

Growth and Opportunity

DELIVERING FOR
NEW BRUNSWICKERS



**SECOND SESSION OF THE 60TH
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF
NEW BRUNSWICK**

OCTOBER 25, 2022

**THE HONOURABLE
BRENDA MURPHY,
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR**

Speech from the Throne

Second session of the 60th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

Province of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1 CANADA
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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

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Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and the people of New Brunswick, welcome to the Second Session of the 60th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq and Peskotomuhkati people. We strive for respectful relations with all the people of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.

Mr. Speaker, this session begins at a time of renewal for our province, as we emerge from the pandemic stronger and more confident in our ability to overcome challenges by working together. Despite immense upheaval and uncertainty in recent years, the people of this province have shown the resilience, conviction and innovation to aim higher, reimagine old processes and practices, and seize new opportunities. Increasingly, on the national stage, we are becoming known as a place of growth and prosperity.

The progress being made is a credit to every New Brunswicker whose creativity, inclusive spirit and drive for excellence is making our province stronger over the long term. We begin, Mr. Speaker, with recognition of the many inspirational individuals whose positive impact is felt near and far.

Congratulations / Recognition

A number of New Brunswickers have had noteworthy recognition and achievements over the past year.

We congratulate renowned Acadian author and playwright Antonine Maillet, who was promoted to the rank of commander of the Legion of Honour by the president of France, Emmanuel Macron. This is among the country's most esteemed honours that can be awarded to a person outside France.

Thirteen lawyers were appointed to the King's counsel, including Ferne Ashford of Fredericton, David Bartlett of Saint Andrews, Nathan Gorham of Saint John, Matthew Hayes of Saint John, Lucie LaBoissonnière of Moncton, Joshua McElman of Saint John, Brenda McMullen Brown of Moncton, Joël Michaud of Fredericton,

Carley Parish of Hampton, Justin Robichaud of Moncton, Carole Sirois-Paquette of Caraquet, Daniel Surette of Moncton, and Corry Toole of Saint John.

We extend congratulations to the New Brunswick athletes, coaches and officials who represented Team Canada at the 2022 winter Olympics in Beijing, China, including: Courtney Sarault from Moncton; Serge LeBlanc from Sainte-Marie-de-Kent; Ryan Hamilton from New Maryland; Betty Dermer-Norris from Fredericton; Nicole LeBlanc-Richard from Dieppe; and Cynthia Benson from Saint John. As well, we would like to recognize Brendan Corey, who grew up in Fredericton and competed for Australia at the games, and Stephen Gough, formerly of New Maryland, a coach with Team USA.

Congratulations to the New Brunswick athletes, coaches and officials who represented Team Canada at the 2022 winter Paralympics in Beijing, China, including Mark Fawcett from Saint John and Mitchell Furlotte from Bathurst.

Five New Brunswickers were recognized as part of the second annual Minister's Awards for Excellence in Championing Gender Equality. VIVE awards were presented to: Youth Champion – Vera Chen of New Maryland; Community Champion – Lyne Chantal Boudreau of Moncton; Business Champion – Cathy Simpson of Rothesay; Everyday Champion – Rev. Elizabeth Stevenson of Kingston; and Government Champion – Michele Cronin of New Maryland.

We want to recognize Bob Stranach, the Council of the Federation Literacy Award winner for New Brunswick for 2021.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2022 Disability Awareness Week Awards, including: Clarence Bastarache of Bathurst, winner of the Honourable Andy Scott Award; Dixie Lee in Shediac, winner of the Employer Award; and Ability New Brunswick, winner of the Provincial Award.

Dr. Donald Joseph Savoie of Moncton was named a Companion to the Order of Canada for his seminal contributions to the advancement of public policy administration and economic governance principles on the national and international levels.

Five New Brunswickers were appointed as Members of the Order of Canada. They are: Louis-Philippe J. Léo Albert of Fredericton for his long-standing commitment to his community, notably through his advocacy of French-language services and within the agriculture industry; Hereditary Chief Stephen Joseph Augustine for

advancing Mi'kmaq studies, and for sharing his scholarly expertise and traditional knowledge with private and public organizations across Canada; Euclide Patrice Chiasson of Dieppe for his continued dedication to the cultural and educational development of the Acadian people, and for his leadership in the co-operative sector; and Elder David Gerard Perley and Elder Imelda Mary Perley from Tobique First Nation for their work as renowned educators and knowledge keepers who have contributed to the academic and cultural landscapes of their province.

Congratulations to the 10 new recipients named to the Order of New Brunswick. The 2022 inductees include: Jean-Claude Basque from Moncton; Cecile Cassista from Riverview; Randy Dickinson from Fredericton; Penny Ericson from Fredericton; Aurèle Ferlatte (posthumous) from Dalhousie; Lucinda Flemer from Saint Andrews; Sandra L. Irving from Saint John; Larry Nelson from Moncton; Valois Robichaud from Baie du Petit Pokemouche; and Robert (Bobby) Sylliboy from Esgehoopetitj First Nation. They will be invested into the Order of New Brunswick on November 2.

We congratulate the Saint John Sea Dogs, who were crowned Champions of the 2022 Memorial Cup, and the City of Saint John for putting on a successful tournament.

Your government is pleased for the cities of Moncton and Halifax to be hosting the World Junior Hockey Championship this coming December. We look forward to the arrival of Team Canada and believe the message of change and respect has been heard. We will stay firm ensuring a culture of respect permeates all sports.

We congratulate the 346 athletes, 80 coaches, managers and technical staff, and 20 mission team members who represented New Brunswick at the 2022 Canada Summer Games in Niagara, Ont., in August. Team New Brunswick returned home with 19 medals.

Condolences

We also pause to remember those we have lost in the past year.

Last month, we lost Queen Elizabeth II. She will be fondly remembered for the close and lasting relationship she forged with our country and our province. She was a symbol of strength and resolve, a guiding light in turbulent times, and a figure of stability. Her passing was a loss to her family, to the Commonwealth and its people.

We honour Noel Mullins of Keltic Transportation, known as much for his unfailing generosity and support of many charitable organizations and sports teams as he was for his entrepreneurial spirit.

We remember Lynn Thornton, a true ambassador for New Brunswick. She spent 34 years working to promote Kings Landing and then another 20 years working for the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Former MLA and senator Mabel DeWare will be remembered as a trailblazer in politics. She was elected to the legislative assembly for two consecutive terms in 1978 and 1982 and became the first female minister of labour in 1978. She was appointed to the Senate in 1990 and, in 1999, she became the first woman to be appointed Opposition whip. She remained in this position until her retirement in 2001.

We honour former MP Claudette Bradshaw, a tireless advocate for our province. She dedicated her life to helping others as a member of the federal government from 1997 to 2006, representing the riding of Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe, and through her work in her community addressing the issues of homelessness, mental health, and at-risk children and youth.

David Peterson, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick from 1978-1993, will be remembered for his many professional and personal accomplishments. A dedicated family man and multi-sport athlete, he was passionate about learning and the law. He was a teacher before returning to school and becoming a lawyer. He served as Fredericton city councillor from 1974-1980 and as a special prosecutor and a deputy judge.

Multi-sport athlete and former firefighter Phil Doiron will be remembered for this dedication to his family and community, as well as his achievements in baseball, softball and hockey.

We honour Adair Losier for his talent for baseball, playing with both the intermediate and senior Les Aigles team of Tracadie, as well as for his tireless dedication to making our province a better place. He loved his family and his community, and he showed it by giving back as a coach and parent-volunteer, as well as through politics and his volunteer work with non-profit organizations.

In recognition of Brenda Robertson and her tremendous impact as the founder of the extra mural program in this province, and with particular recognition of her

accomplishments as the first elected woman to this legislature and the first woman appointed to serve as a minister of the Crown, your government will be formally recognizing her legacy in this legislative session.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, as we begin this new session, we do so at a historic time for our province. New Brunswick is seeing growth levels it has not witnessed since joining confederation in 1867. This pace is expected to continue as we welcome newcomers from across Canada and the world who seek out our province for the promise of a better life.

In addition to record population growth, for the first time since 1961, New Brunswick has seen the median age decline by six months. This is a clear sign that people are bringing families to our province with the confidence they can put down roots, raise children, and enjoy rewarding careers.

For the first time ever, net interprovincial migration exceeded 10,000. In the last year, 60 per cent of those coming to New Brunswick from other provinces were between 20-54 years old with families, while those under 20 years old represented 20 per cent. Mr. Speaker, these statistics bode well for the future sustainability of our province with more employees and students to support our growing economy and the continued transformation of our social services like health care and education.

Your government recognizes the importance of New Brunswick as Canada's only officially bilingual province. Over the past several months your government has been reviewing the recommendations that have been submitted by the two Commissioners regarding the *Official Languages Act*. The review has been comprehensive with recommendations that impact the day-to-day lives of New Brunswickers in workplaces, schools and municipal operations. Your government will advance a response during this session.

Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick is stronger for the rich diversity of our people and their generosity of spirit. Your government thanks the thousands of residents across the province who opened their hearts and homes earlier this year to refugees fleeing a brutal and unjust war in the Ukraine. We extend a warm

welcome to our new Ukrainian neighbours and thank New Brunswickers everywhere whose generosity will never be forgotten.

We also saw record levels of international immigration, with nearly 13,000 people from around the world coming to New Brunswick to live, work and study.

As this session opens, your government is embracing a new day for New Brunswick. It's a day of growth. Managing growth is not something New Brunswick has needed to grapple with in decades. While it is clearly the right path for progress and the long-term financial health of New Brunswick, it presents near-term challenges with housing shortages, affordability, and access to government services.

Your government remains committed to ensuring that as we navigate these challenges we maintain strong, prudent fiscal management by putting the long-term health of the province first in every decision made. Responsible management means spending wisely and making choices about where to invest, as was demonstrated in the last budget through increased levels of funding to health care, nursing homes, women's shelters, housing, crime reduction, and economic stimulus strategies like tourism.

Thanks to the outstanding efforts of those who work across government and every New Brunswicker who stepped forward to lead in recent times, New Brunswick is now being recognized as one of the most stable jurisdictions to invest and has recently been named by the CD Howe Institute as one of the most fiscally transparent governments in the country. In August, Mr. Speaker, our strong fiscal management led Moody's Investors Service to upgrade New Brunswick's credit outlook from stable to positive and reaffirmed our credit rating at Aa2. As well, in their latest reports, DBRS Morningstar and S&P Global Ratings reconfirmed their ratings at A(high) and A+ respectively, with stable outlooks. Mr. Speaker, the days of troubling predictions that the province is teetering on the cliff of bankruptcy are over.

Mr. Speaker, with the province's debt now lowered to \$12.4 billion, the cost of servicing its debt is taking up a smaller share of our revenues, which places us in a healthier position as the world enters a period of rising interest rates and related pressures.

While managing debt levels responsibly, your government has also been focused on annual budgetary discipline. In doing so, the Government of New Brunswick has delivered five consecutive surpluses, which provides flexibility to pursue additional tax reduction measures and help New Brunswickers with inflationary pressures.

These facts, Mr. Speaker, underscore your government's unwavering focus on securing the financial future of our beautiful province and ensuring sufficient means to provide New Brunswickers with the quality services they deserve and good value for their tax dollars.

This philosophy extends to NB Power, which is burdened with high levels of debt and continues to be challenged with cost of service delivery -- which is only being exacerbated this year by sky-rocketing global energy costs.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year your government has continued to support NB Power and its board of directors and management team as it seeks to modernize its operations. Your government looks forward to the strategic review that is currently underway and applauds the organization's recent announcement of a \$50 million cost cutting initiative, particularly in the face of rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that New Brunswickers are challenged with affordability concerns, recently your government, in partnership with NB Power, launched a program to help residents who need it most to control their energy costs.

Every New Brunswick household with under \$70,000 in annual income relying on inefficient baseboard heating will qualify for a free energy assessment that may include free insulation, air sealing and heat pump. This program is funded through a \$30 million investment from your government and will not only help New Brunswickers manage their energy costs, but will modernize thousands of homes across our province with more efficient technology as we continue on our path toward being net-zero by 2050.

To provide further stability for residents, in this session government will bring forth amendments to the *Petroleum Products Pricing Act* to provide the Energy and Utilities Board authority to use discretion to ensure that the regulated maximum prices provide stable and effective pricing in volatile conditions and to provide consistency with the Maritime region.

Addressing our collective issues in meaningful and lasting ways requires reinvention and a constant challenging of the status quo. This is necessary, Mr.

Speaker, to improve many of the ways government operates and to re-establish New Brunswick as a credible and confident province that is capable of attracting investment and talent. We have pressing issues and traditional approaches will not solve them. Every day your government stays focused on its strategic priorities and asks of itself and its residents - *How will this project improve the life of New Brunswickers? Will this initiative get real results? Will this investment improve our province and the quality of life for our children in the decades to come?*

Government Priorities

Your government has been and continues to be focused on key priorities, and advancing them through an affordable, responsive, and high-performing government:

- Energizing the Private Sector;
- Vibrant and Sustainable Communities;
- Dependable Public Health Care;
- World-Class Education;
- Environment

Energizing the Private Sector

Mr. Speaker, energizing our private sector has been a constant goal of your government. The economic development strategy launched in 2018, *Closing the Gap in One Generation*, focused efforts on closing the prosperity gap between New Brunswick and the rest of Canada. By many measures, the province is well on its way.

Mr. Speaker, your government's pro-growth strategy is delivering. The province's economy has quickly surpassed pre-pandemic levels. More people are working than ever before in New Brunswick. In September the province set a record with 373,100 people working. It is notable that this result beat the previous record set five months earlier. By comparison Mr. Speaker, it took approximately a decade to recover the jobs lost during the financial crisis of 2008.

Along with job and employment growth, wages are rising. New Brunswick is leading the country in the growth in average weekly wages with an increase of 5.8 per cent so far this year, higher than the national growth rate of 3.0 per cent.

A key pillar of closing the prosperity gap is population growth, which is essential to addressing future workforce needs and fueling our economy with skilled labour. There are now 812,000 people living in New Brunswick, with nearly a 10,000 increase between April and July, and more growth every week. The 2021 Census shows Moncton and Fredericton saw stronger growth in their under-15 population than centres such as Calgary, Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto.

In the last year, both goods- and services-producing industries registered increased economic activity, up by 6.6 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively.

As well Mr. Speaker, 17 out of 20 major industries reported a rise in their economic activity in 2021, led by agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; public administration; real estate and rental and leasing; and manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, your government is ensuring it does its part to support New Brunswick businesses. By overhauling the government procurement processes to give local enterprises more opportunity to be considered for government business, \$90 million more was kept in New Brunswick over the last year. This is money that fueled employment and contributed to keeping local businesses healthy and strong.

As we look ahead, New Brunswick's total public and private capital investment is anticipated to grow by 7.2 per cent in 2022 and total investment is predicted to reach almost \$4.2 billion.

Non-residential capital construction is expected to increase by approximately \$280 million, a gain of 12.2 per cent from 2021, following a modest increase of 1.9 per cent in 2021. Mr. Speaker, this is a true sign of renewed confidence in New Brunswick and that we are emerging from the pandemic stronger.

Following a decrease last year, investment in the public sector is expected to increase by 11.9 per cent to \$1.7 billion in 2022 – the highest growth recorded since 2017.

The private sector is also anticipating an increase in investment in 2022, increasing by 4.1 per cent to \$2.4 billion, representing 58.3 per cent of total investment. Mr. Speaker, private investment growth is a strong indicator of our province's ability to close the gap with the rest of Canada as it signals that we are no longer over-relying on the public purse to drive the province's economy.

A good example is the Port of Saint John, which is nearing completion of a \$205 million expansion that will double its annual capacity. With the return of CP Rail, the Port is poised to undertake an enhanced modernization worth \$42 million. With three class one rail lines, our highway system and airport, it has become the best gateway in North America.

Mr. Speaker, our province is also seeing significant private investment in housing. Multi-unit construction set a record in 2020 that had stood since 1972, and then set a new record again last year.

Your government is also tackling productivity rates, a key indicator we lagged on with slow adoption of technology and automation compared to national averages. Labour productivity in New Brunswick is now six per cent higher than it was in 2018. Mr. Speaker, in the last year your government has helped over 55 companies adopt automation, and this year's budget provided \$5 million to help New Brunswick businesses embrace technology for greater productivity and increased outputs.

Digital literacy is also critical to our economic and social progress which is why your government invested \$10 million in the new McKenna Institute at the University of New Brunswick for micro-credentials to help residents boost their skills and find new work after the pandemic. The Institute will double the number of computer science grads and triple the number of graduate students, contributing essential talent to our province with the necessary skills to drive continued adoption of technology for productivity-enhancing processes.

Being connected has never been more important. Your government has launched the Remote Satellite Internet Rebate Program to households and businesses in remote areas. This Internet connectivity will boost productivity for many New Brunswickers.

New Brunswick exports are also doing well. The province saw the second largest increase in exports in the country in 2021 – behind only Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the \$14.7 billion in merchandise exports from New Brunswick in 2021 was the highest level of exports we have had in nearly a decade, and seafood exports reached an all-time high at \$2.2 billion. Your government will continue to work on opening new markets for our world-leading seafood and agriculture sectors.

Mr. Speaker, your government recognizes the importance of our agriculture, aquaculture and fishery industries as economic engines that produce quality, healthy food for our tables. Between now and the end of March, the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries will complete federal / provincial / territorial negotiations of the next policy framework: *the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership*. This agreement will provide support to the agricultural industry for the next five years in making New Brunswick a leader in sustainable agriculture and agri-food production.

Mr. Speaker, the historic gains on key indicators of our economic performance are due to an intentional strategy to focus on specific drivers of success.

Given that your government has returned the province to strong financial health, in this session legislative amendments will be brought forth to further reduce personal income tax and property taxes as you continue to advance a pro-growth agenda to attract more investors to New Brunswick and allow residents to keep more of their hard-earned dollars. Your government also plans to introduce incentives for builders to create additional housing as we manage the challenges that come with population growth.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, in this session amendments will be introduced to provide further protection for consumers and suppliers, reduce regulatory burdens on businesses, and provide greater efficiencies. These include prompt payment legislation, amendments to the *Business Corporations Act*, *Public Works Act*, *Real Property Tax Act*, as well as a new *Title Protection Act* to create a system and fee structure regulating minimum credentials for financial advisors and planners.

Mr. Speaker, your government has been disciplined in supporting emerging sectors where New Brunswick can show leadership in the decades to come. While forestry, agriculture and aquaculture will always be backbones of our economy, your government is embracing energy innovation as an emerging opportunity, particularly in the face of climate change imperatives.

Thanks to our abundance of resources and unique assets, as well as our strategic position on the coast, your government is building an energy cluster in our province that will position us as an integrated energy provider to assist both nationally and internationally with the climate change crisis. At the same time, New Brunswick will lead as a global emissions reduction leader. To enable this work, your government will launch an Energy Secretariat to coordinate the various stakeholders and opportunities, and to elevate New Brunswick's assets on the national and global stage.

The Port of Belledune in northern New Brunswick has recently announced an agreement in principle with Cross River Infrastructure Partners to build a green hydrogen export facility.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to emerging technologies, New Brunswick is home to Canada's only operational LNG terminal. As our world transitions to alternative sources of energy, like hydrogen, there is a requirement during the transition period for products like LNG globally – and that's where New Brunswick's LNG terminal offers clear advantages. Given the energy crisis that is underway in Europe, our province is ideally positioned to help. New Brunswick is better suited than any jurisdiction to export liquefied natural gas to Europe.

New Brunswick has vast and untapped shale gas resources in the province that if responsibly developed could provide a made-in-New Brunswick supply of natural gas for use in the proposed LNG export facility, or to replace coal used in power generation in Atlantic Canada. Replacing coal with natural gas has been shown to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent or more.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick's natural gas deposits are unique in that they are cleaner when compared with other North American resources because they do not contain carbon dioxide or hydrogen sulphide. As governments seek to transition off coal, our natural gas supply could provide an excellent clean and reliable alternative. Your government is eager to work with Indigenous and other stakeholders to make this a reality.

Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick has also been leading the national conversation on advanced small modular reactors – or SMRs. New Brunswick has been a leader in nuclear energy in Canada for the past 40 years – one of only two provinces in Canada with nuclear operations and expertise. And now as part of the Pan Canadian SMR plan, New Brunswick is leading the development and deployment of

the Generation IV SMRs. Inherently safe and scalable, this technology provides clean and base load energy that interacts well with intermittent sources like wind and solar. And since they are modular, they can be designed and built right here in New Brunswick and by taking advantage of our world-class logistic assets like the Port of Saint John, shipped to customers all around the world.

Two SMR developers have their Canadian headquarters in our province – ARC Clean Technology and Moltex. Both have received support from your government.

Mr. Speaker, the interest level is high and the opportunities significant. Between 2020 and 2035, SMRs are expected to bring an average of 1,458 direct and indirect jobs per year, \$2.15 billion in positive impacts on our GDP and an increase of \$198 million in government revenue.

There's no question that we are transforming our economy and we are excited to play a leadership role in energy innovation.

Vibrant and Sustainable Communities

LOCAL GOVERNANCE REFORM

Mr. Speaker, your government had committed to working with communities and stakeholders across the province to set a new course for local governance in New Brunswick. That is precisely what has been achieved as we move from 340 local entities to 89, 77 local governments and 12 Rural Districts on January 1, 2023.

More than 95 per cent of the population will be in a local government, while those in the rural districts will also have democratic representation. To that end, special municipal elections are occurring on November 28 in many areas of the province.

The Regional Service Commissions will be playing an expanded and important role in the areas of regional economic development, tourism promotion, community development, regional transportation and infrastructure cost sharing. This is an important step in ensuring a regional approach that will reduce duplication and help focus decision making.

Your government has put in motion the necessary actions with a number of legislative changes made during the past year, including an *Act Respecting Local Governance Reform* and an *Act Respecting Community Funding* that passed this Legislature earlier this month.

During this session, further amendments will be brought forward to the *Regional Service Delivery Act*, and the *Community Planning Act*.

HOUSING

Mr. Speaker, the growth in New Brunswick's population is a testament to the fact that people are coming to the province and they are staying, which presents challenges in terms of ensuring sufficient housing options. Your government is applying a holistic perspective in assessing the housing needs of New Brunswickers, with the minister of Service New Brunswick providing oversight across the entire spectrum.

Rental supply is on the rise in New Brunswick. Since January 2021 there have been more than 2,000 new rental units completed in the province. As of August 2022, there were 3,557 rental units under construction in the province's three largest centres – which is the highest level recorded since 1990.

Residential building permits, which are a good leading indicator of building intentions, are up 23 per cent on a year-to-date basis over 2021 levels. This is higher than the full-year performance seen in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, builders are confident and investing in New Brunswick's cities and communities.

Your government recognizes that affordable housing is an issue for many communities as well. Thanks to multiple efforts over the years, your government has been able to help over 800 at-risk New Brunswickers experiencing homelessness find affordable and stable housing.

Already, the objectives under the 2019-2028 Canada-New Brunswick Bilateral Agreement for the first three years have been exceeded. Originally, this initiative targeted the construction of 151 new affordable housing units in the province from 2019-2022. Instead, 177 new units were created. The second phase of this agreement calls for the creation of an additional 405 units on the market within the next three years. These affordable housing units include the addition of new rent

supplements, requiring tenants to allocate 30 per cent of their gross income toward rent, with your government covering the remainder.

Over and above this, Mr. Speaker, to help alleviate a shortage of affordable housing, your government has just announced an investment of \$102.2 million to build a further 380 new public housing units over the next four years and make immediate renovations to 110 vacant units. This important initiative will result in the building of the first government-owned housing units in 38 years.

Partnerships will continue with private and non-profit landlords to develop more affordable housing options for New Brunswickers in need. In September, the provincial government and Elsipogtog First Nation announced a partnership to help Elsipogtog reach its goals of adding up to 25 housing units in their community over the next five years.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Speaker, a place to live is only one part of making somewhere your home. Residents also need to feel safe. In its latest budget, your government has invested \$3.3 million to reduce crime.

From April 1 to October 7 of this year alone, law enforcement across the province made 130 drug seizures, seized \$734,732 in cash and removed 251 weapons from our streets. Warrants and arrests totaled 338 and show the impacts of these efforts to make our communities safer places to live.

While your government continues to support law enforcement as they apply pressure to drug dealers preying on our most vulnerable, we must also help them address drug-driven crime. Property crime is rising as thieves steal from their neighbours to get money for drugs. We must make it harder for thieves to turn stolen goods, from copper wire to catalytic converters, into cash. During this session, amendments will be introduced to the *Salvage Dealers Licensing Act*, applying best practices from laws across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, your government is also focused on the safety and rights of our seniors, as well as protecting people when online. During this session legislation your government will bring forth amendments to the *Enduring Powers of Attorney Act* and the *Wills Act*. Your government will also bring forth a new Act to replace the *Infirm Persons Act* to support better decision making and representation for laws

relating to guardianship. Further, a new Act entitled *Access to Digital Assets by Fiduciaries Act* will be introduced to clarify the role of Fiduciaries and the duty of custodians.

Mr. Speaker, the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls recommended that all provincial and territorial governments enact missing persons legislation. Indigenous women represent 10 per cent of the total population of women in Canada missing for at least 30 years. Enacting the new *Missing Persons Act* will ensure police officers have the necessary tools to continue their search efforts and ultimately increase effectiveness.

To further protect women against intimate partner violence, in this session your government will be introducing *Disclosure to Protect Against Intimate Partner Violence (Clare's Law)*.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Mr. Speaker, your government supports inclusive communities and strives to implement improvements in our workplaces. During this session the final report of the systemic racism commissioner will be received.

On September 30th your government recognized the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. All New Brunswickers have an obligation to advance reconciliation and foster a better, more inclusive province, not just on September 30 but every single day.

Mr. Speaker, your government has created a website to support the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and we encourage all residents to visit www.gnb.ca/trc and learn about ways they can support progress.

The legacy of residential and day schools has been deeply traumatic for the survivors, families and communities connected to this tragic era in Canadian history. We must never forget. We all share the responsibility to listen, learn, remember, and above all, take action.

Work is underway or complete for 27 of the 31 Calls to Action under provincial jurisdiction, including waiving fees to make it easier for survivors of residential schools and their family members to reclaim traditional names, curriculum development on the history of residential schools, cultural awareness training for

all public servants, and smudging ceremonies being available across the Horizon Health Network.

SUPPORTING ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Speaker, artists and artisans play an important role in strengthening New Brunswick's communities and the economy. Last year your government launched *The Report of the Premier's Task Force on the Status of the Artist* which contained several recommendations to improve the socio-economic status of professional artists.

With the last budget, your government doubled its support for the film sector, recognizing the strong potential for film productions to attract investment in the province. Recently, your government signed an agreement with Louisiana to strengthen cultural relations and create opportunities to showcase our rich cultural product. Your government will continue to identify ways to support arts and culture, and to create linkages to our thriving tourism sector as identified in our new tourism strategy, *The Invitation*.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND WAGE IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Speaker not only is your government growing the economy and reducing taxes for New Brunswickers, it is investing to lift up our most vulnerable. A new *Child and Youth Well Being Act* has been introduced to better protect children at risk. Social assistance has been indexed and your government increased rates while reducing harmful claw backs. Mileage reimbursement rates have also been improved for Social Development partners and clients.

To help more New Brunswickers make ends meet, your government made a one-time correction and increased minimum wage by \$2 per hour in 2022, representing a 17 per cent increase and the most significant jump in the rate since 1980. This change positively impacted thousands of residents and moved the province from last in Canada to among the highest in the region. In 2023, the minimum wage will resume being tied to the consumer price index, a change made by your government in 2019, and based on current trends the increase is anticipated to exceed seven per cent next year which is a significant boost for New Brunswickers particularly during these times when so many are challenged with rising costs.

Government also increased hourly wages for human service workers in community settings and for early childhood educators. Inclusion support workers at early learning and child-care facilities will receive an increase in hourly wages, matching their compensation with early childhood educators. This is in recognition of inclusive learning practices and to support equal opportunities for every child.

To further promote equity and human rights, your government has provided more than \$115,000 to school districts to provide free menstrual hygiene products to students throughout the school year. This program can help reduce the impact on academics and help reduce stigma and social or emotional challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in this session amendments will be brought forward to the *Employment Standards Act* to support persons with disabilities and ensure they are included in workplaces fully and receive fair remuneration. Employers will no longer be able to apply discretion and use sub-minimum wage stipends when employing a person with a disability.

Dependable Public Health Care

Mr. Speaker, a key element of building vibrant and sustainable communities is having a health-care system that can meet the needs of New Brunswickers.

The system we have is not working, and your government has launched a strong plan, built in partnership with health-care professionals across New Brunswick: *Stabilizing Health Care: An Urgent Call to Action*. The plan identifies clear actions and ambitious timelines to evolve our system and deliver improvements that New Brunswickers deserve.

Historic levels of funding have been invested to support this plan, but Mr. Speaker, money alone will not fix this challenge. Every New Brunswicker must be willing to think and behave differently as you continue to expand the variety of providers who can help New Brunswickers with various health-care needs, adopt technology more rapidly, and evolve how we access services across the health system. This will improve access for New Brunswickers and make the system more attractive to the next generation of professionals.

One of the main priorities of the health plan is to give New Brunswickers greater access to primary health-care service. Our new generation of doctors and nurses will not work in single, isolated practices and carry the burden of thousands of patient records. They want to be part of a team, working in a collaborative interdisciplinary clinic where a variety of services are delivered.

Mr. Speaker, you recognize that as you evolve the model to more community team-based clinics, you must also empower professionals to work at a broader scope and connect them across the system with new ways to deliver services faster to New Brunswickers.

Your government has made several strides to support this objective:

- Four communities have been identified as sites for integrated community care: Dalhousie, Sussex, Fredericton and Charlotte County. Recruitment is underway for community developers and nurse practitioners in these communities, and community advisory committees are being established.
- Virtual care through eVisitNB is now available at no charge for people with a Medicare card. Consultations can be booked with a doctor or nurse practitioner, either in person or over the phone.
- Pharmacists can now renew many prescriptions and can prescribe for uncomplicated urinary tract infections, shingles and birth control.
- Paramedics can use clinical judgement when responding to 911 calls and will support patients in finding a community care option when appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, in advancing our health strategy to remove patients from the Patient Connect List and provide primary care to all New Brunswickers, your government has found that in one region about one third of those on the wait list were already connected to a doctor or nurse practitioner. In the past, unattached patients' only access points were walk-in clinics or ERs, and the health status of these individuals could sometimes get worse during their wait for a permanent primary care provider.

Going forward, unattached patients who do not have a primary care provider across the province will be offered the opportunity to join NB Health Link. NB Health Link is a new provincial program that will provide a temporary home and improved access to care for these patients while they wait to find a

permanent primary care provider. Patients registered with NB Health Link will be provided with regular and consistent access to primary care services through a combination of telephone, virtual or in-person visits with primary care providers associated with the program. In addition, NB Health Link will leverage an electronic health record system to ensure that patients are provided with a high degree of continuity of care while they are in the program, vastly improving on the episodic care that is currently provided through walk-in clinics or ER visits.

Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick is witnessing population growth not seen in many generations, resulting in a significant increase in newcomers registering for Medicare coverage. Your government is taking active steps to eliminate the backlog of requests, better communicate with community partners and manage the increased demand moving forward. Your government has undertaken to simplify the application form, streamline the application process to reduce cycle times and increase staff dedicated to processing new requests by 80 per cent in order to ensure our newcomers are provided with timely access to their Medicare cards. The implementation of these improvement measures will allow for the issuance of Medicare cards within 60 days of receipt of required forms. Your government is targeting to address the current backlog and achieve this timeline by February 2023.

Mr. Speaker, your government is also working to increase access to surgery.

Family doctors and surgeons in the Fredericton and Bathurst regions are being trained to use a new e-referral program that will connect patients to the first available surgeon or patients can choose to wait for a specific surgeon.

The Enhanced Recovery After Surgery program has been launched for colorectal surgery patients at the Dr. Georges-L.-Dumont University Hospital Centre, and preparations are underway to launch the program for colorectal surgery patients at the Moncton Hospital and for hip and knee replacement surgery patients at the Saint John Regional Hospital.

And earlier this fall, your government launched a new pilot program in Bathurst to accelerate publicly funded cataract surgeries in private settings.

Mr. Speaker, your government is also increasing access to addiction and mental health services. One at a Time Therapy is now available at 14 community addiction and mental health offices in the province, and this option has reduced wait lists for community mental health services by 62 per cent for the adult population.

Supporting seniors as they age is a key pillar of the health plan. New Brunswickers want to remain living in their homes for as long as possible, but many are unable to do so due to lack of access to services and opportunities for healthy aging. Your government is expanding the Nursing Home Without Walls model to 16 more locations by October 2023 by investing in additional resources for community supports and extending their expertise to help older people in their local communities.

Mr. Speaker, for our health-care system to work better, it must be better connected. Today, silos exist, professionals are fragmented in the ways they deliver care, and residents don't have the information they need to take preventive and corrective steps to proactively manage their health outside of a hospital setting.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, your government has established 415,197 New Brunswickers with MyHealthNB accounts, leveraging technology to put health-care records at the fingertips of residents. These individuals will be first in line to have access to their laboratory and diagnostic test results and their vaccination records when the service is expanded in the coming months.

Perhaps most important of all, Mr. Speaker, are the workers who are needed. New Brunswick is in competition for health-care workers with every jurisdiction experiencing a shortage.

An incentive program was launched earlier this year to attract newly registered nurses for jobs that are hard to fill. More than 266 nurses have been hired within the regional health authorities and Extra-Mural/Ambulance New Brunswick under this program.

Your government signed 10-year performance-based agreements with l'Université de Moncton and the University of New Brunswick to grow the number of nursing graduates by 85 per year. In addition, the master of nursing – nurse practitioner program at the University of New Brunswick will expand from 10 to 20 seats in September 2023. And Mr. Speaker, starting in September 2022, up to 21 UNB nursing students per year will specialize in mental health each year, better preparing them to respond to mental health issues. In addition, your government is bringing 10 medical seats home to New Brunswick from Memorial University in Newfoundland and relocating them at the Dalhousie Medical School at the Saint John UNB Campus. Your government has also added four seats in Moncton in partnership with the Centre de formation médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick

(CFMNB) at l'Université de Moncton. In addition, you have recently established a letter of intent with Beal University in Bangor, Maine to advise New Brunswickers who wish to study in the bachelor of nursing program that they have the capacity to enrol at least 100 eligible students for 2023 and will enter into a return of service agreement with those students directly so that they return to New Brunswick and work as a registered nurse for a minimum of one year.

Your government is also taking down barriers for health-care professionals. Students can now take the nursing exam in Quebec, you have a new agreement with France to recognize foreign credentials for nurses, and recently your government launched a new navigator program to help international medical professionals get their credentials recognized.

In this legislative session, your government will be advancing amendments to the *Regional Health Authorities Act* to expand service delivery to community clinics from hospitals, which would improve access to services such as blood sample collection and cataract surgeries.

Your government believes in making decisions based on evidence and relevant data, with the goal of increasing the use of data to guide investment decisions and to inform system design decisions. With this goal in mind, your government will be bringing forward amendments to the *New Brunswick Health Council Act* to expand the role of the New Brunswick Health Council in data analysis and reporting to the ministers of Health and Social Development. The legislative changes will also see an increase in public reporting of data about services levels and outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, your government is not doing this alone. Positive change is happening because everyone is willing to work together to improve the system and identify ways to create the dependable health-care services that New Brunswickers need and deserve.

World-class Education

Mr. Speaker, your government is advancing the 10-year education plans, [*Succeeding at Home: a green paper on education in New Brunswick*](#) and three government priorities: energizing the private sector by improving workforce participation; creating vibrant and sustainable communities by breaking the cycle of poverty; and establishing a world-class education system by ensuring every child succeeds.

Graduating students who are prepared for the workforce is key to the sustainability of our province. Your government has introduced valuable pre-apprenticeship programs for high-school students interested in skilled trades in New Brunswick to provide work terms and foster connections with employers in the community.

Government is also creating hands-on experiential work opportunities for students who are interesting in learning about key sectors. New centres of excellence were launched in entrepreneurship, health care and social work. These add to the first centre of excellence in energy that was launched last year. Students can interact with and learn from experts in their fields, regardless of their location in the province with a combination of panel discussions, site visits, webinars, speaker series, mentorship, coaching, career fairs, industry training, and co-op placements, both virtual and in person.

Your government is focused on ensuring there is a program that will see all of our students learn and graduate with a conversational level of French. You will work to create system-wide changes which allow for a learning environment where teachers can teach and students can learn with minimal disruptions, where streaming is eliminated, and where parents are clear on the programs that exist. Our children are the drivers of our future and they deserve to have all the tools necessary to thrive and contribute to our province. Mr. Speaker, consistency in our education system is important and your government will be working to establish programs that can be delivered in the same way everywhere in our province.

Mr. Speaker, a healthy and strong province begins with healthy and strong children. Your government is working to support students in need across the province.

Earlier this year the government announced up to \$550,000 for Food Depot Alimentaire to expand its existing free breakfast program from 50 schools to 110 schools. The funding will go toward providing foods such as milk and other dairy products; eggs; fruits and vegetables; cereals and grains; supporting the

government's Local Food and Beverages Strategy and encouraging people to Grow NB, Buy NB and Feed NB.

Government has invested \$3 million over two years to support the continuation of a Saint John initiative that helps the most vulnerable children succeed in school. The *When Children Succeed* project helps students overcome learning barriers in kindergarten to Grade 2 by providing intensive in-class support designed to close the education achievement gap by the time students complete Grade 3, which research shows significantly boosts their graduation rate.

Giving children a strong early start is critical for their future success, and your government is proud that the early childhood agreement has reduced out-of-pocket fees for families by an average of 50 per cent for pre-school aged children at designated learning centres and homes throughout the province meaning more children can benefit from these programs and more parents can return to the workforce earlier. Mr. Speaker, your government is equally proud that it took the necessary time to create a solution that not only built on our existing and very successful early childcare model, it also protected private business owners, the large majority of which are female entrepreneurs.

Continuity of learning is key for students. This session, amendments will be brought forward to the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* to clarify language around strike votes, strikes, lockouts and designated workers to ensure sufficient notice periods and continuity of critical services. This balance is required for families and New Brunswickers who rely on schools, education and other services.

Mr. Speaker, the green paper highlighted the need for a central function of monitoring and accountability to ensure fair and effective implementation of provincial laws, policies and standards. This session, amendments will be brought forth to the *Education Act* to modernize governance in the anglophone sector. Your government will review any required changes to the francophone sector in the year ahead.

Environment

Mr. Speaker, protecting New Brunswick's vast natural spaces for future generations remains a key priority. Your government released a renewed Climate Change Action Plan: *Our Pathway Towards Decarbonization and Resilience* that will help the province adapt to climate change while steering New Brunswick toward a low-carbon future. While progress has been made, as witnessed with Hurricane Fiona, the province is already experiencing the effects of climate change and there is more work to do.

Your government has been working diligently to help residents in the eastern part of the province recover and clean up from the hurricane, and going forward, careful consideration must be given to how to rebuild those areas, always placing a priority on the safety of residents. With that in mind, your government has committed to undertaking several changes to improve land use planning and promote more responsible and managed development of land. As a first step, government will introduce statements of public interest that will focus on climate change, flood hazard areas, settlement patterns, agriculture and natural resources. This will be done with full alignment to the renewed Climate Change Action Plan.

With 30 measurable actions and clear deliverables, the new action plan commits to continuing to support communities in developing adaptation plans to prepare for the impacts of climate change with a goal of having 100 per cent of communities with plans by 2030. Currently, 55 per cent of New Brunswick's municipalities have completed adaptation plans, including all cities and highest risk coastal municipalities, as well as eight municipalities located within the lower St. John River floodplain.

More than \$47 million is allocated in the 2022-23 budget to support 83 climate-change related projects. The investment, which comes from the Carbon Tax, is directed towards initiatives that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, foster educational opportunities, and build resiliency to achieve our greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030 and put New Brunswick on a path to being net-zero by 2050.

Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick has proposed a provincial carbon pricing system that reflects the economic realities and competitiveness concerns of the province. Maintaining provincial control of carbon pricing is critical to ensure that revenue is recycled in a way that provides the best outcomes for residents.

Mr. Speaker, as part of overall climate change goals, your government's vision is to reduce the amount of solid waste being disposed of in New Brunswick and to create opportunities to transform it into materials for tomorrow. You will continue to modernize, expand and establish new waste diversion programs, using an extended producer responsibility approach, an example of which was approved by your government for packaging and printed paper and which positions New Brunswick as a leader in Atlantic Canada. Two pilot programs have resulted in a total of 101 tonnes of glass containers diverted from landfills in 2021-22 and in the coming months government is proposing to modernize the 30-year-old Beverage Container Program.

Diverting waste is critical to keep our natural spaces clean, healthy and thriving with biodiversity. Your government is well on its way to more than double the amount of conserved and protected areas in New Brunswick from 4.6 per cent to 10 per cent, which represents the most significant conservation gain in the history of our province.

Healthy and productive forests are synonymous with our beautiful province. In this session, new legislation will be introduced that creates a new fund for private woodlot sustainability specifically designed to support private woodlot owners in implementing improved management, silviculture and protection of forests for the long term. This legislation will re-invigorate private woodlot owners in the province and set a new long-term path of sustainable management on small private woodlots.

You will also be making great gains in transparency and oversight of Crown lands and forest management by establishing the Crown Lands and Forest Advisory Board. You will soon be advertising for positions on this advisory board and look forward to start working with them in to ensure diverse management of one of greatest assets and to further solidify the commitment that our forests are for everyone.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, your government has set New Brunswick on a new course of prosperity and long-term sustainability. Through careful planning, regular consultation and intentional actions that strive for meaningful outcomes, the province is seeing historic levels of growth.

Your government will continue to encourage New Brunswickers everywhere to challenge old thinking that is no longer serving our province or its people. In doing so, we have several examples of how New Brunswick has been reinvented both economically and socially. Progress is happening, and its tangible progress people can see and feel as they go about their daily lives.

Mr. Speaker, your government's work is far from over. There is much more you aim to achieve, particularly in health care, education, and creating vibrant and sustainable communities that include every New Brunswicker and help them reach their fullest potential.

Together, we must seize opportunities and continue to build growth and prosperity for the people of our province.

We are on our way and stronger than ever before.

