

## 2013 Speech from the Throne

Mr. Speaker, honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and fellow New Brunswickers.

Welcome to the opening of the Fourth Session of the 57th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick.

The people of New Brunswick are its greatest asset. We are a strong, creative and determined society. Every day, we work hard to continuously improve our province and the quality of life it offers our families.

By working hard and empowering our people to be the best they can be, we keep moving towards a stronger, more prosperous New Brunswick - one step at a time, one innovation at a time, one job at a time.

This throne speech highlights the initiatives that your government will put forth in the next year as part of its plan to strengthen our economy, invest in our families and communities and manage today for our province's future.

As we begin this session, we officially welcome Brian Gallant, Leader of the Official Opposition, and congratulate him on his win in the Kent byelection in April.

### **Celebrations**

I was very pleased to celebrate, along with all New Brunswickers, the birth of His Royal Highness Prince George of Cambridge in July. To honour his birth, your government will be making a donation to the Born to Read program.

Tomorrow, 10 deserving New Brunswickers will be inducted into the Order of New Brunswick for their outstanding contributions to the social, cultural and economic well-being of our province.

This year's recipients are Joanna Bernard of Madawaska Maliseet First Nation, Édith Butler of Paquetville, Alida Clément of Dieppe, Eugène Durette of Edmundston, Dr. Dana Hanson of Fredericton, Mrs. Jean E. Irving of Rothesay, Freeman Patterson of Kingston, Gerry Pond of Saint John, Gordon Porter of Woodstock and Lionel Poitras of Saint-André.

On the national stage, three of our own were invested into the Order of Canada this year. Paul Cherry of Saint John was made an officer of the order and Dr. Dana Hanson and Jacqueline Oland were made members.

Keeping in line with the Department of National Defence's efforts to restore traditional titles, what was formerly known as Canadian Forces Base Gagetown became the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown last summer.

And again in the last year, New Brunswick members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been recognized for various accomplishments and distinctions.

The Governor General's Meritorious Service Medal was awarded to three New Brunswickers: Lieutenant(N) Melissa Helen Fudge of Nigadoo, Captain Christopher Glen Cyr of Fredericton and Master Warrant Officer Anthony Carl Pettipas of Fredericton.

As well, six New Brunswickers were admitted into the Order of Military Merit as members: Chief Warrant Officer Claude Chouinard, Captain Lorne Doucet, Chief Warrant Officer Shawn Croucher, Sergeant Christopher Hanrahan, Major Elizabeth van Oostrum and Master Warrant Officer François Vidal.

Last month, we welcomed Assistant Commissioner Roger Brown as the 29th Commanding Officer of the RCMP in New Brunswick.

Inspector Lise Roussel of Fredericton was made a member of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces for her leadership and dedication to developing and supporting women as leaders in policing.

In the last year, 11 courageous New Brunswickers were awarded the Governor General's Medal of Bravery: Constable Brian Murray Carmichael, John Lamkey, Sergeant George Winton Matthew Myers, Troy Alan Wilcox, Constable Solange Aurella Phyllis Cormier, Constable Keith Carson Head, Constable Philippe Pausé, Constable Glen Joseph Pinto, Constable Neal Fowler, Constable Roger Lee Paris and Constable Nicholas Joseph Roy.

As well, the dedication of five considerate New Brunswickers was celebrated with the Governor General's Caring Canadian award: Jean-Guy Plourde of Grand Falls, Georgeline Gauvin of Lamèque, Arthur Haché of Bertrand, Patrick Edward King of Miramichi and Betty Savoie of Lamèque.

I am a firm believer in honouring excellence, and again this year, I was pleased to pay tribute to those in our province who strive to do their best, not for recognition or reward, but because it is the right thing to do:

- Mary Majka received the first-ever Award of Excellence in Land Conservation;
- Carmelle Valotaire and Richard Hornsby received New Brunswick Youth Orchestra Distinction Awards;
- Fred Wheaton received the Award for Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation;
- John Wood received the New Brunswick Human Rights Award;
- The Association of Municipal Administrators of New Brunswick, fredkid and the Centre Communautaire Sainte-Anne as well as the New Brunswick Massotherapy Association received Dialogue Awards;
- Cheryl Robertson received the Award for Excellence in Public Administration;
- Father Monte Peters and the New Brunswick Women's Institute Home received Awards for Excellence in Aging; and
- Melvin Gallant, Jenny Munday and Janice Wright Cheney received Awards for High Achievement in the Arts.

On the artistic front, Viola Léger, our very own Sagouine, was the recipient of the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in Theatre.

On the music scene, David Myles received the Juno Award for rap recording of the year and Radio Radio took home the 2013 East Coast Music Award for Rap/Hip-Hop Recording of the Year.

The Prix littéraire Antonine-Maillet-Acadie Vie was awarded to Jonathan Roy for his collection of poems *Apprendre à tomber*. Claude Le Bouthillier was awarded the third Prix Quinquennal for his body of work.

Textile artist Susan Vida Judah was awarded the 2013 Strathbutler Excellence Award.

As well, two New Brunswickers will be honoured tomorrow night in Saint John: Arthur Irving will receive the Canadian Red Cross 2013 Humanitarian Award for New Brunswick and Alisha Virmani will receive the Canadian Red Cross Young Humanitarian Award.

Business leaders Aldéa Landry, Hans W. Klohn and Mike Wilson were named to the New Brunswick Business Hall of Fame this year.

In the sports arena, we congratulate Janie McGraw and Don Lavigne who participated in the World Special Olympics Winter Games last winter in the Republic of Korea.

Last July, more than 1,000 athletes from 11 different communities across the province participated in the 2013 New Brunswick Indian Summer Games in Tobique and Perth-Andover.

New Brunswick athletes and para-athletes once again showed us their skills last summer during the Canada Summer Games in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Team New Brunswick returned home with an improved performance resulting in 16 medals.

We also congratulate the young athletes and artists of Team Canada-New Brunswick who participated in the 7th edition of Les Jeux de la Francophonie last September in Nice, France. The team equalled its previous record of six medals at the games.

A job well done to all artists, athletes and mission staff of our New Brunswick teams.

In 2013, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Université de Moncton, New Brunswick's only francophone university and a pillar of the Acadian community.

Next summer, we look forward to hosting, along with our neighbours Quebec and Maine, the World Acadian Congress from August 8 to 24. Held every five years, the event is set to bring more than 50,000 visitors to our region to celebrate under the theme *Acadia of the World*.

## **Condolences**

We pause to remember Andy Scott, former New Brunswick civil servant, Member of Parliament for Fredericton and federal Cabinet minister. We also remember Wendell W. Meldrum, former MLA, Cabinet minister and judge.

We pay tribute to Win Hackett, educator, senior civil servant and former executive assistant to the late Hon. Richard Hatfield. We also celebrate the life of Frederic Arsenault, former provincial and federal senior civil servant and principal secretary and trusted advisor to the late Hon. Richard Hatfield.

We remember Martin J. Légère, the founder of the Fédération des Caisses Populaires Acadiennes.

We pay tribute to Stompin' Tom Connors, beloved musical icon and writer of our unofficial national anthem, *The Hockey Song*. We also celebrate the life of Alex Colville, renowned painter and pillar of the Mount Allison University community.

We also remember Noah and Connor Barthe whose young lives full of so much promise and potential were tragically cut short.

## **Introduction**

New Brunswick, Canada and the entire world are still in the grip of economic turmoil. Many markets, jobs and profits have not bounced back from the depths of the recession.

There is no hiding it - these are still challenging economic times. And our province is not immune to these fluctuations - we have felt the impact. Recovery can be a long and fragile process. New Brunswick is at a crossroads. It will take great leadership and co-operation to confidently move forward – in strengthening our economy, making strategic investments and managing responsibly for the future.

Every day, we are taking important steps towards recovering and rebuilding. Steps to bring our workers home. Steps that lead us to a brighter future.

And that light is there – that hope for a brighter, more prosperous New Brunswick.

## **Strengthening our Economy**

A strong economy and employment opportunities are top-of-mind priorities for New Brunswickers.

Your government's focus on the economy as well as protecting and creating jobs is a centrepiece for attention and action. Strategic investments based on input from stakeholders and sound analysis are positioning New Brunswick in local, regional and international markets.

To grow our economy and both protect and create jobs for people, your government is building partnerships that are leading to new investments and new possibilities for our province.

Released last March, your government's export strategy, *Growing Global Markets*, has identified new opportunities among emerging and non-traditional markets, helping local companies connect with global markets to drive job creation, growth, and investment here at home.

A historic agreement was penned just a few weeks ago when Prime Minister Stephen Harper signed into effect an agreement in principle of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Free Trade Agreement, commonly referred to as CETA.

New Brunswick is Canada's most export-oriented province and as such, your government is always interested in opening up new markets for our thriving business community's products and services.

Our province has been an active participant throughout the CETA negotiations. The European Union represents New Brunswick's largest export market after the United States, and our historical ties and geographic proximity to Europe make it a logical target for diversifying our exports.

Many of New Brunswick's key sectors will benefit from an ambitious Canada-European Union trade agreement. Your government is pleased to note that immediate duty-free market access for our agricultural products such as frozen potatoes, blueberries and cranberries has come to fruition in this agreement.

The agreement will also eliminate barriers to access the world's largest fish and seafood market. New Brunswick ranked as Canada's largest exporter of seafood in 2012, with exports valued at \$967 million. We have had success in market diversification, especially in Asia. Better market access through the implementation of CETA will ensure that we can continue to build on these recent successes.

The forestry industry is one of the founding blocks of New Brunswick's economy. At home, your government will continue to promote wood as a material of choice in public infrastructure projects such as bridges and buildings and also as a fuel alternative where the option of using wood pellets for heating presents itself.

Internationally, under CETA, tariffs on Canadian wood and wood products will be completely eliminated. This will benefit New Brunswick's forestry industry through more jobs, higher wages and greater long-term prosperity.

In the upcoming year, your government will also be implementing a strategy to ensure New Brunswick has a competitive forest industry for generations to come.

Last summer, your government welcomed TransCanada's decision to move forward with a west-east pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick. This project will bring jobs and other benefits to families and communities throughout New Brunswick and Canada.

New Brunswick is well equipped to accommodate this pipeline - we have the largest, most modern refinery in Canada as well as the deepest seaport on the east coast of North America in Saint John.

This pipeline is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that will help retain and return our workers at home.

As TransCanada proceeds to the environmental and regulatory approvals phase, your government will continue to work with all communities and regions of New Brunswick to ensure that our province derives maximum benefits from this historic opportunity while ensuring responsible resource development.

Responsible resource development will protect the rights and interests of future generations while at the same time improving the quality of life for all New Brunswickers, including First Nations.

Your government is committed to continuing its efforts to establish the relationship among First Nations, industry and business, so that together they can build a healthier and more prosperous New Brunswick. Your government believes that by working together, these groups will yield a rich dividend of respect, friendship and progress that will benefit every resident of this province.

As you may recall, your government has done a great deal of work towards making sure that our natural resources – and, in particular, our natural gas potential – are identified to determine whether there is potential for economic benefits in the future.

Economic benefits that could be derived from our natural resources are what will allow government to help fund and improve education, health care and many other services in the years ahead.

Backed by the strongest rules for industry, introduced in February, as well as an action-oriented *Oil and Natural Gas Blueprint for New Brunswick*, introduced in May, your government will continue on the course of responsible exploration and development.

A key aspect of managing oil and natural gas development is ensuring that the province secures a fair return to New Brunswickers for our resources. Your government recently announced a new natural gas royalty regime that ensures a fair return to New Brunswickers while encouraging investment in this sector.

Additionally, work will continue on key energy and mining projects leading to a stronger economy, including:

- the ongoing efforts towards the responsible exploration and development of shale gas;
- the launch of an Expression of Interest for potash to promote other potential sites for exploration and mining of this resource in New Brunswick;
- the continued work on mining projects, including the Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed Sisson Brook Tungsten Mine, the opening of the Picadilly Potash Expansion in the Sussex area and the restart of the Trevali lead-zinc mine at Caribou near Bathurst;
- the ongoing support for the development of the Energy East Pipeline;
- the negotiation of the Canada-New Brunswick offshore accord; and
- the ongoing support for the Reduce and Shift Demand initiative as lead by NB Power.

On the innovation front, the establishment of the New Brunswick Research and Innovation Council earlier this year has created a much-needed leadership forum to foster entrepreneurship and creativity, key drivers of the growth of our knowledge economy.

In the coming year, your government's increased investment in research and innovation will start bearing fruit:

- through the Industry Innovation Challenge, bold research and development initiatives will accelerate the growth of our industries by pursuing some of their biggest ideas to grow new markets;
- our small- and medium-sized enterprises will be able to access the new Innovation Voucher Fund to drive the growth of their business through the development of new processes, products and services;
- entrepreneurs and investors will have access to increased seed and early capital and a consolidation of the innovation ecosystem to feed the launch and growth of new business ventures in our province;
- a call for proposal will lead to the creation of up to six New Brunswick Innovation Research Chairs to engage with industry in key sectors of our economy;
- our province's public researchers will benefit from a threefold increase in support to their projects and initiatives which will help them leverage new federal and industry partnerships; and
- our best and brightest undergraduate and graduate students will be able to access additional resources through the research assistant initiative and the New Brunswick Graduate Scholarship Initiative.

These initial investments are only the first steps necessary to accelerate the growth of our economy through innovation. Other policies and initiatives are being designed to bolster our knowledge economy and create new, sustainable jobs for our province.

Furthermore, a new economic development approach has been initiated by your government, providing quick and easy access to funding programs through the creation of five districts with a total of 12 offices serving small- and medium-sized businesses. Decentralized decision-making provides more efficient service to entrepreneurs.

Workforce needs and skills development must be linked with emerging economic opportunities. This means investing in large- and small-scale resource-driven and value-added commodities, including wood, food products, oil and gas. It also means supporting growth in the industrial fabrication and manufacturing sectors as well as innovation through ventures such as information technology start-ups and the aerospace and defence sector.

Your government is committed to working with industry and federal partners to establish a centralized mechanism to coordinate access to business incubation and laboratory facilities for companies in the bioscience sector. This will enable the establishment and growth of start-up bioscience companies while making the best use of existing infrastructure around the province.

As part of its plan to invest in New Brunswick businesses and work to rebuild the economy, last winter, your government announced its One-Job Pledge initiative aimed at creating jobs and keeping our young post-secondary graduates home in New Brunswick while they gain valuable on-the-job experience.

Your government is pleased to report that the program has been a resounding success and that it has exceeded all expectations. In the coming weeks, your government will be announcing an expansion of the original target of 650 positions.

Last month, your government launched a consultation on immigration as part of its Population Growth Strategy. The purpose of this consultation is to collect information that will assist your

government in developing a five-year population growth strategy as well as a targeted action plan on Francophone immigration.

In addition, this strategy will focus on how to address the province's demographic decline for a prosperous and thriving New Brunswick, enabling your government to foster a stronger economy, train people and create well-paying jobs for all New Brunswickers.

As well, your government will work to strengthen its partnership with the federal government to ensure that federal funding in support of infrastructure and the labour market meets provincial needs.

Although Employment Insurance is a federal program, your government remains concerned about the potential impact of Employment Insurance changes in our province. It will continue to defend the interests of all New Brunswickers affected by these changes.

As a result, your government has joined forces with the other Atlantic Provinces, through the Council of Atlantic Premiers, and established the Atlantic Premiers' Panel on Impacts of Changes to Employment Insurance.

The success of last summer's Buy Local Tour demonstrates that New Brunswickers have a keen interest in supporting our agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors.

Your government will build on this effort and lead by example - provincial departments and agencies will encourage and promote the use of local, healthy food during government-hosted meetings and events.

Legislative amendments to the *Seafood Processing Act* regarding the licensing of fish buyers, which focused on improving the quality of fish from the wharf to the plant, took effect last summer.

This fall, further improvements to this act will be introduced to support our industry's commitment to the highest quality seafood, enhanced global competitiveness as well as the diversification of markets.

Oyster aquaculture is experiencing steady growth in the province and has the potential to be an even greater contributor to the rural economy. Aquatic animal health in both the finfish and shellfish sectors remains a priority for your government and targeted improvement initiatives will proceed.

New Brunswick producers now have access to new and innovative agriculture and agri-food programming thanks to a renewed federal-provincial agreement, *Growing Forward 2*. During the next five years, \$37 million in federal and provincial funding will be invested in new and traditional programs covering innovation, competitiveness and market development.

In partnership with the industry, strategic work will continue to improve seed potato quality, strengthen the competitive position of the New Brunswick seed potato sector and expand and develop seed potato markets.

In the coming year, in the area of value-added food, your government will be addressing ongoing challenges within the labour market and the need for automation as well as assisting companies to meet regulatory requirements.

A new five-year wild blueberry strategy to support New Brunswick producers in keeping pace with the growing worldwide demand for wild blueberries was recently announced by your government.

In the area of tourism, your government has undertaken a review of its trails use policy to encourage a safe, sustainable and strategically located provincial trail network that will focus on the development of the tourism sector for both motorized and non-motorized trail systems.

In an effort to spur growth in the snowmobile tourism sector, your government has initiated discussions with its partners to improve and expand snowmobile trail opportunities and services in the centre of the Northern Odyssey snowmobile region. This plan proposes the establishment of a new centralized snowmobile trail grooming base at Mount Carleton Provincial Park.

In addition to development in the snowmobile sector, your government is also researching the potential to develop an all-terrain vehicle tourism product. The purpose of the product would be to provide a stimulus for economic development primarily focused on tourism.

The Cruise Strategy for Northern New Brunswick was completed earlier this year, and your government is pleased to announce that an action plan and recommendations have been developed and are being implemented to attract cruise business to northern New Brunswick.

## **Investing in Families and Communities**

Your government is committed to enhancing the quality of life of all New Brunswickers.

As such, it has made a commitment to the development of a prescription drug plan that will help New Brunswickers afford the drugs they need and prevent people from experiencing financial hardship because of prescription drug costs.

This new plan will contribute to the sustainability of New Brunswick's health care system by providing access to the drugs New Brunswickers need to manage their health. Individuals who can effectively manage their chronic diseases through affordable prescription drug coverage require fewer hospitalizations and experience better quality of life.

During this legislative session, your government will introduce legislation to establish the foundation for this new drug plan. By next summer, New Brunswick will move forward with a plan that ensures its residents have access to many expensive drugs and that prescription drug coverage is improved for citizens of this province.

Your government recently released its new five-year Provincial Health Plan, *Rebuilding Health Care Together*. This plan is designed to give health care professionals and system administrators the strategic guidance and direction they need for the planning, governance and delivery of health care in New Brunswick.

During the five years of this plan, the Department of Health will work closely with New Brunswick's health system partners to achieve an efficient and effective health care system that is both financially and clinically sustainable while encouraging innovation and improving quality of care and patient satisfaction. Year one initiatives are clearly identified and will move forward.

Last August, your government released its *Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy*. This strategy builds on our province's Economic Development Action Plan, which outlines your government's commitment to ensuring the availability of a skilled and globally competitive labour force.

This strategy includes three main themes that consist of 44 priority action items: support for the K-12 and post-secondary education systems to adequately prepare students for labour force needs, support for learning and skills development and retention as well as the attraction of highly skilled individuals.

Apprenticeships and skilled trades are also a key element of your government's *Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy*. The strategy contains actions aimed at attracting teens into the trades through the New Brunswick Teen Apprentice Program as well as efforts to implement a women-in-trades program. In the coming months, your government will be announcing several new initiatives to encourage more people to enter apprenticeships and to increase employer involvement.

As well, recently, as part of its efforts to support apprenticeship in New Brunswick, your government was proud to announce that it is investing \$50,000 in Helmets to Hardhats Canada, a national, not-for-profit organization that provides apprenticeship training to current or former members of the Armed Forces or Reserves who are seeking a civilian career. Providing financial support to help our veterans move into a trade will help your government address the increasing demand for skilled trade workers in our province.

Recently, your government was also pleased to honour its commitment to provide sustainable and predictable university funding and stable tuition levels for students by the year 2014.

Public universities are critical to the socio-economic well-being of our province, representing key investments in our people, our economy and the future of New Brunswick.

This new funding commitment ensures universities can plan their operating budgets through to 2016. This is the first time that the provincial government has provided a concrete funding commitment in advance of its yearly budget announcement.

In addition, in response to its commitment to ensure stable tuition levels for students, starting in 2014-15, your government will set an annual tuition increase cap of no more than three percent for the next three years for all public universities in our province except St. Thomas University.

Tuition increases are a reality across the country, but your government believes that stable and predictable increases help students better budget for their education, ensuring them accessible and affordable post-secondary education opportunities.

To complement these initiatives, your government plans to announce a redesigned student financial assistance program in the near future.

Your government will introduce amendments to the acts legislating workers' compensation in our province this fall. This initiative is part of an overall legislative review of workers' compensation, something which has not been accomplished in more than 20 years in our province.

These amendments aim to modernize workers' compensation, striking a balance between both workers' and employers' interests.

Your government recognizes that more emphasis must be placed on community and home-based care and supports designed to maintain seniors' health and independence.

The report from the Premier's Panel on Seniors *Living Healthy, Aging Well* as well as the citizen engagement initiatives held in June of 2013 will provide guidance to your government as it moves forward in the coming months to implement initiatives to create supportive environments for healthy aging.

Work is in the final stages on a comprehensive new *Home First Strategy* designed to serve as a cornerstone of an integrated provincial system of health care and long-term care.

The strategy will include a concrete action plan that represents a fundamental change in philosophy and practice where seniors are supported in their communities to the extent that lengthy hospital stays and premature residential placements are avoided.

An independent evaluation has been completed on the 3.5 Hours of Care in Nursing Homes pilot project, and your government will soon release a report with evaluation findings and recommendations. Those recommendations will inform the broader work being done with the sector and the New Brunswick Association of Nursing Homes to enhance, improve and modernize the services provided in nursing homes across the province.

Already, your government has made progress to support seniors with the implementation of a toll-free seniors' information line. This user-friendly, client-centered phone line will ensure that seniors, their families and caregivers are assisted by qualified agents to navigate the system to get information about government programs and services available to them.

A partnership between your government and Go Ahead Seniors Inc. has been formed to offer wellness clinics for seniors around the province. These clinics will provide seniors with a venue where they can receive healthy living advice and meet with health and wellness professionals for things such as blood pressure and glucose monitoring.

As well, your government will be proclaiming the recent amendments made to the *Ombudsman Act* to expand the authority of the Ombudsman to cover long-term care services supported by government.

On October 1, your government launched the broadest number of changes to the provincial social assistance system since the 1990s. By April 2014, eligible social assistance clients will see a seven per cent increase in their monthly financial assistance.

Disabled clients living with their parents are benefitting from a reduction or complete elimination, depending on parental income, of their shelter deduction. This positive change represents the first important step in the broader work being done by your government to create a separate income support program for persons with disabilities.

It is no secret that our province is facing serious wellness challenges. It is particularly important that we encourage good habits among our children, and this includes involving them in sport.

Your government will partner with the private and not-for-profit sectors to engage children and youth to increase their physical activity levels and motivate community schools to promote a healthy environment where students are active throughout the day.

The New Brunswick Wellness Strategy has been evaluated, and positive outcomes have been noted in schools, communities, workplaces and homes:

- each year, close to 100 per cent of New Brunswick schools are championing wellness initiatives, involving students, educators, parents and community partners;
- the New Brunswick Workplace Wellness Community of Practice has 75 workplaces actively championing comprehensive workplace wellness; and
- since October 2011, more than 1,900 wellness commitments have been made as part of the New Brunswick Wellness Movement.

A renewed wellness strategy will be introduced in 2014, and further enhancements to your government's wellness initiatives will be undertaken.

Your government continues to work towards enhancing the quality of life for New Brunswickers living in poverty. The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation has just finished a tour of 12 communities throughout our province during which New Brunswickers were invited to engagement sessions to share their thoughts on how to reduce poverty. The results of the consultations will culminate in a renewed plan to overcome poverty to be released in 2014.

While it is true that our province as a whole is experiencing challenging times, there is an urgent need to achieve greater social, economic and health outcomes for our First Nations communities.

Your government is committed to working in partnership with First Nations to improve conditions in aboriginal communities. There are many things that can be done in the short term, including: economy-building, capacity-building, increased investments in post-secondary education and training and improvements in infrastructure.

By continuing to collaborate with First Nations communities, your government will ensure that they can rise up out of poverty by encouraging and promoting opportunities for economic development and success through education and training.

Your government is taking a leadership role in promoting equality between women and men and boys and girls in our province. Early in 2014, a cross-government initiative regarding the use of gender-based analysis in the development and decision-making processes of government programs and policies will be launched.

New Brunswick remains one of the safest provinces in which to live. New Brunswickers can continue to feel secure living, working and raising a family in our province. The crime rate in our province remains below the national average.

New Brunswick's Roundtable on Crime and Public Safety is committed to the protection of families, seniors and children. The roundtable has identified as its priorities: youth at risk, chronic repeat offenders and domestic and intimate partner violence. Your government, through this roundtable, will continue to focus its collaborative efforts in reducing crime and victimization in all areas of the province.

Your government remains committed to ensuring public awareness and education efforts to protect children from Internet child exploitation and to improve the capacity and capabilities of law enforcement.

Investing in collaborative efforts to protect children and youth from all forms of harm remains a priority for your government. This includes innovative initiatives promoted by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, such as UNICEF Canada's Rights Respecting Schools Initiative.

Informed by an extensive consultation process earlier this year, the Community-based Services for Children with Special Needs Program will be modernized to be more responsive to the needs of families with children with special needs.

Your government continues to be committed to providing early prevention and intervention services and supports for children and youth with multiple needs. To this end, it will be introducing legislation to facilitate the sharing of information between multiple service providers in the context of service delivery to our most vulnerable population.

All students in New Brunswick's public schools will benefit from enriched educational opportunities and fewer barriers to learning as a result of your government's new Inclusive Education Policy. Continued investments will increase system capacity within New Brunswick schools in order to support your government's vision for inclusive education.

In the area of early childhood development, your government will continue to honour its commitments to build a continuum of learning, starting from birth.

Investments in child care staff wages made to date have reduced the overall staff turnover and improved the quality of care offered by child care facilities in our province.

During this legislative session, once amendments and regulations are finalized, your government will move forward on the proclamation of the *Early Childhood Services Act*. This act will bring New Brunswick to the forefront as the first province in Canada to streamline authority on all aspects of early childhood into one act.

Over the past year, your government has strengthened the tools used to address bullying in schools by enhancing legislation and introducing two provincial anti-bullying coordinators. In the upcoming year, your government will build on this strong foundation by fortifying existing standards to make our schools even safer for our children.

Your government firmly believes in following up on the Commission on Francophone Schools' report to increase the capacity of francophone educational institutions and of their educational partners to foster academic success and build individual students' identity.

Your government is pleased to note that it plans to build on the successful implementation of the *Action Plan for a New Local Governance System in New Brunswick*, and will continue to work with stakeholders to modernize the *Municipalities Act* and the *Community Planning Act*.

In keeping with its commitment to enhance consumer protection, your government plans to introduce a new act to regulate the mortgage broker industry. The new legislation governing mortgage brokers will provide the necessary tools to regulate the industry and will bring New Brunswick in line with the majority of other Canadian provinces.

Your government plans to introduce amendments to unproclaimed legislation aimed at regulating payday loans to create an effective regulatory regime for payday lenders. Legislation will effectively control payday lending practices and enhance consumer protection.

It is your government's priority to ensure that those who least can afford it have access to justice. Your government will reform legal aid to ensure that it is managed as efficiently and as effectively as possible so that maximum resources can be directed to clients.

Incorporating input received through an extensive consultation process, your government will soon be finalizing its work on the renewal of the provincial Cultural Policy. The renewed policy will chart the course for cultural development priorities in our province for the next five years.

By establishing a Premier's Task Force on the Status of the Artist, your government will work towards recognizing and supporting the profession of artists in our province. This task force will provide recommendations that will improve the socio-economic status of professional artists.

Your government has made a commitment to preserve and maintain ownership of the parks system for the benefit of New Brunswickers and visitors alike, now and in the future.

A revision of the *Parks Act* which will form the basis of our parks' mandate for the coming years has been initiated by your government. Bearing in mind the feedback gathered and the evolving role of parks in our society, revised legislation will be brought forward.

To create a coastal connection between Saint John and Moncton, your government is continuing its investments in one of our province's key tourism attraction, the Fundy Trail Parkway.

## **Managing for our Future**

Pension plans in Canada and across the world continue to face huge challenges, and our province is no different. The pension plan provided for in the *Public Service Superannuation Act* is facing a \$1-billion deficit today, and this figure is only expected to grow. We cannot place the burden of addressing this deficit entirely on the shoulders of taxpayers, current employees and future generations. This means that changes must be made to the plan today in order to make it sustainable and secure for current and future retirees. The status quo is not an option.

Last year, your government indicated its intention to move towards a shared risk model for public service pensions. During the last year, it has worked with retirees, unions and current employees to provide information and address their concerns.

During this session, your government will introduce legislation that will make public service pensions more affordable, fair, sustainable and secure for all public service retirees going forward. This legislation will also pave the way for Members of the Legislative Assembly to adopt a shared risk model for their pensions.

Your government will introduce fiscal accountability measures to facilitate the return to sustainable fiscal balance, place controls on overall government spending, require an annual multi-year fiscal plan including a deficit reduction plan should deficits be projected, and require the provincial Auditor General to report on the province's finances 60 days in advance of each fixed election date.

Your government will take measures to increase transparency and accountability in election commitments and make the costs of election promises clearer to New Brunswickers. This includes providing tools to voters to enable them to better understand the economic and fiscal outlook for the province leading up to an election.

Based on the Auditor General's recommendations, and to demonstrate proper accountability for more than \$500 million in annual health care spending, your government will take the necessary steps to report publicly on the remuneration paid to all medical practitioners, including fee-for-service payments, medical pay plan, sessional arrangements, alternate payments and alternate funding plans.

Last year, your government committed to creating a Smart Regulations system. The goal of this system is to reduce the numerous and complex regulatory burdens and difficulties faced by businesses, individuals and community organizations while maintaining tough regulations that safeguard personal health and safety, environmental integrity and the rules of business.

Throughout 2013, your government has worked with departments to reduce their regulations by 20 per cent. In early 2014, your government will introduce a new "1-in, 1-out" system where the introduction of new regulatory obligations will be offset by the elimination of existing ones.

Looking forward, your government will explore ways to modernize New Brunswick's regulatory system. This will include greater use of plain language to help New Brunswickers better understand their regulations, speedier resolution of issues related to red tape and the requirement that all new regulations be based on research, evidence or risk analysis.

Your government will continue on its path to work with its provincial and territorial partners as well as the federal government to pursue opportunities for collaboration aimed at a delivery of services of the highest possible quality and cost-efficiency. Initiatives such as the Atlantic Workforce Partnership, the Atlantic Procurement Agreement and the Health Innovation Working Group, which are all focused on delivering quality services for improved prices, are great examples of how your government already collaborates with its counterparts to better serve New Brunswickers.

Here at home, in moving towards a performance-based organization, New Brunswick's public service has undergone, since 2011, a deep culture shift and adopted the methodologies of a formal management system to increase accountability, improve productivity and processes, enhance service delivery, solve problems and reduce waste.

To date, close to \$11 million have been saved through Lean Six Sigma process improvement initiatives across government. More than 125 projects have been completed or are currently underway, involving more than 1,000 employees.

Through these projects, your government has generated real results, such as reduced wait times at customer service centres and hospitals, increased quality and efficiency of highway maintenance work, identification of inventory management efficiencies for pharmaceutical drugs and vehicle parts and reduced costs of printing and employee travel, just to name a few.

Your government is currently working on implementing this new management system to the last wave of departments completing all areas of the core public service. This new way of conducting government business is making a huge impact on the cost and the quality of

services being offered to the people of New Brunswick and your government is committed to building on the established success of this program to keep offering better services in a smarter and more cost-effective way, now and for the future.

## **Conclusion**

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

Amendments to acts and regulations will be presented to move forward your government's plan to rebuild New Brunswick and invest in our greatest asset – our people.

As individuals, and collectively as a province, we need to innovate and seize on opportunities, focusing on the strengths of our human resource potential, traditional economic advantages and strategic growth in emerging sectors.

Together, we are establishing a solid foundation on which to rebuild, grow and prosper. And the future looks bright for our province as strong leadership focuses on priorities that matter and progress that is sustainable.

We are still not out of the trenches, but by strengthening our economy, investing in our families and communities and managing today for our province's future, we are positioned for responsible growth and have begun taking steps towards a brighter tomorrow.

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