant task at hand and respectful of the tradition of this House.

We also congratulate Roger Duguay on his election as leader of the New Brunswick New Democratic Party. I am certain he will bring an important perspective to debates on issues in our province.

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Many New Brunswickers have been recognized this year for their contributions to their field, their communities and to our province.

On October 30, a total of 10 new members were inducted into the Order of New Brunswick. These individuals have made outstanding contributions to the social, cultural or economic well-being of this province and its residents.

The new members are: Susan Butler, Miramichi; Audrey Côté St-Onge, Edmundston; Angelo DiCarlo, Minto; Stephen Hart, Douglas; Mohan Iype, Quispamsis; Linda B. LeBlanc, Memramcook; Viola Léger, Moncton; Bernard Lord, Fredericton; Joseph A. MacDonald, North Tetagouche; and George Piers, Lower Kingsclear.

In 2007, eight New Brunswickers were invested into the Order of Canada: Mary Majka, Harvey; Paul Gendreau, Beresford; Roland Gauvin, Moncton; Daniel O'Brien, Fredericton; Gérard Snow, Moncton; William Hoyt, Fredericton; Jean Chiasson, Pointe-Brûlé; and Lora Dell, Moncton.



Since the last Speech from the Throne, the Province has lost three former members of this Legislature: Edgar LeGresley, Charles Gallagher and Jean Gauvin.

Today, we also acknowledge Sean Collins, the son of the member from Moncton East and his wife Lisette, who passed away on July 9, at the age of 13. Through illness and adversity, Sean never ceased to be generous, kind to others and wise beyond his years. The book *Ten Needles* by Martin Latulippe tells the story of this courageous young New Brunswicker. Wishing to leave a legacy to his family, friends and classmates, Sean wanted to spread his message to “live each day as if it were your last” throughout the province, the country, and the world. Last week, *Ten Needles* became a national best-seller, and tens of thousands of dollars have been raised for sick children in New Brunswick



New Brunswick has a long history of military service. Of the 2,500 troops deployed to Afghanistan this winter, 1,160 were from Atlantic Canada and over 800 of those men and women were from New Brunswick. Our province knows the pride of military service but we also know the sacrifice.

Today we remember all those who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and in particular those with New Brunswick connections:

Sgt. Don Lucas
Cpl. Aaron E. Williams
Cpl. Brent Poland
Pte. David Robert Greenslade
Pte. Kevin Vincent Kennedy
Trooper Patrick Pentland
Master Cpl. Allan Stewart
Master Cpl. Darrell Jason Priede
Captain Jefferson Francis



We also take this time to remember other prominent New Brunswickers who passed away this year: Acadian activist and rights advocate Fr. Armand Plourde; journalist, *voice of le Madawaska* and member of the Order of New Brunswick Advisory Council Jean Pedneault; and pioneering broadcaster and salmon conservationist Jack Fenety.

Each of these individuals helped build the foundation on which your government will build a better New Brunswick.



On September 18, 2006, your government was elected on its *Charter for Change*. This Charter, with its three cornerstones- energy, education and economic development – formed a vision and a plan for a self-sufficient New Brunswick. Your government is pleased to report that, after its first year in its new mandate, it has completed 40 per cent of its *Charter for Change* commitments. Your government is expecting to bring that number to 65 per cent by its second anniversary in office.

The Throne Speech that opened the First Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly on February 6, 2007 was based on the *Charter for Change* and set out a number of important actions that would support your government in the move toward transformational change and a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

This past session saw the passage of important measures to improve care and support for our seniors, strengthen consumer protection and increase safety in our workplaces and on our highways. Our economy has been strengthened by *The Franchise Act*, improvements to the Small Business Investor Tax Credit and new support for entrepreneurs. New partnerships have been forged to advance the energy file. A new focus on primary and secondary education, as outlined in the education plan *When Kids Come First*, will likely have the most far-reaching impact of the work done in the last session.



During the first year of its mandate, your government undertook conversations and consultations with New Brunswickers in a number of key areas. Your government established a Community Non-Profit Task Force, a Task Force on Right to Information and Protection of Personal Information, and a Commission on Post-Secondary Education. The reports from these consultations have been presented. Your government has begun to address their recommendations and will continue to do during the upcoming Legislative session.



In January 2007, your government commissioned the Task Force on Self-Sufficiency to engage New Brunswickers in a dialogue about what must be done to make New Brunswick self-sufficient by 2026. Earlier this year, the Task Force delivered its recommendations based on those discussions. Your government thoroughly reviewed these recommendations and responded in full by releasing *Our Action Plan To Be Self-Sufficient in New Brunswick*.

During the course of this Legislative session, your government will address many of those action plan items requiring legislative changes. This Throne Speech will outline a legislative agenda that will set in motion transformative change toward a self-sufficient New Brunswick. Your government's Action Plan and this Legislative session will build on what is good about New Brunswick with the goal of making our province an even better place to be.

Your government recognizes that New Brunswick is home to vibrant French, English and First Nations communities and a growing multicultural presence. New Brunswick is a place where we celebrate our differences. This diversity will make us more attractive to new Canadians.

Our growing economic strength will help retain our family and friends in our home province and make New Brunswick a more attractive place to return to or to settle in as new residents. Your government is committed to achieve a net population increase of 100,000 people by 2026.

Your government will build on our family-friendly communities. New Brunswickers look out for one another. We know we are stronger when we move forward together. These roots, this sense of belonging give us the confidence to look forward to a better future. We are connected to one another and we are connected to the land.

These are the values on which your government will build a better New Brunswick and we will do it by focusing on four areas of transformation. We will transform our government, transform our relationships, transform our workforce and transform our economy.



Transforming Our Government

All New Brunswickers are being asked to join in the journey toward self-sufficiency. Your government recognizes that we must lead by example. Your government is committed to a structure that is flexible, adaptable and oriented toward providing quality services.

Transforming government requires that we build on our dedicated and competent public service. In addition to investing in the skill set of the public service, your government will address the leadership and career development needs of the public sector. Your government realizes that an effective public service is an efficient public service.



Accountability will be important throughout the journey to self-sufficiency.

The government will also introduce the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* to protect public service employees who disclose incidents of government wrongdoing. Instances of abuse of power or misuse of public funds are rare, but this legislation will protect employees who choose to come forward in the public interest.

New legislation on the right to information and the protection of personal information will be introduced, as will new measures on lobbyist registration and third party spending during elections.

Furthermore, your government will consider future investments in the Provincial Archives to meet the growing demand for archival services and will implement a strategy for electronic records management in order to transform the way government information is managed and stored.

Your government will continue to respect and adhere to the *Fiscal Responsibility and Balanced Budget Act*. A balanced budget will be achieved over the current four-year fiscal cycle, from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011, per provisions of the act.

Capital estimates for 2008-2009 will be tabled December 11, as will a fiscal and economic update for the current year. **Pre-budget consultations** will begin in December. In the spring sitting, your government will bring down a balanced **budget for 2008-2009** that will make the necessary investments for transformational change.

Your government will also pass legislation and establish the regulatory framework to support the new Responsible Gaming Policy. This new approach to gaming will focus on responsible management and responsible play in a responsible environment.

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Transformation of government requires further transforming service delivery to New Brunswickers.

An **expanded mandate for Service New Brunswick** will transform the way New Brunswickers and New Brunswick businesses interact with their government. By 2009, and with the endorsement of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, your government will introduce a new "**one business - one record**" **system** of business services that will make it faster, easier and more convenient for New Brunswickers to do business.

In the coming year, government departments will begin transferring their customer-facing services to Service New Brunswick as part of an overall quality service initiative. The **Office of the Rentalsman** will be the first program to move to Service New Brunswick in this transformation.

Service New Brunswick and the Department of Public Safety will also determine the optimal balance of shared responsibility in the delivery of **motor vehicle registry services**.



To reach our goal of self-sufficiency, we must ensure that we are a healthy province. Your government will strengthen and enhance our **provincial Wellness Strategy** based on the work and recommendations of the Select Committee on Wellness. Your government will also introduce a Dial-a-Dietician service for New Brunswickers that will provide reliable advice and information about nutrition that will lead to healthier lifestyles. As well, your government will amend the *Tobacco Sales Act* to regulate the display of tobacco products. Levels of physical activity will increase in our schools and all New Brunswickers will be urged to adopt healthier life practices.



A self-sufficient New Brunswick requires healthy people with access to high quality and accessible health care services. To ensure that we can continue to meet our health care needs now and in the future, the Minister of Health will introduce a new *Provincial Health Plan*.

Your government values a public system that is inclusive and equitable, accessible in both official languages, affordable and accountable. The *Provincial Health Plan* will focus on six priorities - achieving better balance, enhancing access, improving efficiency, harnessing innovation, making quality count and building partnerships. Strategic initiatives will be outlined for each priority.

The *Provincial Health Plan* will provide citizens with tools, resources and support to allow them to work in partnership with health professionals to take better care of their own health.

The *Provincial Health Plan* will offer seniors improved options to allow them to live in their communities and maintain their independence as long as possible. This will be done in concert with the **long term care strategy** for seniors that will be released early next year. Over the past 10 months, more than 1,000 New Brunswickers have identified issues and provided ideas on how to improve the current system. This feedback, along with research and statistical analyses, will serve as the foundation for building a responsive and sustainable system to help meet the needs of seniors.

Your government recognizes that sharing information quickly and appropriately among health care providers and health managers is necessary in transforming health care. Your government remains committed to the development of a **one patient, one record system**.

Your government will support pharmacists in introducing amendments to the *Pharmacists Act* to enable these health professionals to prescribe certain drugs. Your government will also introduce new legislation to regulate the profession of **midwifery** in our province.

New legislation will also be introduced to **legalize living wills** and provide for substitute decision makers to make health care decisions for individuals no longer competent to make their own decisions.



Your government is committed to transforming child protection in New Brunswick. A **Child Protection Mediation Model** has been adopted as the primary form of dispute resolution in child protection cases. Your government will now begin work on the new **prevention-based multiple response service delivery model** where services to families will fit their situation, from minor support to intensive services. This model will complement the Child Protection Mediation Service and result in a comprehensive, effective, client centred approach to protecting New Brunswick's children and assisting their families.



Transforming government also requires us to strengthen New Brunswick's legal institutions. New legislation will outline the role and the mandate of the **Attorney General**, to bring greater public transparency to this office. During this session, the Minister of Justice and Consumer Affairs will mandate a **Task Force on Access to Family Justice** to report on options for increasing access to justice in family law disputes.

Your government remains committed to protecting New Brunswick consumers. **Pay day lenders legislation** will be introduced to set limits on the cost of borrowing and regulate the business practices of these short term lenders. Your government will introduce a **Cost of Credit Disclosure Act** to bring disclosure requirements for loans in line with those for federally regulated banking institutions.

Furthermore, your government will undertake a targeted consultation process and review of the **Credit Unions Act** and will introduce amendments to strengthen the regulation of the credit union movement in New Brunswick.



Although New Brunswick enjoys a reputation as a safe place to live, your government is committed to taking increased action against organized crime.

Legislation will be introduced regarding offence-related property and proceeds of crime and direct funds towards combating organized crime. Your government will bring in legislative amendments to provide police officers with the ability to carry out their work in neighbouring jurisdictions.



Your government is committed to supporting our workers and protecting our most vulnerable residents. Therefore, your government will introduce legislative amendments to institute **mandatory coroner's inquests for workplace fatalities** and enhance the resources available to the coroner when reviewing the circumstances of sudden and unexpected deaths.

Two multi-disciplinary committees will advise the Chief Coroner on deaths attributed to domestic violence and deaths involving vulnerable young children. Establishing a **Domestic Violence Death Review Committee** will allow us to learn from domestic violence deaths, and identify the steps we can take to prevent domestic violence and eliminate its impact on families and society. The **Child Death Review Committee** will be moved to the Office of the Chief Coroner. The Child Death Review Committee was established in 1997 as an Advisory Committee to the minister responsible for child protection. The role of both committees is consistent with the coroner's mandate to impartially investigate all sudden and unexpected deaths, including recommendations for any systemic changes arising from the case circumstances.

Your government will evaluate proposals for a **modern, wireless communication system** to support ongoing effective delivery of ambulance services, policing, forest fire management, commercial vehicle enforcement, drug enforcement and coordination of emergency response between organizations.

Your government will take steps to enhance the current **Graduated Licence program** and regulations will also be introduced to implement a **provincial Interlock program**.



Transforming Our Relationships

Self-sufficiency will not be achieved by government alone. We need partnerships and relationships with other governments, business and labour organizations, post-secondary institutions, community groups, the non-profit sector and New Brunswickers that will sustain these changes over the long term. Your government is committed to transforming and strengthening these relationships.

Your government has named a new Minister responsible for Community Non-Profit Organizations. Supported by a secretariat within the Executive Council Office, the minister will present the government's work plan on the Task Force Report in this Legislature in March. This work plan will contain the concrete steps that your government is taking in each of the four report themes: stable funding, respect and recognition, revitalizing the relationship between government and the non-profit sector, and supporting a culture of volunteerism.

Building a **strong, sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship with the Government of Canada** is a key element in your government's plan to move New Brunswick towards self-sufficiency. Your government is seeking a lasting partnership to address the economies and social challenges facing our province.

Your government will continue to work closely with the government of Canada and partner organizations to ensure the promotion and **equality of the official language communities** in the province.

Your government has signed an agreement with the governments of Canada and Quebec in preparation for the next **Francophone Summit**, which will take place in Québec City in 2008. We will take this unique opportunity to showcase our expertise and our proficiency and to ensure the visibility of our province among the participating states and governments.

In May, New Brunswick will host the **Conférence francophone des organisations internationales non gouvernementales**, as well as the **Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation de la Francophonie**, in conjunction with the Francophone Summit to be held in Québec City in 2008. Representatives of more than 50 countries belonging to the Francophonie will have the opportunity to discover New Brunswick and, more specifically, the Acadian Peninsula. These meetings to be held in Caraquet constitute a unique opportunity to demonstrate our expertise in education and community organization.

In August, New Brunswick hosted a successful annual meeting of the Council of the Federation during which time Premier Graham assumed the Chair of the Council for the coming year. He looks forward to building **cooperative relationships with other provinces** particularly in the areas of energy and the environment.

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On June 22, all fifteen First Nations and the Province signed the historic *Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Province of New Brunswick Relationship Building Bilateral Agreement*. The signing of this agreement was an historic moment in transforming the relationship between the provincial government and First Nations communities. Bilateral roundtables are currently being established on health, education, land and resources, governance and jurisdictions, gaming, economic development and sustainability, and social development.

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Strong, dynamic and prosperous communities are necessary to attain self-sufficiency by 2026. Your government has appointed a **Commissioner on the Future of Local Governance** to examine the structure and organization of local government in New Brunswick, including property taxation and funding arrangements, land use planning and the provision of regional services.

New Brunswick's economy continues to produce results that are amongst the best in the country. In certain regions of the province, this economic success has translated into booming local real estate markets and increasing property assessments.

Your government recognizes that some New Brunswickers are impacted disproportionately by these rising assessments. Your government will introduce targeted property tax relief for homeowners least equipped to deal with the tax burden associated with rising assessments. We are confident that municipal governments will act responsibly in establishing their tax rates while carefully considering the impact their spending decisions have on property taxes.

Your government will also strengthen requirements for drinking water treatment and disinfection and standards for municipal drinking water systems. Furthermore, your government will expand the drinking water approvals program to include larger privately-owned systems which serve the public such as trailer parks, recreation facilities and camp grounds.

Your government will adopt new performance-based standards for municipal wastewater effluent from wastewater treatment facilities. These standards will incorporate an environmental risk management model and harmonize the regulatory framework with other Canadian jurisdictions.



Transforming Our Workforce

To transform our province, we need a new generation of healthy, productive and creative citizens who have the learning and skills to seize the opportunities offered by a better New Brunswick. This will require transformative changes in our workplaces, our post-secondary institutions, our schools and our communities.

Your government will appoint a **Special Committee of Cabinet on Early Childhood Development and Care** to give this file the multi-departmental leadership it needs. During this session, your government will table a **long-term plan for early learning and child care**, an ambitious undertaking that will enhance supports to young children, their parents, and the professionals and community groups who support them. We will then begin work to improve the accessibility, the affordability and the quality of these services.

Recognizing how essential early learning is to future school success and to reaching our goal of a self-sufficient society, your government will introduce a new *I'm Ready for School* initiative, designed to ease the transition into kindergarten, especially for children at-risk.



This year, your government will continue implementing its education plan, *When Kids Come First*, designed to transform New Brunswick schools and to create the best education system in Canada.

The **Innovative Learning Fund**, in place since September, has received over 450 applications and is obtaining positive feedback from teachers.

Your government will establish and invest in **22 community schools** in 2007-2008, with support from local communities and the private sector. A new framework for investing in **small rural schools**, providing new learning opportunities for students in rural areas, will be announced.

We will further support trades and vocational education in schools through a *Diversity in Learning* initiative that addresses the needs of all students and better prepares them for the world after school. Your government will improve **career counselling services** to ensure that students are aware of their strengths and know the process to identify potential career paths, including post-secondary options.

As well, your government will continue to implement strategies to further enhance and support our inclusive system of education by launching a **province-wide learning disabilities strategy** focused on early detection and intervention. Together with the departments of Family and Community Services and Health, the Department of Education will pilot a new integrated service delivery model to improve services for students in the public school system.

Knowing that successful schools enjoy effective leadership, your government will also establish a *"New Brunswick Education Leadership Academy,"* a centre of excellence for principals and teachers focused on leadership in public education.



Significant gains must be made to ensure that New Brunswickers of all ages have the skills they need to participate fully in the economy and in society. During the year ahead, the **Select Committee on Life Long Learning** will begin its work on the status of literacy in New Brunswick, and your government will release a **literacy strategy** designed to support the achievement of bold targets for the increased levels of literacy necessary for self-sufficiency.



Through the Commission on Post-Secondary Education, New Brunswickers have told your government that transformation of the post-secondary education system is essential. New Brunswick must have a post-secondary education system that is student-focused, integrated, accessible, affordable and of high quality.

A **working group of university presidents, community college principals and government officials** is now considering the recommendations of the Commission on Post-Secondary Education's report.

This working group will recommend to government the best model for a post-secondary education system in New Brunswick and an accompanying implementation plan. The working group is expected to make its recommendations early next year.

With the advice of the working group, your government expects to move forward on key pieces of a model for an integrated post-secondary education system including student financial assistance, credit transfer and an information portal for students over the next year.

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All New Brunswickers will play a role in transforming our economy. 2007 marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons in New Brunswick. Through the Premier's Council, your government will release the new provincial **Disability Action Plan Strategy** on December 3, the annual United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

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Later this year, the **independent review of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission** will submit its report which will include key considerations for the future transformation of the commission.

Your government will also introduce amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* that will respect presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters.

Your government will address in legislation the long standing issue of "double breasting" in the construction sector, respecting the balance that is essential for effective collective bargaining.

Your government is committed to increasing the **minimum wage** to the national average. Indeed, by April of next year, only 19 months after being sworn into office, the government will have increased the minimum wage by \$1.05, to \$7.75 per hour.

Your government will continue to make significant progress in achieving pay equity in the province. We will lead by example in the public sector and will make significant inroads into the private sector by first targeting employment settings where government depends on the private and non-profit sector to provide services, such as child care, home support, transition houses and nursing homes.



In order to transform our province, we must reverse the trend of population decline. Following consultations across the province, your government will announce a **Population Growth Strategy** for New Brunswick. In order to achieve its twenty-year target, your government's interim goal is to attract at least 5,000 new immigrants per year by the year 2015.

We will partner with the Government of Canada, employers, settlement and multicultural associations in expediting and **streamlining the immigration process** and **improve settlement services** provided to recent immigrants and their families once they arrive in the province. We remain committed to the Provincial Nominee Program and that immigration recruitment must reflect the nature of our bilingual province.

These measures will help New Brunswick address potential skills shortages, create economic growth and ensure that our province remains a great place to live, a great place to come back to, and a great place for a new beginning.



Transforming our Economy

In order to transform our economy and be self-sufficient in New Brunswick, we must focus on our strengths, enhance the productivity and competitiveness in our resource-based industries, and target key strategic sectors in which to develop our province's capabilities.

The transformation has begun. Over the past year, New Brunswick has enjoyed some of the strongest job growth in the country. There have been numerous exciting projects launched, including Potash Corp's \$1.7 billion expansion in Sussex that will make New Brunswick the largest potash producer in the world. As well, the diversification of Miramichi's economy is well underway with the establishment of Atcon Group's Centre of Excellence in Steel Fabrication. Your government is committed to building on these success stories.

Following the tabling of the report from the **Task Force on Wood Supply and Forest Diversity**, your government will outline its strategy for public and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, your government will unveil a new system to provide woodlot owners with **fair and equitable access to markets** that has been developed with the New Brunswick Federation of Woodlot Owners, the New Brunswick Forest Products Association and the Department of Natural Resources.



Your government has nearly completed a year-long process to review and renew the fisheries sector. During this session, your government will table a **Fisheries Renewal Framework** that will provide an agenda for transformational change in this sector.

Given the on-going challenges facing the crab sector, your government commissioned a "*Report on New Brunswick's Snow Crab Industry*" earlier this year. The final report was received October 30, 2007 and its recommendations are under review by the department in cooperation with the Minister's Round Table on Fisheries and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The Minister of Fisheries will provide government's response to these recommendations during this session.



Currently in the last year of a federal/provincial **Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement**, your government will continue negotiations toward a new five-year agreement entitled "**Growing Forward**." Your government will ensure that the new agreement provides programming to help transform the sector and that transitional programming is available until the new agreement is finalized. Consistent with this, we will develop a **Strategic Investment Initiative for Agriculture** to advance the agriculture sector's long-term growth and sustainability.



The aquaculture sector generates in excess of \$270 million in sales and creates direct and indirect employment for over 4,000 New Brunswickers, mainly in rural communities. Encouraged by recent discussions with the federal government on a federal/provincial initiative to foster **sustainable growth of the aquaculture industry**, your government will ratify a strategy to support investments that will position the sector to contribute to self-sufficiency.



New Brunswickers have long realized the economic potential of tourism in our province. As part of its self-sufficiency agenda, your government has committed to further investments in **tourism infrastructure** to ensure New Brunswick's breathtaking scenery and unique culture continue to attract millions of visitors to our province.

As a further indication of its commitment to tourism, your government has transferred Mount Carleton Provincial Park to the Department of Tourism and Parks and will invest \$250,000 to rejuvenate the trail network, restore the park's historic hunting camps and upgrade other facilities and equipment to enable Mount Carleton to serve as a attraction.

Your government will introduce changes to the *Tourism Development Act* to create a more competitive tourism environment and ensure quality and standards of the New Brunswick tourism product and service. The legislation will address industry's concerns with the current Act, particularly with respect to the licensing system for tourism accommodation.



The abundance and diversity of arts and culture in New Brunswick do indeed already form part of the solid foundation that will enable our province to reach self-sufficiency. To keep ideas going back and forth in this regard, and to ensure that this sector can contribute fully to the vitality of our communities, your government will enter into an intercultural dialogue on the contribution of the cultural sector to our society.



Your government recognizes that a thriving entrepreneurial sector must also be an integral part of its agenda for achieving self-sufficiency by 2026. That is why we will strive over the coming year to ensure that New Brunswick's business environment stimulates business start-ups or expansions and promotes diversification, innovation and productivity improvement.

Your government will work with business, labour and other stakeholders to establish consultative mechanisms for exploring strategic options to achieve self-sufficiency.

Further, through the newly launched **NB Growth program**, your government will address the issue of access to capital for new and growing small businesses. Under this program financial assistance will be made available to support start-ups as well as expansion, diversification or productivity improvement projects for existing companies.

Your government will examine New Brunswick's **tax environment** for overall competitiveness and will work toward a smarter and more streamlined regulatory framework.

Your government will also take deliberate measures to announce to the world that New Brunswick is open for business. Through your government's recently launched **New Brunswick Ambassador Program**, more than 200 business executives, alumni and expatriates, key public servants and politicians have signed up to put their energy and enthusiasm into promoting New Brunswick as an investment location of choice.



While recognizing the important contribution to be made by New Brunswick's existing industrial base, achieving the transformational growth needed to reach self-sufficiency will require that we expand our economy by building on what we are able to generate from within. Toward this objective, a unit will be created within Business New Brunswick to develop and aggressively execute a strategy for attracting and supporting investment by existing and new marquee firms.

An important component of the investment attraction initiative will be to strategically supplement development in key areas for which New Brunswick has demonstrated potential to build **world-class technology clusters**. Experience demonstrates that the process of innovation and commercialization of technology occurs most efficiently in geographic clusters.

New Brunswick will support the advancement of key technology clusters, driven by strategic investments in priority core technologies to enhance our capacity for global competitiveness.

Additional strategies will see the development of local and international partnerships and strategic alliances; education, training and recruitment of highly qualified personnel; as well as aggressive investment attraction from key international companies.



The energy sector will help bring transformational change to New Brunswick. It will be central to economic development, job creation and repatriation.

A new international power line has been constructed and will be in use in December. Your government will continue to reach across the Canada-U.S. border and build on our collective desire to develop new energy markets for clean and renewable energy, resolve inter-connectivity issues and strengthen our position as a key energy trading partner.

The result of the \$2.5-million feasibility study into a potential **second nuclear generating station** at Lepreau will be announced during this session. This study, at no cost to the province, was carried out by internationally-respected companies which make up Team CANDU.

NB Power will soon announce the successful bidders on 300 megawatts of **clean wind power**. Your government will consider policy options for **community wind development initiatives** and review NB Power's **renewable portfolio standard** to ensure that it reaches its maximum potential in renewable energy.

Your government will release its official policy on **Tidal Power Generation** and we will also continue its work in exploring **tidal energy potential** in the Bay of Fundy with our Nova Scotia neighbours.

Your government will launch a feasibility study into bringing natural gas to Northern New Brunswick. The Department of Energy will consider this file a key priority.



The Department will review the *Electricity Act* to ensure that the utility structure and the electricity market adequately reflect the self sufficiency goals and energy hub agenda.

This includes enhancing New Brunswick's ability to attract investments in generation and transmission for electricity exports while providing long term domestic supply options that maintain attractive electricity rates for New Brunswickers.

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Your government is committed to transforming New Brunswick into a leader in energy conservation as well as energy generation. New Brunswick is a national leader in ensuring that all homeowners, including those with limited incomes, have access to energy efficiency programs. On average, **home energy retrofits** undertaken through the mandate of Efficiency NB bring annual energy savings of \$900 to the household budgets of low income homeowners. Your government will continue to ensure that low income homeowners can realize the energy savings and the greater home comfort through the program for home energy efficiency renovations.

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In order to transform our economy, we must ensure that our transportation infrastructure supports this transformation.

The completion of the four-lane Trans-Canada Highway earlier this month is a milestone in the history of this province and serves as a foundation in support of economic development and our quest for self-sufficiency.

Your government will continue to invest in safe and efficient highway corridors with the recent signing of the first phase of a **\$414-million cost sharing agreement** with the federal government for projects in the national highway system.

Your government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding in respect to the **Atlantic Gateway**, and will continue to work with the other Atlantic Provinces and the federal government towards the establishment of this strategic corridor for international trade. The early completion of the twinning of **Route 1** remains a priority of your government.

New Brunswickers need good connections between their rural and urban areas. Your government will be announcing an infrastructure strategy to improve the condition of our **provincial highways**, including those in rural areas.

Your government has made significant progress and will continue its efforts towards reducing wildlife collisions on our highways. Measures such as the erection of additional **wildlife fencing** and clearing of highway right-of-ways in areas with high incidence of moose/vehicle collisions will be carried out in the coming year.

The development and deployment of new technologies to improve efficiency in the movement of people and goods is critical to the competitiveness and sustainability of the transportation sector. A New Brunswick **Intelligent Transportation Strategy** document will be released this spring.

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Your government is committed to transforming the economy in all regions of the province to ensure that all New Brunswickers can contribute and benefit from a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

As outlined in the *Charter for Change*, your government will establish the \$100-million **Northern New Brunswick Initiative**. Initial funding to improve the economic infrastructure of the northern counties of our province will be allocated in 2008-2009.

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Sustainability of our resources is important as your government moves forward on its self-sufficiency agenda. Your government will release its' new *Species at Risk Act*, a modernization of the existing *Endangered Species Act*.

As well, your government will unveil its' new **Biodiversity Strategy** designed to protect ecosystem, species and genetic diversity. Your government will also continue its consultation and bring forth a decision regarding **Sunday hunting**.

The proposed new Irving Oil Refinery is currently undergoing a comprehensive **environmental impact assessment** (EIA) under the provincial EIA Regulation. The comprehensive review will require that the best available environmental control technologies be evaluated for use in the proposed new refinery. Your government is also working with administrators of the federal EIA process in an effort to harmonize the EIA processes.

Restoration of the Petitcodiac River is a major environmental concern for your government and many New Brunswickers. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has also declared the Petitcodiac River Causeway in violation of federal legislation on fish passage.

In the *Charter for Change*, your government made a commitment to environmental sustainability. A clear course of action has been established to restore the river and your government is now seeking federal/provincial partnership to transform the face of the Petitcodiac River for future generations. In the coming year, your government will establish a **trust fund for the Petitcodiac River** and begin planning and design work for this important undertaking as further partnership options are pursued.



Self-sufficiency must be our common cause, and all New Brunswickers have the opportunity to play an important part in building a better New Brunswick.

Throughout this session and beyond, your government will play its part by using its policy-making and legislative powers to support sustainable growth and to provide leadership that will move us toward self-sufficiency.

Today's Speech from the Throne outlines a number of key initiatives government will take as we continue our journey toward a self-sufficient New Brunswick. Important as these initiatives are, transforming New Brunswick will take all New Brunswickers working together.



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

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

Your government will also provide details on additional policy and program matters of importance to the people of New Brunswick.

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