

**JOURNALS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF THE
PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK
SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 1999-2000
THE HON. MARILYN TRENHOLME COUNSELL
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR**

Fredericton, N.B.
Tuesday, November 30, 1999.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the First Session of the Fifty-fourth Legislative Assembly of this Province was dissolved on the sixth day of July, 1999;

AND WHEREAS I have thought fit to call the Second Session of the Fifty-fourth Legislative Assembly of this Province into Session, I hereby issue a Proclamation that the same be called to meet on the thirtieth day of November, 1999.

GIVEN under my hand and the Great Seal of the Province at Fredericton this twenty-eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety-Nine and in the forty-eighth year of Her Majesty's Reign.

BY COMMAND OF THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Bradley Green, Q.C.
Attorney General

Marilyn Trenholme Counsell
Lieutenant-Governor

This being the day appointed for the Opening of the Second Session of the Fifty-fourth 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:

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and all New Brunswickers:

Welcome to the opening of the Second Session of the 54th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

This is the first full session of this Assembly since the June 7th provincial election. I want to welcome all new and returning Members and congratulate you on receiving the confidence and trust of your fellow citizens.

I want to congratulate Bev Harrison, MLA for Hampton-Belleisle, for his recent election as Speaker and his return to this Legislature.

On behalf of the people of New Brunswick, I want to express appreciation to former Premier Camille Thériault.

On behalf of all New Brunswickers, I offer heartfelt thanks and congratulations to former Governor-General Roméo LeBlanc for his distinguished and dedicated service to Canada. Throughout his years of service, his

beloved province of New Brunswick was never far from his thoughts and actions. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

To Her Excellency, Adrienne Clarkson, I offer congratulations and best wishes for a successful tenure as Canada's new Governor-General.

This past August, New Brunswick lost one of its most distinguished citizens in the person of Hédard Robichaud. Mr. Robichaud was a Member of Parliament, a federal Minister of Fisheries, and a senator before becoming in 1971 the first Acadian to hold the position of Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of New Brunswick, a position he held for 10 years. Throughout his career, Mr. Robichaud served his community, province, and country in an exemplary fashion while remaining deeply attached to family values.

A former member and minister of this Assembly, the Honourable Fernand Dubé, MLA for Campbellton from 1974 to 1987, recently passed away. We remember his contributions with respect.

This past September, New Brunswick hosted the VIIIth Francophone Summit. By meeting in Moncton, the international Francophonie wished to acknowledge the unique contribution made by the Acadian people to the greater Francophonie family. The Moncton Summit will remain one of the most successful and friendly summits so far. It is important to pay tribute to all those, anglophones and francophones alike, who contributed to making this a memorable event. New Brunswick will continue to build productive relationships with the international Francophonie, particularly in the area of youth.

A New Century for New Brunswick and New Brunswickers

This session of the Legislative Assembly has the unique distinction of heralding the close of one century and the beginning of a new Millennium. This new century reminds us all that we must take a longer view; that we must take decisions for our Province not for the next election, but for the next generation.

New Brunswick enters this new century with pride, optimism, and a clear determination to embark upon a new direction with a new vision.

On June 7th, the people of New Brunswick signalled their desire for change.

Change to a new vision that builds on our strengths; where new job opportunities exist; young people want to stay and live; families are healthy and secure; and seniors live in dignity.

A new vision that begins with listening to New Brunswickers, and creating a truly open and responsive government, with a clear goal: to make New Brunswick the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family.

It is a vision founded on New Brunswickers themselves.

People like Hal Merrill, a paralympic athlete from Charters Settlement who won two gold medals and one silver at the Southern Cross Games in Australia, setting new Canadian records for shot put and javelin. Or Jolène Bourgeois from UNB who has been named one of the Top Ten Academic Canadians, CIAU Player of the Year, and New Brunswick's female athlete of the year.

Herménégilde Chiasson, a poet from Saint-Simon, whose book *Conversations* received the 1999 Governor-General's Literary Award for French-language poetry. And Mathieu Duguay, harpsichordist, Order of Canada recipient, founder and artistic director of the Lamèque International Baroque Music Festival, who returned to his hometown almost a quarter-century ago to bring music and joy to his fellow New Brunswickers and is now retiring.

Or Frank Hogan, a lay minister at Assumption Church of Saint John and founder of the Saint John Legal Centre, who will receive the YM-YWCA Canada Peace Medal for his "Vision of Peace" and work with refugees. And Joseph Howard McKay from Eel Ground Reserve, the first-ever recipient in the Seniors category of the New Brunswick Family Awards.

These New Brunswickers are examples of our pride and our spirit. We salute their accomplishments.

Government today is about choosing directions and priorities. Government cannot and should not try to be all things to all people. It should focus on clear public priorities based on the most important needs of New Brunswickers.

The priorities of your new government were set out in *New Vision New Brunswick*. To change the way government works, to renew health care, to build new job opportunities, to manage smarter and lower taxes, and to invest in education.

These priorities will strengthen New Brunswick's ability to become more competitive and more compassionate. A leader in Atlantic Canada. A model for the rest of Canada.

Your new government will work on your behalf to implement these priorities not just in this Legislative session but throughout the mandate you have given it.

Changing the Way Government Works for All New Brunswickers

Changing the way government works means creating an open, responsive government that listens all the time, not just at election time. It is a pledge your new government makes once more to all New Brunswickers.

Your government has created a new standard of accountability with its 200 Days of Change Action Plan. One of the specific commitments, being fulfilled today, was to report publicly on the status of the plan. With this Throne Speech, 15 of the 20 commitments have been met.

To change the way government works, an all-party committee of the Legislature to review key public appointments has been formed; an independent financial review of the province's books has been completed; and a court challenge against the federal Bill C-68 has been joined.

To renew health care, 300 new, permanent nursing positions have been created; a comprehensive physician recruitment initiative to make New Brunswick physician-friendly is underway; and senior couples will now have the choice to live in the same nursing home.

To build new job opportunities, the Premier's Action Committee for the economic development of the Acadian Peninsula is in place.

Under New Brunswick's leadership, all provincial premiers have expressed support for a national shipbuilding policy that will help secure the future of this industry in our province.

To manage smarter, the size of Cabinet has been cut by 30 per cent; a Red Tape Reduction Committee has begun work; and an ABC review of all agencies, boards and commissions is underway.

To invest in education, 100 new teacher assistants are in place; a new \$1 million school supplies top-up fund has been established; and a Healthy Minds school nutritional program from K-3 is being piloted.

Your new government is working to fulfil each and every one of the remaining commitments of its 200 Days of Change and improve the public accountability of government.

Your government will enhance the role of MLAs in our democratic system by introducing a consultation paper for consideration by New Brunswickers and their elected representatives as a first step in the development of a new MLA Responsibility Act. This Act will, among other things, require each MLA to hold at least two public meetings per year.

A reinforced role for MLAs and the Legislature will bring even greater public accountability. Already, two new committees for Health and Education have been created to reflect the interest of New Brunswickers in these key public policy issues. For the first time, Hospital Corporations will appear before the Crown Corporations Committee in a move to improve accountability.

A strong, professional public service for New Brunswick is key to providing more accountable, effective government. Your government will foster public service renewal by creating a virtual Centre for Leadership and Management.

The contribution of aboriginal people within New Brunswick is important. Your government will work co-operatively with the aboriginal community and the federal government to improve the economic and social prospects for aboriginal peoples. To better co-ordinate a range of aboriginal policy and program matters, an Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat has been created.

Renewing Health Care for New Brunswick Families

New Brunswick families want and deserve quality health care. It is one of their top priorities. Your new government shares this priority to build a truly patient-focused health care system.

Your government reiterates its pledge to increase health care funding each and every year of its mandate to better serve the health care needs of New Brunswickers. It will do so despite previous federal government cuts to transfer payments resulting in approximately \$100 million less in federal transfers for health, post-secondary education and social services than New Brunswick would have received in 2000-2001. Your government will continue its joint efforts with other provincial governments and directly with the Prime Minister to convince the federal government to fully restore the Canada Health and Social Transfer to 1994-1995 levels.

Our public health care system must, however, be made better. More money, by itself, will not fix all our health care problems and guarantee better care. Changing population trends, advances in medical technologies, and alternatives to traditional service delivery are all factors affecting the quality and delivery of health care services to people.

We must examine closely how health care services are delivered to ensure the right care at the right time in the right way. There must be province-wide standards with greater public accountability for how your health dollar is invested. Patient rights must be respected, but patient responsibilities toward their own health must be encouraged.

Your new government will create a Premier's Health Quality Council with a two-year mandate to examine the structure of health care delivery and to develop with the government an action plan to move to a regional health governance system. The council will advise on the development of a Patient Charter of Rights and Responsibilities and a provincial Health Report Card all firsts to improve the quality of health care in New Brunswick and create a more truly integrated health system.

As part of renewing health care, your new government will work with health care professionals such as nurses and physicians to ensure that long-term resource and professionalization plans are developed.

A new, senior-level Patient Advocate position within the Department of Health and Community Services will be established to cut through red tape and help bridge the gap between patient needs and services.

Ensuring that New Brunswickers live healthier, more enriching lives begins with promoting good health habits and preventing disease. The new Legislative Assembly Committee on Health has already begun to study wellness and health promotion as a first step in the development of a comprehensive Wellness Strategy for New Brunswickers.

Seniors are a vital part of our New Brunswick family. Your government wants to work with seniors to improve their health care and well-being.

An announcement on improved Special Care Home funding rates will be made shortly.

The Prescription Drug Program will be enhanced for multiple sclerosis patients.

Renewing health care for New Brunswick families must have a focus on children. While parents have the primary obligation to care for and nurture their children, government and communities can provide important support for families. Your new government will take steps to improve the co-ordination and delivery of child welfare services. Environmental issues can have a significant health impact. Your new government will focus on protecting public water supplies and water quality in our lakes and rivers. Waste management strategies will be developed through consultation with municipalities, solid waste commissions, and the public. A discussion paper has already been released as part of this process.

Sharing is a New Brunswick tradition. It is part of who we are.

Your government will implement an NB Sharing Initiative, in co-operation with grocery store chains, allowing customers to make contributions towards the purchase of New Brunswick food products for donation to food banks and kitchens.

Building New Job Opportunities for New Brunswick Workers

Stable, long-term economic growth, fiscal responsibility, and lower taxes are the best way to build lasting job opportunities for New Brunswick workers.

Your new government will focus on made-in New Brunswick job solutions that build on our competitive advantages of small business, natural resources, the local, entrepreneurial strengths of our regions and communities, and the quality workers who make up New Brunswick's workforce.

New Brunswick's natural resources have been a traditional mainstay of our employment. As part of a "total development" plan, sector-specific strategies for forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, mining, agriculture, and tourism will be developed and presented publicly as key elements of our province's economic development approach.

Government should encourage job creation, not hinder it. That is why a Red Tape Reduction Committee of private sector experts has begun work with a six-month mandate to help reduce government barriers to job creation and economic growth affecting New Brunswick businesses, particularly small business.

The forthcoming budget will provide additional assistance to New Brunswick's small businesses by lowering the corporate income tax rate to ensure they remain competitive.

New job opportunities for young New Brunswickers will be encouraged in that budget through a JobStart program.

To be competitive in today's global economy, New Brunswick must export. Your new government will focus on trade as a key job creation tool by strengthening the co-ordination of international and domestic trade policy within government, and making technology and exports a strategic imperative of our economic development efforts.

New Brunswick will participate in a Team Atlantic Trade Mission to the United States in the spring of next year to further business opportunities for New Brunswick firms. Your government will work closely with its Atlantic provincial partners to establish a stronger presence in this market to promote new trade and investment opportunities.

The recent decision to award a provincial natural gas distribution franchise will further job creating investment in this sector. A Memorandum of Understanding on natural gas co-operation with the Government of Québec will be signed shortly.

Competitive changes in regional, national and international energy markets are occurring. A new comprehensive, sustainable energy policy is needed to ensure that the future economic and social needs of New Brunswickers are met. Your government will develop such a policy including a response to the report by a previous legislative committee on electrical industry restructuring.

As part of providing fairer wages to New Brunswickers, legislation will be introduced to increase the minimum wage by twenty-five cents effective January 1st, 2000. This will meet a further commitment of the 200 Days of Change Action Plan.

Managing Smarter and Lowering Taxes for New Brunswick Taxpayers

New Brunswick workers pay too much income tax. New Brunswick's statutory personal income tax rates are the second-highest in Canada affecting our competitiveness and our ability to create and attract new jobs.

Other provinces are lowering their taxes. To be competitive, we cannot be left behind. If New Brunswick maintains its current rate we will have the highest statutory rate in the country within two years.

Your new government will begin a phased approach to lowering income taxes for New Brunswickers. The goal is to give New Brunswick the lowest personal income tax burden in Atlantic Canada and one of the lowest overall tax burdens in all of Canada.

To achieve these goals, your government is mindful of the financial situation and structure it has inherited, as well as the federal government's intention to lower the taxes it collects, resulting in reduced revenues for the provincial government.

That is why your new government believes in balancing the books honestly and openly to show New Brunswickers the real financial situation facing our province at all times.

The recent independent financial review demonstrated that the financial books of the province are substantially in deficit. Our net debt has more than doubled since 1987.

The legacy of the last year of this century should not be deficits and lost financial hope as we begin the next.

New Brunswickers understand the need to live within our means and address this situation in a more comprehensive and lasting manner than previously attempted.

Knowing this situation, we set an immediate example by reducing the size of Cabinet by 30 per cent on our very first day of government. But more comprehensive steps must be taken if we are to correct the structural problems in government to protect taxpayers and provide the key public services New Brunswickers need.

A systematic program and service review across government to determine whether existing programs and services are contributing to the economic, social, and competitive needs for New Brunswick's future is now underway.

The overriding aim of this process is to provide New Brunswickers with a government that is better structured and focused on key public priorities to ensure our province is ready for the new century. It is to provide the services New Brunswickers need, at taxation levels they can afford.

New Brunswick's taxation system contributes to our overall competitiveness. Your government will examine the merits of de-coupling New Brunswick's tax system from the federal tax-on-tax system to a more effective tax-on-income system. This will restore a greater degree of provincial control over taxation. At the same time, the taxation system will be reviewed to ensure it is more simple, fair, transparent and efficient.

Your new government will not wait until these steps are taken to begin to improve tax fairness for New Brunswickers. Personal income tax relief will be announced as part of your government's first budget. Amendments will be introduced this session to the *Residential Property Tax Relief Act* to eliminate the September 30th deadline for receipt of applications for the property tax allowance program and expand the eligibility period of those entitled to claim the allowance. Marriage licence and initial birth certificate fees will also be eliminated as part of your new government's first budget.

Investing in Education for Young New Brunswickers

New Brunswick's competitiveness depends upon an educated, trained, and dynamic workforce. Investing in education and training will help reduce the exodus of young New Brunswickers from our province and provide new job opportunities right here at home.

Your new government will continue to invest more funding in education each and every year of its mandate as a clear public priority.

Investing in education means having safe, healthy schools. School infrastructure and renovation programs will focus first on ensuring our schools are safe and healthy for those who learn and those who teach.

Secure and stable funding for post-secondary education is a key commitment of your new government. A multi-year funding formula for post-secondary institutions will be announced to ensure education opportunities for New Brunswick students. It will allow our universities to commit to longer-range plans.

Education in New Brunswick affects more than students. Parents, teachers, and local communities all have a contribution to make. Your new government will restore active community involvement at the local level in education decisions through publicly and locally elected Education Councils. The new Legislative Assembly Committee on Education will begin a public examination of this issue in the coming weeks.

Literacy is the basic foundation of learning and growing. Steps to update the province's literacy initiative are underway with the formation of a working group of the four major literacy organizations in the province, community colleges, and the Department of Education. Specific recommendations for renewal will be made to the government early next year.

A Strong Voice for New Brunswickers in Canada and Atlantic Canada

New Brunswick has a unique role and identity in the Canadian federation, as one of the founding partners and as Canada's only officially bilingual province. We are all justifiably proud and aware of the special responsibility this brings. Your new government will work always to preserve, protect and promote this heritage.

But, for Canada to work well, and achieve its potential, all provinces and regions must be treated fairly and equitably.

New Brunswickers have paid their share of eliminating the federal deficit through several years of reduced health, education, and social services transfers as well as higher taxes. As the federal government moves into a period of financial surplus, your new government believes a larger portion of this growing federal surplus should be directed to New Brunswick and all provinces, for enhancing core social programs.

This Legislative Assembly will be asked to adopt a unanimous resolution calling on the federal government to immediately restore full CHST funding, along with an annual escalator, and lift the equalization ceiling for New Brunswickers.

Greater Maritime and Atlantic regional co-operation is at the heart of your government's new vision for a more competitive New Brunswick. Our province is stronger when we work in concert with our Atlantic neighbours.

Already, initiatives are underway to create a new Council of Atlantic Premiers to strengthen our region's voice in Ottawa and across the country. The inaugural meeting of this council will be held soon in New Brunswick.

Your government will enhance regional economic and social co-operation on a number of fronts, including trade, research and development, health care, regional development, agriculture, and reducing business barriers among the Maritime Provinces.

A New Vision for a Competitive, Compassionate New Brunswick

At the beginning of a new century, New Brunswickers chose a new government for a new beginning.

A new government that focuses on clear public priorities based on New Brunswickers' most important needs.

Government must be structured to meet not just current but future economic and social needs. That is the best way to plan for the next generation.

We must have an overriding goal of ensuring our province becomes more economically competitive with new job opportunities and stronger education, while being more socially compassionate with investments in front-line health care.

Focus and choices are necessary to ensure we can meet this goal. These choices will not be easy. But they are necessary.

Your new government will work with all New Brunswickers to make these choices and meet these goals, in an open and honest way. So, together, we can make our province the best place in Canada to live, work and raise a family.

As the session progresses, ministers will provide more details on policy and program initiatives in their departments for consideration by members of the legislative assembly.

During this session you will be asked to review and approve a budget presented by the Minister of Finance and a Statement of Estimated Revenues and Expenses, as well as Capital Account appropriations for the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Specific new legislative initiatives will be tabled for the consideration of members of this Legislative Assembly.

A number of Acts that are outdated, have seldom or never been used, or serve no significant public policy purpose will be repealed as a first step in modernizing our legislative landscape in New Brunswick.

The government will also undertake a consolidation of New Brunswick Acts at the conclusion of the program and services review process. Such a consolidation has not occurred in over twenty-five years. This process will result, over time, in a modern, simplified and more accessible set of laws for our province.

May divine providence guide you in your deliberations.

Her Honour then retired from the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.

Ordered that Hon. Mr. Lord, 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.

The 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.)

Unanimous consent was granted for Ms. Dubé, the Member for Edmundston, to address the Assembly from a seat other than her own.

On motion of Ms. Dubé, seconded by Mr. MacDonald,

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

Ms. Dubé, a Member for the electoral district of Edmundston, proposed an Address to Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to the speech, which she read in her place, and being seconded by Mr. MacDonald, a Member for the electoral district of Mactaquac, it was handed to the Chair where it was again read and is as follows:

Fredericton, N.B.
November 30, 1999.

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, it was, on motion of Mr. C. Thériault, a Member for the electoral district of Kent South, adjourned over.

And then, 4.53 o'clock p.m., the House adjourned.