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No.1

Fredericton, N.B.

Tuesday, November 24, 1998.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the third session of the fifty-third Legislative Assembly of this Province was prorogued on the twenty-fourth day of November, 1998 at 9.30 o'clock in the forenoon;

AND WHEREAS I have thought fit to call the fourth session of the fifty-third Legislative Assembly of this Province into session, I hereby issue a Proclamation that the same be called to meet on the twenty-fourth day of November, 1998 at 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the Province at Fredericton this 21st day of October, 1998, in the forty-seventh year of Her Majesty's reign.

BY COMMAND OF THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Gregory Byrne, Q.C.
Attorney General

Joseph Z. Daigle
Administrator

This being the day appointed for the opening of the Fourth Session of the Fifty-third Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick for the dispatch of business pursuant to the proclamation hereinbefore annexed, and the Members being present:

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor was announced and having been bidden to enter, took her seat in the chair upon the Throne and was pleased to open the session with the following speech from the Throne:

Speech from the Throne

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

Introduction

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

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the Fourth Session of the 53rd Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

On behalf of this Assembly I welcome the Honourable Camille Thériault to his first Session as Premier of New Brunswick. I also welcome the new Leader of the Opposition and recently elected Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I also want to take the opportunity to express our appreciation and thanks to former Premiers Frank McKenna and Raymond Frenette for their years of exceptional service to the people of New Brunswick.

I also wish to draw the attention of this House to the level of excellence achieved by the coach and athletes from New Brunswick who participated with such distinction as part of Canada's team at the 1998 Commonwealth Games, bringing home eight medals. It is with great pride that we saw a New Brunswicker, Marianne Limpert, carry the Canadian flag at the opening ceremonies.

On behalf of this Assembly, I congratulate David Adams Richards, the distinguished New Brunswick author, who has won his second Governor General's Award, this time in the nonfiction category for *Lines on the Water*. Mr. Richards is only the third Canadian to receive this coveted award in both the fiction and nonfiction categories.

As well, I congratulate two eminent Acadian writers, France Daigle and Robert Viau who each received the Prix France-Acadie 1998 just this month.

In the seven brief months since the new Premier and Cabinet were sworn in, the Government has charted a fresh and different course, one which builds on the social justice of Equal Opportunity and the pride and fiscal responsibility of Self-Sufficiency. This Third Wave is a "made in New Brunswick" approach to governance which also draws on global trends to include citizens in the decision-making process and to harmonize social and fiscal responsibility.

This Government has set out to govern in a new and inclusive way. It will act with urgency and determination to make things better for our people, to remain focused in its concern for the less fortunate and to build on the immense pride which New Brunswickers feel for their Province's culture, identity and hopes for the future. As we approach the new millennium, New Brunswick will be characterized as a more caring, fair and prosperous society.

Securing Health Care for the Future

Through the extraordinary efforts of the people of New Brunswick and their elected Government, this Government has presented four consecutive balanced budgets. Balanced budget legislation has been enacted and under a Liberal Government, New Brunswick will never again borrow from our children's future to pay for the daily bills of the Province. Government stands firm and totally committed to this standard.

At the same time, Government is mindful of the impact of new pressures such as the aging population and the cost of advanced medical technology in providing and securing adequate funding for our health care system. Government hears the voices of genuine concern of our citizens about the threats to our health care system and the need to secure its future. This Government will again press the federal Government to restore all lost funding for health care transfers.

Through measures to be introduced in this new Session of the Legislature, the Government makes absolutely clear that health care is its primary focus. We remain convinced, as with all areas of public expenditure, that the key to ensuring continued excellent services for the public is maintaining responsible management of programs, as well as a strong and rapidly growing economy.

For these reasons, Government today is making its Health Care Guarantee to the people of New Brunswick. We pledge that there will be continued responsible management bolstered by real and continued growth of health care expenditures in relation to the growth of the New Brunswick economy.

The *Health Care Funding Guarantee Act* will be introduced to ensure that the growth in health care spending each year will exceed the real economic growth of the provincial economy. Despite a difficult fiscal climate, a funding level in excess of the minimum provided for in this *Act* will be respected in next month's budget and in the future. New Brunswickers will have the comfort of a legislated guarantee of the security of the health care system, a guarantee for today's seniors, for families and for young people.

The Government recognizes that ambulance service is extremely important to all New Brunswickers, especially for our seniors. Action will be taken to ensure that this service is accessible and affordable to all our citizens.

During recent discussions involving the Government and its health care partners, it was agreed that staffing patterns for nurses working in hospitals would be reviewed. Accordingly, the importance of caregivers in our health care system is being further recognized, and measures are being introduced to allow more nurses working in the system on a casual basis to enjoy the protection and benefits of permanent status.

This Government will add resources to provide for new physician positions to improve access to primary care. In partnership with health care professionals, the Department of Health and Community Services will further explore the Nurse Practitioner concept and how it can best serve New Brunswickers.

As well, the Government will consider ways in which to strengthen the accountability of the Province's hospital corporations.

To ensure better care for our senior citizens and other residents of nursing homes, the Government will re-establish appropriate staffing levels in these facilities.

The impact of cancer on individuals, their families and our communities is of great concern to everyone. This budget year, a comprehensive new cancer prevention program will be implemented to educate and to encourage New Brunswickers to stop smoking, improve nutrition and make lifestyle improvements. The program will also integrate the many important cancer treatment programs and improve care in a concerted effort to ease the strain on cancer patients and their families.

This Government understands that investing in health care also means investing in the health of our citizens, regardless of their age. All our citizens will stand to benefit from a new five-year program, developed in partnership with sport, recreation and active living organizations and designed to significantly increase the level of physical activity of New Brunswickers.

As 1999 marks the International Year of Older Persons, we are reminded of the important and valued role senior citizens play in our society. The Minister of State for Seniors will establish a dialogue with senior citizens to seek their wise counsel on issues that affect them today and the challenges presented by our changing demographics.

To ensure that our children are growing up in healthy and safe environments, there will be a comprehensive review of child protection services, including the adequacy of child welfare standards and practices. The goal is simply the safety and security of all our children. There will be amendments to a number of Acts, including the *Family Services Act*, *Medical Services Payment Act*, *Hospital Act*, *Mental Health Act*, and *Health Act*.

Further amendments to the Family Services Act will require employers to abide by payment orders issued by the courts for child support. Other measures will be taken in the justice system to strengthen the imperative that, in New Brunswick, child support must be paid.

In 1999, the independent Health Services Review Task Force will present its report. Throughout its work, the task force is listening to users of the health care system, as well as those working directly in it, to arrive at final recommendations on how best to manage, protect and secure health care in our Province.

Growing the Economy

While the Government will devote considerable energy to the securing of health care in New Brunswick today and into the future, it also knows that continued effort must be placed in growing our economy, particularly in areas which need specific attention.

This Government is committed to fostering a new entrepreneurial spirit in New Brunswick where our business people use their ingenuity and sense of innovation to expand their businesses. The Government will promote and strengthen our economy's links with the world economy, including welcoming and seeking out new investment and assisting our larger firms in competing successfully on the world stage. Yet, the Government recognizes that, increasingly, small- and medium-sized businesses with their eye on quality production for specific markets are the engine of economic growth for our Province, accounting for the creation of approximately two-thirds of the new jobs in New Brunswick.

Our Province is also well placed to realize the tremendous potential for jobs and future economic development of major projects in the natural gas, electricity and transportation sectors.

Sources of Energy for a Prosperous Future

Following full consideration of the First Report of the Select Committee on Energy, the Government will, prior to the new year, issue the request for proposals for the distribution of natural gas in New Brunswick. The Government will ensure that its decisions on natural gas uphold the vital interests of all New Brunswickers and all regions of the Province. During this Session, you will be asked to consider and approve new legislation and amendments to allow for the distribution of natural gas in the Province and for the regulation of the new distribution system.

The second report of the Select Committee on Energy regarding the future of electricity generation, transmission and distribution will be tabled. After a full opportunity to hear the views of the public, the Government will make decisions of great significance for the future economic development of New Brunswick.

Building a Modern Infrastructure

A solid and modern infrastructure is essential to our provincial economy. During this Session, the Minister of Transportation will announce the details of a Rural Roads Initiative to ensure that rural roads keep pace with advances in the collector and arterial roads of the Province.

Road development initiatives for 1999 will also include extensive work on the sections of the Trans-Canada Highway between the Quebec border and Woodstock and on the new four-lane highway between Longs Creek and Moncton. Both sections of highway will contribute dramatically to improved safety and more pleasurable traveling for our citizens. Within four years, New Brunswickers will enjoy a four-lane, state-of-the-art highway between Longs Creek and Aulac. As well, we will see significant progress on "four-laning" between Longs Creek and the Quebec border.

Fueling the Small Business Engine

This Government believes that meaningful work for our citizens is the key to both personal fulfillment for the individual and an adequate revenue base for secure and sustainable social programs.

To this end, the Small Entrepreneur Capital Assistance Program (SECAP) will be expanded to include business expansions throughout the Province, and changed to include new start-ups or diversification in manufacturing, information technology and key tourism and commercial service sectors.

In response to the needs of New Brunswick's small- and medium-sized businesses, a new initiative to ensure access to working capital for smaller firms in key economic sectors will be launched.

The Work Ready Workforce Program will be expanded to provide a coordinated approach to supplying workers to those targeted sectors where the Province has a clear and competitive advantage.

As well, over the coming months the Government will be carrying out a review of the *Employment Standards Act*. Employees, labour unions, employers and other interested groups will be consulted to ensure that workplace standards are appropriate for today's rapidly changing work environment.

Seasonal workers in the Northeastern region of the Province can expect to see continued action by this Government. The report on consultations by the Gaudet Commission will be received in early 1999.

Government will continue to assist the creation of jobs in a number of sectors, including customer service centre expansions and value-added production in our resource sectors. The great strides and innovations that have been made in New Brunswick's telecommunications and information technology industries will remain important drivers of the Province's economic development strategies. The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture will lead the process to create a new economic vision for the Province beyond the year 2000.

Fresh from its greatest year ever, New Brunswick's tourism industry is a success story in economic diversification, notably for some of our regions which have historically relied heavily on seasonal workers. To continue the momentum in the growing tourism industry, the Government will aggressively develop new products, including cultural tourism. With their roots in the community, culture and heritage lend authenticity to the experience of visitors to our wonderful Province.

Given the recent incorporation of Culture within the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, New Brunswick is well positioned to take full advantage of this rapidly developing aspect of the tourism industry. The Government will apply the same winning strategy to the promotion of cultural tourism as it has used in increasing awareness around the globe of other New Brunswick tourism products.

This Government recognizes the power of arts and culture: they enrich our life and define us as a diverse and dynamic society. The cultural community will be nurtured and further development of this sector will be encouraged.

The Province's music industry will benefit from Government support using a strong business case approach, and an enhanced commitment to Film New Brunswick will be unveiled. As part of the rich array of cultural events underway each year in our Province, the Government, in partnership with the private sector, will sponsor an annual arts celebration to recognize the successes of New Brunswick's many talented artists.

No event in the coming year will have a more dramatic short- and long-term effect on the Province's tourism and cultural industries than the Francophone Summit next September. With more than 50 nations represented, this is an historic opportunity for the Province to showcase to the world its rich culture and its unique approach to linguistic harmony and national unity. The Summit also offers an important opportunity for New Brunswick tourism products to be introduced to

European markets. The theme for the Summit is youth, an important priority for Government, around which a number of initiatives will be unveiled during this sitting of the Legislature.

Promoting Our Youth

Any revitalization of our society, our economy and our political system requires an infusion of young ideas and youthful energy.

A number of exciting new initiatives for young people are being implemented to allow our young adults to assume a full role in the world of work, including the public service of our Province. Following this fall's recruitment drive, the Government's new Public Service Internship program will commence next May. One hundred young university graduates will be hired over the next five years. The program will give participating young people two years of training and work experience and the opportunity to make a career in the public service.

This Government will ease the requirement of prior work experience for a number of entry-level government positions filled each year. In so doing, the merit principle and a transparent competitive

process will be upheld.

Early next year, the Government will establish a Youth Secretariat to give young people the opportunity to work at the centre of Government. The Secretariat will review major Government initiatives to ensure they are sensitive to the needs and perspective of youth.

Revitalizing Education

Preparing our young people for the future is an essential function of the educational system. This Government is encouraged by the spirit of cooperation among students, parents, educators and administrators exhibited at the recent Premier's Forum on Education. While there remains much to be done to improve educational opportunities for our children, a consensus is gradually developing on the directions we must take to achieve this goal.

A major initiative to improve teacher/student ratios in the first three grades of school will be phased in over the next three years. In 1999-2000, this government will reduce maximum class size in grade one to 25 from 28. Additional resources will be dedicated to the classrooms at all grade levels to improve the learning and teaching environment.

The Government will introduce a new Positive Learning Environment Policy to ensure improved discipline in the schools. Support for Students At Risk will be strengthened through additional programming and increased resources. The important role of supply teachers in the educational system will be recognized, and steps will be taken to improve their working conditions.

This Government will make improvements to the governance structure of the school system when it brings forward its response to the recommendations of the Parental Governance Structure Review Committee.

A major action plan will be launched to undertake a significant upgrading of schools and community colleges to ensure that the physical plant is fully modernized and conducive to learning, and to meet health and safety concerns.

The Government is mindful of the challenges faced by our higher education institutions, and these will be addressed in the upcoming budget. Recognizing the impact of tuition fees on student debt loads, specific measures will be introduced to ensure greater access to student aid. The government will also seek ways to improve accountability in the province's higher education institutions.

Enabling Strong Communities

This Government has identified the well-being of individual citizens as an area of major concentration. The strength and social fibre of our communities will also benefit from refocused attention. Increasingly, the role of Government is to nurture and enable communities to address their specific needs and concerns. In this way, our communities can become more just, safer and healthier.

As a result of province-wide discussions led by the Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal, a Discussion Paper will be tabled in this Session. It will serve as the foundation for broadly-based public involvement in the drive to strengthen the caring nature of New Brunswick society and enhance the dignity of all New Brunswickers.

Government will also implement a number of positive reforms which are in keeping with the broad thrust of its social renewal process. During 1999, Human Resources Development - New Brunswick will put in place a network of Human Resource Service Centres so that New Brunswickers can access more easily a full range of income support, employment, training and education services.

Action will also be taken to improve access to housing for people with disabilities.

Significant reforms will be undertaken in the justice system during this Session. The Department of Justice will expand the Domestic Legal Aid system to assist families who are undergoing separation or divorce. A new Small Claims Court will be put in the place, and the *Small Claims Act* will be amended. The outdated court facility in Miramichi will be renovated, incorporating the historic aspects of the building into a new complex.

Strong communities are also safe communities - ones in which citizens enjoy a heightened quality of life. The recently launched Moncton Safer Community Pilot Program will be extended to Saint John and Fredericton, and, if successful, the program will be extended to other communities throughout the Province as part of an overall Crime Prevention Strategy.

The Department of Municipalities and Housing is facilitating a process whereby local elected officials, municipal administrators and the general public provide feedback on proposals for the first major rewrite of the *Municipalities Act* in 30 years. Vibrant municipalities are essential for the Province to realize the potential of the 21st century.

A good quality of life depends on a clean and healthy natural environment. A number of measures, in this Session, will improve both air and water quality in the Province. A pillar of the *Clean Air Act*, the Public Participation Regulation, will be put in place early in 1999. The involvement of the public will be sought in three major water protection initiatives: the Designation of Municipal Wellfields, further Protection of Drinking Water Watersheds and a Water Classification Program.

Amendments will be proposed to broaden the *Beverage Container Act*, and further public discussion will be held on the important Protected Areas Strategy.

Full and equal participation of members of the Aboriginal community in our economy is vital if we are to reach our potential as a fair and just society. During this Session, the Nicholas/LaForest Task Force on Aboriginal Issues will provide their recommendations on how Aboriginal groups and Government can work better together and solve problems.

After dialogue with Aboriginal communities, the Government will proceed with several initiatives, including the strengthening of the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) to enhance the economic development and employment prospects of Aboriginal people. The Government will step up its efforts to find satisfactory approaches for the inclusion of Aboriginal people in all aspects of the provincial economy and in the public service.

The people of New Brunswick have come to expect good governance and quality service from their elected representatives and the public service. To help uphold these values, this Assembly will be asked to approve amendments to the *Conflict of Interest Act* which reflect all-party recommendations on measures to ensure the integrity of public offices.

Under the leadership of the Department of Supply and Services, work is progressing on the Year 2000 computer problem so that the delivery of services is uninterrupted by the transition to the new millennium. To help make Government service more personal, voice mail will no longer be used by Government telephone answering positions. As well, the Government is exploring legislative improvements for the management of the affairs of vulnerable persons, including the concept of a Public Trustee.

This Session will see a number of initiatives to strengthen the agriculture, fishery, forestry, mining, energy and transportation sectors.

A Rural Development Symposium will be held early in 1999 to bring together all those vitally interested in rural issues to identify opportunities for economic development.

The Government will put in place a Farm Internship Program to attract new young farmers to the agricultural sector and encourage more of the Province's farming graduates to return home to work in primary agriculture. In addition, an Immigration Program is being implemented to attract experienced immigrant farmers to the Province's world-class agri-food sector. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will work with farm organizations to improve the *Agricultural Operations Practices Act* and *Topsoil Preservation Act*. A new *Natural Products Act* and *Plant Health Act* will be developed during the coming year.

To ensure an environmentally sustainable and balanced aquaculture industry, a new Bay of Fundy Marine Aquaculture Site Allocation Policy will be introduced in the new year. Negotiations will proceed in earnest with the federal Government to ensure that adequate resources are in place for the development of alternate species in aquaculture. In addition, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture will work with stakeholders to develop and implement strategies in the fields of Oyster Aquaculture Development, Fresh Water Aquaculture Development and Commercial Fisheries.

Mindful of the importance of private woodlot owners and workers in the Province's overall forestry production, the Department of Natural Resources and Energy will bring forward a Strategy on Private Woodlots.

To increase support to the mining sector, the geoscience database and Restigouche geophysical and geochemical surveys will be expanded in 1999. Support for the junior mining sector will also be strengthened.

Conclusion

Before I conclude, I ask that you look ahead. As we anticipate the dawn of the new millennium, New Brunswick, along with so many other players on the world stage, looks forward to the enormous opportunities this milestone represents. The Government in cooperation with communities and various groups and organizations, will identify projects and legacies to mark this turn of the century. A centre of responsibility will be established in the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, to provide coordination and leadership for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Details of the Government's 1999 agenda and the 1999-2000 spending estimates will be presented to you by the Minister of Finance and other 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 pray that divine Providence will continue to bless New Brunswick and its citizens, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.

Her Honour then retired from the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.

Pro Forma Bill

Ordered that Hon. Mr. Camille Thériault, 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.

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.)

On motion of Mr. S. Graham, seconded by Mrs. Barry,

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

Address

Mr. S. Graham, a Member for the electoral district of Kent, proposed an Address to Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to the speech, which he read in his place, and being seconded by Mrs. Barry, a Member for the electoral district of Saint John Lancaster, it was handed to the Chair where it was again read and is as follows:

Fredericton, N.B.

November 24, 1998.

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 Kent to address the Assembly from a seat other than his own.

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

Appointment of Deputy Speakers

On motion of Hon. Mr. C. Thériault, seconded by Hon. Mr. Byrne:

Resolved, that Carolle de Ste. Croix, Member for the electoral district of Dalhousie-Restigouche East and John Flynn, Member for the electoral district of York, be appointed Deputy Speakers.

And then 4.23 o'clock p.m. the House adjourned.

