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**No. 2**

Tuesday, November 25, 1997.

*3 o'clock p.m.*

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was announced and having been bidden to enter, took her seat in the chair upon the Throne.

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**Speech from the Throne**

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was pleased to open the Session with the following gracious speech:

Mr. Speaker, and Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly:

Today I have the honour and privilege of welcoming you to the Third Session of the 53rd Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

I am pleased and most humbled to have been given the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

I am very proud to have the opportunity to open this Session of the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, and I wish you a warm welcome.

My Government wishes to acknowledge and give heartfelt thanks to our former Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, who so graciously served our Province in a diligent and caring manner.

On behalf of the people of New Brunswick I want to recognize and sincerely thank the former Premier, Frank McKenna, for ten years of exemplary leadership and unselfish dedication to the Province and its people.

I wish to thank our former Premier, Frank McKenna, for his exemplary and dedicated work on behalf of New Brunswickers.

To Mr. McKenna and his family, we wish all the best in their future endeavours.

On behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to congratulate John McKay, MLA for Miramichi Centre, on his recent appointment as Speaker of the House.

Following on the success of the Annual Premiers' Conference in St. Andrews this year, My Government will host the 23rd Annual Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers in Fredericton in 1998.

New Brunswick participated with the Government of Canada at the recent Francophone Summit in Hanoi. My Government is very pleased with the decision to hold the next Summit in Moncton in 1999, where youth is expected to be the predominant theme. This international event brings together 49 heads of state and government, and the exposure and spin-off activities are expected to be of major benefit to New Brunswick.

On behalf of the Members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to all our athletes who so ably represented the Province at the 1997 Canada Summer Games. They succeeded in bringing home a record 17 medals. Congratulations are also in order for our athletes and artists who participated at Les Jeux de la Francophonie in Madagascar, and returned with 5 medals for New Brunswick.

My Government shares the concern of our Atlantic colleagues about the current and future impact of federal social and economic policies on Atlantic Canada. The Atlantic Vision Conference was the beginning of a renewed effort to address these concerns, and to help communicate to all Canadians

the vision of this Region and the determination to remain strong and vibrant partners in our Canadian federation.

Over the past ten years, My Government has made considerable progress in fiscal management, in diversifying and modernizing the economy, in social policy reform, and in improving the quality of life for our citizens. New Brunswick has been recognized across the country and elsewhere as an activist province working tirelessly to promote its strengths and advantages.

My Government recognizes that while we have succeeded in putting our fiscal house in order, New Brunswickers have had to make sacrifices along the way. Our citizens approached this challenge with resolve, and it is only fitting that they should benefit from these accomplishments. The Province is now positioned to build and expand on these accomplishments, and to reinvest some of its hard earned dividends in the key social programs and enhancements to our quality of life.

My Government will maintain fiscal discipline by operating within the framework of a balanced budget, living within our means, and paying down the net debt. This will continue to present a major challenge to the Government in the coming years. It is as a result of these fiscal policies over the past decade that the Province can now make strategic investments in our key social programs. My Minister of Finance will elaborate on this later in the Session.

The Government has put in place a solid foundation for New Brunswickers to participate in the new information economy. The resource sectors are restructuring, and the Province's businesses and industries are ready to participate in the new global trading environment. The economic indicators for the Province are strong and positive, and marked growth in the economy and in employment opportunities is expected. New Brunswick is at a crossroads in our economic history, and is poised to grow and expand with the rest of Canada as we move towards the millennium.

The Province has reached a landmark where an increased emphasis can be given to stabilizing and securing key social programs, while continuing to aggressively pursue job creation opportunities. My Government continues to believe that the best social program is employment, and job creation will remain a priority for 1998. At the same time it will be balanced with strategic reinvestments in social programs with health care and education as the top priorities.

A sound and compassionate system of health care is of fundamental importance to all New Brunswickers. My Government remains committed to a planned and relevant health care system which meets the needs of all citizens. A major goal of my Department of Health and Community Services will be to ensure that the system is sustainable for generations to come.

This Government is completing the third year of its major policy initiative: Making Health and Community Services Sustainable. No further fundamental restructuring in the health care system is planned. As we enter a period of stability and sustainability in the coming year, reinvestments will be made in key health care and social services.

Last year My Government responded to particular requirements identified in the hospital system, as well as in other service components of the long term care strategy. This year My Department of Health and Community Services will respond positively to a recent study on nursing home care.

My Government is participating in renewed efforts in federal-provincial cooperation in health, social services and human resource development, leading to the design and implementation of a new social policy framework for Canada. My Minister of Health and Community Services will be participating in the development of a federal-provincial protocol for discussing issues regarding the interpretation of the *Canada Health Act*.

A new *Public Health Act* will be introduced and will provide stronger enforcement powers to reduce health hazards and control communicable diseases.

Major investments will be made in TeleHealth in partnership with the Region Hospital Corporations and the private sector. By becoming world leaders in TeleHealth, the Government will not only provide better, more modern services, but will create jobs for New Brunswickers.

An effective public education system is also a major priority for New Brunswickers, and in 1998 My Government will focus on stabilizing the system and undertaking strategic reinvestments in selected areas. Additional resources will be made available and directed to classrooms, particularly in remedial, special needs and enrichment activities, as well as music, arts, and physical education.

The new *Education Act* will be proclaimed during this Session, and will provide the legal framework to complete the reforms necessary to prepare New Brunswick students for the 21st century. The emphasis will be on learning and teaching, and a better school environment for students and teachers. A Positive Learning Environment Policy will be implemented in 1998.

This year My Department of Education will be making new technology investments, which will see an infusion of World Wide Web-ready computers in our schools. This will enhance opportunities for

learning in the classroom.

My Government is aware of concerns expressed about the cost of post-secondary education and particularly the student debt load. New measures will be introduced to help alleviate the burden of student debt repayment.

An area of increasing concern to New Brunswickers is the accessibility of video lottery terminals. My Government will move to implement a phased-in program to remove video lottery terminals from all non-licensed establishments in the Province. Effective immediately the installation of video lottery terminals in non-licensed establishments will no longer be authorized. My Minister of Finance will be providing further details in the coming weeks.

My Department of Human Resource Development remains committed to its mission of client self-sufficiency, and will continue its emphasis on education, training, and job experience. Support will be in place to assist unemployed New Brunswickers in their transition or return to the workforce. Assistance will be provided through integrated case management and active program interventions.

My Government is sensitive to the concerns of our most vulnerable citizens, and particularly those with lower incomes. A number of these concerns will be addressed in the coming year. In addition to investments in health care, training and education, and job creation, other measures will be undertaken to help alleviate hardship, and to give greater support to low income families and individuals:

New exemptions to the Household Income Policy are being implemented to provide additional support for individuals receiving social assistance benefits.

Recognizing that senior citizens often experience difficulty with day-to-day living expenses, legislation will be introduced to provide a payment to low income senior citizens to help offset the increased costs of home heating.

The New Brunswick Child Tax Benefit and Working Income Supplement will direct significant resources to low income families with children. In addition federal-provincial discussions are underway at the First Ministers level with a view to increasing the Federal contribution to the Canada Child Tax Credit in 1998.

Over the next two years this Government will establish a provincial network of Human Resource Service Centers where unemployed people will be able to access a complete range of income support, employment, and training services.

My Government continues to be concerned with the high level of youth unemployment. Following the decision reached by Provincial Premiers in August, the Province will continue to aggressively pursue the development of a National Youth Employment Strategy with sister provinces and the federal government.

Amendments to the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act* will be introduced to support a regional focus for the Council, and a strengthened provincial network for New Brunswick women. The *Change of Name Act* and the *Family Services Act* will also be amended.

As a result of the success of some 150 Community Access Centers, the program will be extended to a second phase to focus on bringing new services to rural New Brunswickers. On-line pilot projects will be introduced for banking, university courses, high school equivalency certificates, tourism promotion, and others.

My Government believes that the most compelling reason for job creation and a growing economy is to generate the resources necessary to secure and protect social programs, and improve our quality of life. Job creation will therefore remain a high priority.

My Government's job creation initiatives for 1998 will target new sectors such as plastics and metalworking, while vigorously pursuing call centres, information technology businesses, and textiles. Special efforts will be undertaken to encourage value-added processing and manufacturing in wood, textiles, metalworking, minerals and fisheries. Both rural and urban regions of New Brunswick will benefit from these job creation efforts.

Special economic development emphasis will continue to be given to areas adversely impacted by major disruptions, such as the Sussex area with the closure of the potash mine.

My Government will continue to build on the success of our recent tourism initiatives. In 1998 a major new marketing campaign will be launched in Ontario as well as in selected Canadian and US cities. The emphasis will be placed on the eco-traveller, and the fly-drive market in partnership with airlines.

Specific tourism development plans will be introduced for Cape Tormentine, Albert County and in the Shippagan/Lamèque/Miscou area. A new Outdoor Network project will be launched, resulting in new facilities at Hopewell Rocks, Sugarloaf Park, Tracadie, Caraquet, and Mount Carleton. The new and

expanded tourism initiatives for the coming year are expected to create a significant number of jobs throughout the Province, especially in rural areas.

Priorities in the resource sectors for 1998 will result in increased employment opportunities, particularly for rural New Brunswickers. These will include:

The implementation of specific initiatives for sustainable forest management on private woodlots, in partnership with woodlot owners and industry.

An initiative to achieve longer term employment in fish plants licenced to process snow crab.

Active pursuit in the mining sector of the potential for development of a number of minerals and opportunities to create value-added jobs. Additional mineral exploration activity will also be undertaken.

A new Cottage Industry Development Initiative for rural areas, encouraging more cottage industry products to be wholesaled into the marketplace through the Rural Riches Trading Company.

In the agriculture sector the Certificate of Compliance Program will be strengthened, and a Tiered Crop Insurance Program will be established. The *Real Property Tax Act* will be amended so that the difference in property taxes paid by farmers in incorporated and unincorporated areas will be reduced considerably.

The Sable Island natural gas project will result in over \$135 million in investment in New Brunswick, with hundreds of associated jobs. Legislation will be introduced to create an appropriate environment for the development of natural gas distribution. A lateral pipeline to the northern part of the Province is clearly a priority of this Government. A natural gas Industrial Benefits Strategy will be developed to maximize the number of jobs for New Brunswickers.

Electrical energy deregulation will be advanced in 1998. Transmission tariffs for wheeling electrical power through and out of the Province will be implemented January 1, 1998. A further stage of transmission access to allow for the wheeling of electric power into and within the Province must be fully addressed.

The energy sector in New Brunswick is now at a crossroads. Several issues need to be explored including restructuring, open competition, and private sector involvement in the electrical energy sector. My Government believes that these matters must be addressed in full consultation with New Brunswickers. A discussion document on electrical energy issues will be tabled during this Session, and referred to a special committee of the Legislative Assembly for that purpose.

My Government will introduce legislation to amend the *New Brunswick Highway Corporation Act*, the *Motor Vehicle Act*, and the *Highway Act* pertaining to the new four-lane Fredericton - Moncton Highway. A new *Fredericton - Moncton Highway Financing Act* will also be presented during this Session.

A major element of My Government's job creation strategy is to prepare New Brunswickers for the jobs of the future. A new Work-Ready Workforce initiative for information technology firms will be developed and implemented to better reflect the opportunities available in New Brunswick. In partnership with universities and colleges, the number of work-ready graduates will be increased. New programs will be introduced in schools to assist teachers on how best to use this technology.

My Government is fully aware of the future demographic trends in New Brunswick. Our future development will depend to a large degree on population growth, and a new Immigration Strategy will be developed pursuant to successful negotiations with the Government of Canada.

My Departments of Justice and the Solicitor General will implement a number of new measures in 1998 to improve the system of justice in the Province:

A restorative justice Alternative Measures Program will be established throughout the Province, for both adults and young offenders.

Provincial guidelines and protocols for the public notification of dangerous offenders will be put in place.

Amendments to the *Police Act* will be introduced which will enable the Government to ensure the establishment of regional police services. Efforts will continue to ensure gender equality and visible minority recruitment in policing.

A new *Protection of Personal Information Act* will be introduced. The Law Amendments Committee will consult with the public on extending privacy protection to include personal information held by the private sector.

My Government will introduce amendments to the *Right to Information Act*, and will request that it be referred to a Legislative Committee for consultation. The Honourable Justice Creaghan's review of the

*Conflict of Interest Act* will be tabled and referred to a committee of the Legislature for review and advice from all Members of the Legislature.

My Government will bring forward during the course of the next year, its response to the study on the efficiency of the New Brunswick Language Policy. This will include measures regarding the language of service to the population and the language of work.

As a result of a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, My Government will introduce legislation to establish an independent Commission on Judicial Salaries.

The Corporate Registry will be modernized, and the *Companies Act* will be tabled for amendments.

In 1998 the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission will give priority to creating a high standard of excellence in New Brunswick as an accident-free workplace. Amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* will provide important adjustments to benefits for injured workers and surviving spouses.

A province-wide high speed, high capacity communications network will be put in place in 1998 to connect most Government offices and facilities. NBTel and Fundy Communications infrastructure will be used, consistent with the Government's commitment to support private sector service providers.

To facilitate current municipal restructuring initiatives, you will be asked to consider legislation respecting amalgamations. Amendments to the *Municipalities Act* and *Municipal Elections Act* will be tabled in response to the recommendations of the Select Committee on Electoral Reform.

A new Cultural Policy will be introduced which will create the framework for the growth and prosperity of the arts and culture in our Province. Initiatives will be undertaken to strengthen New Brunswick's music and sound recording infrastructure. The *Arts Development Trust Fund Act* will be amended to ensure a stronger funding base for the Arts Board.

My Government will continue to advance a range of initiatives aimed at strengthening environmental protection, encouraging stewardship, and promoting sustainable development.

Implementing the *Clean Air Act* will be a major focus, including full consultation on new regulatory requirements for administrative penalties and public involvement.

The Wellfield Protection Program will enter the final stage of public discussion, leading to the designation of protected areas around environmentally fragile municipal ground water supplies.

Completion of our province-wide state-of-the-art solid waste management system will open the way for a new and expanded waste diversion strategy to further reduce the volume of waste generation and disposal in the Province. Specific initiatives in this regard will include a Waste Oil Recovery Program operated jointly with manufacturers and vendors of such products.

In the coming year My Department of Natural Resources and Energy will complete a new Protected Areas Strategy for New Brunswick, which will contribute significantly to conservation biodiversity.

A new *Conservation Easement Act* will be introduced during the Session to permit legal easements between private land owners and non-profit organizations for protection of ecologically sensitive lands with appropriate tax breaks.

The people of New Brunswick have been asked to share their views with a special committee of the Legislature in regard to the Calgary Declaration of Premiers on Canadian Unity. A special committee will table a report reflecting its consultation with New Brunswickers, and members of this Assembly will be asked to debate a resolution on the unity of Canada.

Further details of My Government's 1998 agenda and 1998-99 spending estimates will be outlined by my Ministers over the course of this Session.

You will be asked to review and approve the Statement of Estimated Revenues and Expenses and Capital Account appropriations, required to operate the Government for the coming fiscal period.

I would like to wish the Honourable Members of this Assembly success throughout this new Session. May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

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Her Honour then retired from the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.

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**Pro Forma Bill**

Ordered that Hon. Mr. Frenette, Premier, have leave to introduce a Bill entitled *An Act to Perpetuate a Certain Ancient Right*. (Bill 1)

He accordingly presented the said Bill to the House and the same was received and read the first time.

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**Election Returns**

Hon. Mrs. Breault, pursuant to the provisions of the *Elections Act*, laid upon the table of the House the returns of votes polled in the electoral district of Victoria-Tobique in the election held on the 23rd day of June, 1997.

On motion of Hon. Mr. Frenette, seconded by Hon. Mrs. Breault,

RESOLVED, that the returns be entered in the *Journals of the House*.

And they are as follows:

**RETURNS OF THE ELECTION  
FOR A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
HELD ON THE 23rd DAY OF JUNE 1997  
VICTORIA-TOBIQUE # 51**

Dr. Larry Kennedy (LIB) 3,510  
Deanna Grant (NDP) 137  
Greg Inman (PC) 3,061

JUDY ST. PETER  
Returning Officer

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Mr. Speaker then informed the House that in order to prevent mistakes he had obtained a copy of Her Honour's speech, which he offered to read. (Reading dispensed.)

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On motion of Mr. Kavanaugh, seconded by Mr. D. Landry,

RESOLVED, that the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor be forthwith taken into consideration.

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**Address**

Mr. Kavanaugh, a Member for the electoral district of Riverview, proposed an Address to Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to the speech, which he read in his place, and being seconded by Mr. D. Landry, a Member for the electoral district of Centre-Péninsule, it was handed to the Chair where it was again read and is as follows:

Fredericton, N.B.  
November 25, 1997.

To Her Honour,  
The Honourable Marilyn Trenholme Counsell,  
Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of New Brunswick.

May It Please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick, now in session, beg leave to extend our humble thanks to Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has addressed to us, and we assure Your Honour that all matters which may be submitted to us during the session will receive our most careful attention and consideration.

And a debate arising thereon, unanimous consent was granted for the Member for Riverview, and the Member for Centre-Péninsule to address the Assembly from seats other than their own.

And the debate continuing, it was on motion of Mr. Robichaud adjourned over.

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And then, 4.46 o'clock p.m. the House adjourned.