

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE | OCTOBER 21, 2025

Change in motion

Second session of the 61st Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick
The Honourable Louise Imbeault, Lieutenant-Governor



Cyclists and Sand Dunes | Marjory Donaldson

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Opening remarks

Madame Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and fellow New Brunswickers, welcome to the opening of the second session of the 61st Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

We respectfully acknowledge that New Brunswick is situated on the unceded and unsurrendered territories of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We seek to repair and rebuild meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and honour these lands which hold the hopes for future generations. This acknowledgement is given as a continued commitment to action so that we can achieve meaningful reconciliation.

Upon taking office in November, your government hit the ground running. As a result, we have seen the start of many positive changes in our province. However, challenges remain.

We must continue to challenge the status quo, be bold and think big as we work collaboratively to achieve our goals. This isn't always easy, as the world continues to shift and change around us, but with determination and persistence, change is possible.

As we begin today's session, we want to highlight some of the inspirational people and groups who are making positive change across our province.

Congratulations / Recognition

Many New Brunswickers deserve noteworthy recognition for their achievements over the past year.

We would like to thank everyone who helped keep our province safe during the wildfires this summer, including the teams of firefighters and other first responders, public servants, and the many volunteers and community members, as well as those who travelled to New Brunswick from across Canada and from Maine to lend a hand.

Congratulations to the five New Brunswickers who have been inducted into the Order of New Brunswick this year: William Lloyd Hoyt from Fredericton; Richard (Rick) Hutchins from Grand Lake; Dr. Rodney Ouellette from Dieppe; Danielle Pelletier from Fredericton; and Cherrill Edwina Shea from Saint John.

We congratulate the nine recipients of the 2025 Excellence in Education Awards from the francophone sector, as well as the 11 recipients from the anglophone sector.

Congratulations to Dawn Arnold, New Brunswick's newest senator.

We congratulate the New Brunswick lawyers who have been appointed to the King's Counsel within the past year.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2025 VIVE Awards, for being outstanding individuals in the advancement of gender equality in our province.

We congratulate Michel Cardin of Riverview and Stephen Adrian White of Moncton, who were invested in the Order of Canada in 2025.

Congratulations to the top New Brunswick exporters this year, who were recipients of the 2025 Export Awards.

We congratulate the nine recipients of the Étoiles Awards, for being recognized as leaders in innovative practices and efforts to create engaging, safe, and helpful learning environments where students can thrive.

We extend our congratulations to the winners of the 2024 New Brunswick Book Awards.

We honour the five recipients of the Disability Awareness Week Awards, including the winner of the Honourable Andy Scott Award, Alicia Munn; the winner of the Employer Award, Repeat Boutique; and the winner of the Provincial Award, Wabanaki Council on Disability.

Congratulations to Brenda and David Sansom, this year's recipients of the Philanthropy in Action Award.

Congratulations to Marie Doiron and Ginny Hooper for receiving the Council of the Federation's 2025 Literacy Award, an award that recognizes outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

Congratulations to Jessica Forbes, provincial coordinator of Integrated Service Delivery at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, for receiving the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) Award in the Emerging Leader category. Congratulations as well to Nicole Gervais, executive director for Corporate Services at the Executive Council Office, for being shortlisted for the IPAC Award for Established Leaders.

We congratulate Melissa Cummings, P. Eng, director of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure's Environmental Services Branch, on receiving the Transportation Association of Canada's (TAC) Leadership Award for her involvement on the TAC Environment and Climate Change Council.

We wish to congratulate the Martin Boys of Woodstock for making the province proud when they appeared on Canada's Got Talent, where they made it to the finale. A huge congratulations also goes out to Olivier Bergeron of Kedgwick for his Top 20 finish on Season 23 of American Idol.

Congratulations to Will Reynolds on being drafted by the Seattle Kraken in the 2025 NHL draft.

Congratulations to the Moncton Wildcats on winning the 2025 Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League Championship Series.

And, of course, we extend our congratulations to all the athletes, coaches, officials, and staff involved in the 2025 Canada Summer Games, who proudly represented New Brunswick.

Condolences

We would also like to take the time to remember those we've lost in the past year.

We honour Antonine Maillet, a powerful Acadian novelist and storyteller, well-known for her contributions to the cultural fabric of our province and her pride for her Acadian heritage.

We were saddened by the passing of Daniel Légère, president of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour and proud advocate for working class New Brunswickers.

We mourn the loss of Buzz Hargrove. Originally from Bath, he was national president of the Canadian Auto Workers Union from 1992 until his retirement in 2008, and a tireless advocate for workers across the country.

We remember Ron Turcotte, an accomplished jockey from Drummond best known for riding Secretariat to win horseracing's triple crown in 1973, who became a strong supporter and advocate for the Permanently Disabled Jockey Fund.

Introduction

One year ago today, New Brunswickers elected a government focused on their priorities – on health care, affordability and education.

Since then, your government has hit the ground running and worked hard to earn the trust of New Brunswickers through transparency, collaboration, and action.

As a new legislative session begins, your government is excited to build on what has been achieved, recognizing that there is still much work to be done to reach our shared goals.

If the past year has shown us anything, it is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the challenges we face. Working in partnership and listening to one another is key if we want to get things done.

Your government recognizes the importance of not just setting and working toward goals, but in creating goals that are both strategic and measurable. As a province, we must be able to evaluate our success and be flexible in adjusting our approach when needed to ensure we are getting the results we want.

Last January, 15 accountability metrics were introduced by government covering key priority objectives in health care, education, housing, environment and the economy. Your government set targets for these metrics to not only track progress, but to help guide future decisions while being fully transparent to the people of this province.

Today, your government will highlight some of what has been accomplished, how it has been measured, and its impact on residents – but the focus will be on what is next. This Speech from the Throne will lay out the next steps for improving the lives of New Brunswickers as your government enters the second year of its mandate.

Health care

The health-care system in our province is facing persistent, critical challenges. Transformational change is necessary to ensure every New Brunswicker can count on receiving care that is timely, respectful and available close to home.

Your government envisions a health-care system that is connected, responsive and patient-centred and recently released a provincial health-care plan that puts people at the heart of health care. The success of this plan will be measured through clearly defined performance indicators.

Primary care

According to the New Brunswick Health Council, only 77 per cent of New Brunswickers have access to a primary care provider. Government will increase the number of people with a doctor or nurse practitioner to 81 per cent by 2026. Because they know that having primary care is only one step closer to the goal, they will also increase access to a doctor or nurse practitioner within five days to 33.4 per cent in 2026.

They committed to establishing 10 collaborative care teams by the end of 2025. Your government hit the ground running, took rapid action, and in the last seven months set up seven family health teams in Campbellton, Moncton, Miramichi, Carleton North, Tantramar, Lamèque, and Fredericton. At least three more collaborative family health teams will be added by the end of December. These teams are taking more than 10,000 patients off the waiting list for care in communities across New Brunswick.

In 2026 another 10 family health teams will be established in communities around the province.

By the end of 2028, at least 30 family health teams will have been established across New Brunswick – ensuring care is close to home and personal, and available when you need it.

The regional health authorities continue to engage with community physicians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, mental health professionals, social workers and more to co-create teams, modernize existing community health centres, and improve access to primary care. As these teams mature, New Brunswickers will be able to receive care from the right person at the right time.

Health-care workforce

We also need to ensure that we care for those who are caring for New Brunswickers which is why one of the first things your government did was issue recognition and retention payments to nurses. Your government is pleased to report that the second retention payment of \$5,000 was issued earlier this year.

Later this week, government and the New Brunswick Nurses Union will sign a new agreement that reflects a shared commitment to supporting the vital role nurses play in caring for New Brunswickers.

Your government continues to strengthen support for training health-care professionals here at home. By expanding existing training programs, developing new programs in priority health areas, and advancing mentorship and leadership initiatives, they are helping to build a strong and engaged health-care workforce.

Increasing the number of health-care providers working in New Brunswick is a priority for your government. Efforts will continue in the years ahead to strengthen recruitment efforts across Canada, lead targeted international recruitment in high-return markets, and provide relocation and settlement support for priority candidates.

Improvements to infrastructure at Centre de formation médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick will allow capacity for an increase of eight additional undergrad medical seats, for a total of 40 seats. This, along with a renewed five-year agreement between Dalhousie Medical School, the University of New Brunswick and government, means there will be 80 seats available for New Brunswick medical students in 2026. These agreements are going to help build a strong and stable pipeline of future New Brunswick doctors.

\$6.5 million has been committed to a bursary program to reimburse paramedic and emergency medical technician students who train in New Brunswick. Planning is underway for the province's first physiotherapy program at the Université de Moncton.

Recognizing the importance of culturally safe, sustainable, and equitable health care for Indigenous people across New Brunswick, the bilateral health forum was launched in September. This is an avenue for First Nations and government to collaborate on programs that support Indigenous health and well-being, resulting in

concrete, measurable outcomes. In the year ahead, work will begin on First Nations health priorities identified through the forum.

Government is also committed to advancing accessible and affordable women's health care. The first act of this government was to remove Regulation 84-20, increasing access to reproductive choice for New Brunswickers.

They also fulfilled a commitment to help New Brunswickers start their families by investing more than \$1.9 million to support access to fertility treatments.

As of September 2025, more than 623 families have received care since the Fredericton Midwifery Centre opened. In 2026 your government will hire additional midwives at the centre. Work continues to enhance partnerships to support the expansion of midwifery across the province. Funds are being allocated to support this work along with funding to educate and train midwives from New Brunswick.

Digital health

Government is seeing the positive impact that technology is having on health care in New Brunswick and will be expanding digital solutions in 2026 to ensure a seamless delivery of care for you and your families.

MyHealthNB continues to connect patients to their health information, surpassing 200,000 users who access their data through the website and app. To better serve New Brunswickers, more online tools have been added, including the recent addition of a dashboard showing the average length of stay in emergency departments across the province.

Your government has supported a hybrid operating room at the Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital in Fredericton which combines a traditional operating room with advanced medical imaging devices, allowing physicians to diagnose and perform complex, minimally invasive surgical procedures in one setting.

Your government is supporting seamless and standardized medical image sharing and interpretation across the health system, improving efficiency and ensuring clinicians have secure, real-time access to imaging, regardless of location. Access to a single, secure and comprehensive patient medical imaging record will support improved delivery of patient care.

Your government is investing in modernized medical records with primary care providers making patient information accessible and organized. This along with leveraging AI to summarize clinical visits reduces the administrative burden on

health-care staff. Additionally, by digitizing forms used by Ambulance New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Extramural program, they will be reducing duplication and supporting safer transitions between home, community and hospital settings.

Mental health

Your government has made improving access to mental health services a priority.

Investments have been made in treatment beds throughout the province to ensure there is a bed for anyone who needs it, when they need it. A 50-bed facility will open in summer 2026 to increase support to individuals with complex substance use issues.

In the spring of 2026, legislation to create a Mental Health Advocate position will be tabled to ensure New Brunswick families struggling with mental health and navigating the system have a champion.

As well, addiction and mental health court access is being expanded to ensure the promotion of alternative pathways for justice. A new specialized court diversion program in Moncton will focus on people with addictions and mental health challenges. The program aims to provide treatment and reduce relapsing. Government is committed to expanding the mental health court model and will identify the next target community in 2026.

Seniors and long-term care

Your government is focused on supporting seniors. To help keep vulnerable New Brunswickers healthy, the RSV vaccination is now being provided at no charge for seniors and vulnerable people, including those 60 and older who are living in a long-term care or adult residential facility.

Your government wants to help seniors stay at home as long as they choose to. The growing Nursing Home Without Walls program helps to enhance their quality of life while offering tailored supports. Five new sites have been approved since November 2024, bringing the number of locations to 30 provincially.

In 2026, government will increase that number to 40 sites. To further support seniors staying in their homes, your government is investing \$10 million this fiscal year to make home care more affordable.

In 2026, incorporating personal care aides into the New Brunswick Extra-Mural program will further bolster at-home acute, rehabilitative, and palliative care, helping more seniors stay at home with the necessary supports in place.

For those who are no longer able to live at home, long-term care space must be accessible. As of September, the nursing home waitlist included 1,129 New Brunswickers. The goal is to stop any further growth on the waitlist by using vacant beds at all levels and enhancing initiatives focused on aging in place. A recently signed agreement with the New Brunswick Council of Nursing Homes unions will improve wages for personal support workers, critical members of our long-term care homes.

Recognizing the challenges facing our growing senior population, a Dementia Strategy will be launched and Dementia Care Navigation services will be in place in 2026.

Affordability and housing

Rising costs continue to be a challenge for too many New Brunswickers.

To help, government moved immediately to put a number of affordability measures in place, including implementing a 10 per cent rebate on residential electricity consumption last January.

Increased funding was also allotted for the Enhanced Energy Savings Program which provides free air-sealing, insulation and heat pumps to residences that heat with electric baseboards or heating oil.

Your government recognized that New Brunswickers could not continue with the magnitude of rate increases and financial pressures facing NB Power and their customers. The government took action, and an Independent Comprehensive Review of NB Power was initiated to ensure that everything possible is being done to provide competitive and stable power rates, ensure reliability of service and ultimately position the utility to manage growth in an affordable and sustainable way. A final report of the review of NB Power is expected by March 2026. Information from the review will inform future decisions regarding NB Power and will be used to update the province's Energy Strategy.

Your government remains committed to removing seven cents off the price of gas by eliminating the carbon adjustor to save consumers money at the pumps by the end of this year.

In the last legislative session, government implemented a freeze on the amount of property assessment value for taxation for 2026. The one-year assessment freeze was adopted to help provide immediate relief and predictability to New Brunswickers as work continues to overhaul the province's property tax system.

Government committed to creating a property tax system that is more predictable, transparent, fair and stable for the 2027 taxation year and beyond. For 2026, they have expanded the Equalized Payment Plan program to include more property types, making over 460,000 property owners eligible for the program. They also completed the discovery phase of the property tax project and are working to draw upon the information gathered to design meaningful solutions that will begin to be implemented in the 2027 tax year.

Housing affordability remains a challenge for New Brunswickers. Every New Brunswicker deserves a safe and affordable place to call home.

To help achieve this, government has set goals to increase both housing and affordable housing starts.

Your government committed to enabling 6,000 new housing starts a year. That is why upon forming government, they immediately eliminated the provincial portion of the HST off new multi-unit residential construction.

Your government delivered on their affordable housing target and started 320 affordable units in 2025.

In 2026, there are a further 430 units coming. By 2029, government will add a total of 1,760 affordable housing units.

Steps have also been taken to make housing more affordable. A rent cap came into effect in February 2025, making the maximum allowable annual increase in rent three per cent under the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

The rent cap is reviewed annually and will remain at this level for 2026.

Since the Direct-to-Tenant rental benefit was launched, over 10,000 households have been approved for support. In 2025-2026, Housing NB committed to supporting an additional 2,500 households and as of August 31, 2,457 new households had been approved.

In July, Housing NB also launched two new referral-based pilot streams for persons with a disability and youth experiencing housing insecurity. Housing NB will continue to deliver these programs to vulnerable New Brunswickers.

In March, government announced the New Brunswick-Canada agreement for the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, which to date, has enabled over 5,500 housing units.

Your government committed to a Housing First approach to reduce the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness. In September, they established a ministerial task force on homelessness. The task force, consisting of ministers and deputy ministers, is coordinating efforts across departments responsible for housing, social development, local government, justice and public safety, and mental health and addictions to ensure swift action. A homelessness action plan will be delivered before the end of this year.

As of September 2024, 1,050 individuals were deemed chronically homeless, which means they were homeless for more than six months during the last year. Your government is taking action to cut that number by 40 per cent by 2028, to 621. By working with partners and connecting people with supportive housing and other programs, the goal is to get that number to zero.

Housing NB, in partnership with the Department of Social Development, developed a \$7.4 million emergency fund in 2025-2026 to assist community non-profit housing providers to develop shovel-ready supportive and bridge housing and to maintain shelters at risk.

Emergency supportive housing funding has the capacity to create up to 141 units and maintain shelter beds as needed by April 2026.

A multi-year plan for future investments in supportive housing and associated wrap-around services is in development in collaboration with stakeholders and other departments and will be released in early 2026.

Supporting these actions, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is undertaking a multi-year property inventory review to validate property records and identify surplus properties. This initiative aims to establish clear and accessible data on property ownership, enabling quick and reliable decision-making that supports housing efforts.

Education

By investing in the next generation, your government is investing in the future of our province – and this begins with our youngest residents.

Government invested \$7.24 million to increase early childhood educator wages. This supports retention, recruitment, and recognition of the sector's vital role in our province and its future.

In 2026, Women's Equality will conduct a wage review and continue to work with early childhood educators to improve working conditions.

Steps have been taken to reduce the child-care waitlist by investing in expanding access and improving quality child care.

The province has allocated 3,600 designated child-care spaces and is working with early learning and child-care centres to have these spaces open by March 31, 2026.

Legislation will be introduced in this session in response to what government has heard from child-care operators to streamline processes and decrease the administrative burden on them.

Your government's goal is to stabilize classrooms and invest in the priorities of New Brunswick parents: improving literacy, numeracy and reducing chronic absenteeism.

In August, your government launched public consultations to guide the development of the province's next education plans, which will last throughout the fall. The new plans will be released in 2026 and will encompass the early learning and child-care sector, as well as the kindergarten-to-Grade 12 public school system.

Reading skills are key building blocks in learning, ones that improve quality of life and help young New Brunswickers prepare for the future. That is why it is imperative that we improve literacy outcomes for students. Government's goal is to increase assessment results to 56 per cent in English prime, 69.4 per cent in French immersion and 75.9 per cent in the francophone sector by 2028.

Your government also set a goal to lower absenteeism to 29 per cent in 2026 and 26 per cent by 2028. Both the anglophone and francophone systems will continue to work with the department to address root causes.

Government is improving access to French second language learning by giving schools more flexibility in program delivery while maintaining the current immersion entry points. Effective this school year, these changes respond to feedback from students, families, and educators to strengthen French language learning outcomes across the province.

The school day should begin with a good breakfast – which helps students have the energy and focus to learn. As of September, all public schools across the province offer free breakfast to students. This program gives students an essential tool to help them succeed, while also making life more affordable for families.

Your government is also working with partners to ensure that all schools in New Brunswick have affordable and accessible healthy lunches beginning in September 2026.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is finalizing a strategy for the retention and recruitment of teachers. Over the summer months, action plans were developed in collaboration with key partners to support the work that will be outlined in the strategy. The strategy and plans will be announced this fall.

To make sure adequate space is available for the province's growing student population and that schools have the space they need to deliver quality education, government announced eight new infrastructure projects last year. More projects will be announced in this year's capital budget.

This year, construction will continue on the new Saint John Peninsula School and Saint John North End K-5 Elementary School and their community hubs, as well as a new K-8 school in Campbellton, K-12 school in Shediac, the addition to the school in Tabusintac, and mid-life upgrades at Polyvalente Louis-J.-Robichaud.

Social Development is working to increase the number of children and youth in care who graduate from high school by supporting them to stay in school. In 2026, construction is set to begin on the Provincial Youth Treatment Centre which will be an eight-bed facility offering multidisciplinary care for youth ages 12 to 18 who are struggling with complex mental health challenges.

An Actions to Outcomes Plan is being developed by Social Development to ensure the best outcomes for children, youth and young adults in the province, with a

focus on prevention. This includes an early help program that will be piloted in two areas of the province in 2026, so families receive help before a situation escalates.

As well, the department is supporting young people as they transition to adulthood, through training, education and employment opportunities.

The youth in care scholarship supports individuals, formerly in care, who may not have the opportunity to access post-secondary education. Twenty-five students received support under the scholarship for the 2024-2025 academic year and 111 students have submitted scholarship applications for the fall 2025-2026 academic year.

Economic development

New Brunswick is entering a challenging period of economic uncertainty. The province is no longer experiencing the revenue windfalls of years' past and U.S. tariffs have caused instability in New Brunswick's export-driven economy, which relies heavily on U.S. markets. Growth is slowing. Costs are rising. Investment patterns are shifting. Your government understands that these pressures require careful navigation and thoughtful decision-making.

While the road ahead will not be without difficulty, government's focus remains on protecting New Brunswickers, supporting affected businesses and workers, and ensuring that our province continues to grow in a way that is stable, resilient, and future-focused.

A strong economy is the foundation for a strong province. Your government is making strategic investments that will not only impact economic development in the short term, but for generations to come.

New Brunswick finds itself in a strategic position to support several projects of national significance, helping New Brunswickers here at home with good paying jobs.

New Brunswick has two international ports, connecting Canadian businesses to global markets.

Modernization projects at Port Saint John and the Port of Belledune bundle together rail upgrades, expansions, erosion protection, and new infrastructure to eliminate bottlenecks, unlock export capacity, and position New Brunswick ports as world-class hubs for containerized goods, energy products, minerals, and clean fuels.

The Sisson Mine is one of the largest undeveloped tungsten deposits in the world and contains significant molybdenum resources as well. With updated feasibility work now underway, the project is poised to become a major source of critical minerals essential to Canada's economic security, defence sector, and clean energy future. The project will result in 300 permanent jobs, hundreds more in construction, and 27 years of operations generating sustained GDP and provincial revenue.

Beyond the Sisson project, New Brunswick has 21 of the 34 minerals identified as critical to Canada's economy. Work is underway to develop a comprehensive minerals strategy with related legislative amendments to be introduced in 2026. Modernizing New Brunswick's legislative framework is a key part of ensuring that New Brunswick is positioned as a trusted supplier of minerals on a global scale.

In response to uncertain global markets for export driven industries highly reliant on the U.S. and China, market diversification is more important than ever. In the first seven months of 2025, New Brunswick increased food exports to Europe by 46 per cent and the Middle East by 23 per cent, and to Hong Kong by 112 per cent. At the same time, our manufacturing sector has also shown remarkable resilience. Manufacturing exports to India, a key market for the province's diversification efforts, are up almost 23 per cent.

In the year ahead, Opportunities New Brunswick and the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries have plans to increase market diversification further, through growth partnerships and leading targeted trade missions.

In this unpredictable economic climate, committing to long-term investments requires measured flexibility. That is why in the year ahead your government will launch an economic development strategy that will be designed to help boost productivity, enhance private sector competitiveness and resiliency, and attract investment. This approach will position New Brunswick as a competitive jurisdiction to invest, build, and grow.

Trade is also increasing within Canada. The *New Brunswick Free Trade Within Canada Act* will be introduced this fall and will remove internal regulatory barriers for goods and services that have been approved for sale in another Canadian jurisdiction, increasing consumer choice and making it easier for New Brunswick businesses to succeed in other Canadian jurisdictions with similar legislation. In the year ahead, collaboration will continue with other provinces and territories to develop new business opportunities and projects of national interest.

Part of building a strong and resilient province is having a strong workforce.

By 2027, one in every four New Brunswickers will be 65 or older, and there will be a critical need for people to fill skilled jobs across all sectors, including construction, maintenance, transportation and manufacturing.

Steps are being taken now to prepare. This summer, several students took part in the New Brunswick Teen Apprenticeship Program, an industry-led pre-apprentice program for high school students interested in pursuing a skilled trade.

In the years ahead, more programs like this will be used to help build the workforce by connecting youth to future careers in trades.

Government has set a goal to increase the percentage of young people aged 20-29 engaged in education, employment or training to 86.9 per cent by 2028.

Recognizing the workforce challenges we face, your government has focused its immigration programs and policies to prioritize health care, education, and social services, as well as the construction trades. These sectors account for 45 per cent of all provincial nominations in 2025. Immigration New Brunswick will continue to enhance its support for these areas through laser-targeted recruitment of applicants from professions in these critical sectors.

Amendments to the *Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* have been passed to pave the way for removing barriers to labour mobility. In the year ahead, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will continue to work with our national colleagues to align labour mobility requirements.

Work is also being done to improve the socio-economic conditions of professional artists in New Brunswick with the passing of the new *Status of the Artist Act* in the spring session. Regulations are being developed to operationalize this landmark Act.

Improving cellular service in rural New Brunswick will make our province a more attractive place to live and do business. Government, in collaboration with Bell Canada, has committed to improving cellular service in 10 rural areas in the province. In addition, government is working with cellular mobility carriers to advance plans for providing cellular service at three new sites.

In 2026, government will upgrade three towers in New Brunswick and work with cellular mobility providers to install equipment and improve cellular service in these locations.

Putting New Brunswick – and Canada – first is also impacting tourism. The Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture has been engaging with the public and stakeholders since February and will be unveiling a full tourism strategy this fall.

Government continues to work toward economic reconciliation with First Nations communities. Recently, revenue sharing agreements were signed with 14 First Nations in the province. The team is committed to rebuilding government-to-government relationships with First Nations – relationships that establish trust and a shared understanding of treaty obligations.

Environment

In New Brunswick, we are fortunate to be surrounded by natural beauty, with forests and trails, lakes and bays that allow us to get back to nature and find balance in our lives. This is not something we should ever take for granted.

The Department of Natural Resources successfully navigated an historic fire season in the province with more than 300 fires thanks to collaboration across government departments and municipalities, and with support from across Canada and Maine.

The wildfires here in New Brunswick – and across the country – were an important reminder of why we must have plans in place to ensure the safety of our communities before, during and after natural disasters.

Fires are just one example – another is flooding. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has completed Phase 3 of the development of the Long-Term Flood Mitigation Plan, which identifies and prioritizes provincial transportation assets that are vulnerable to flooding.

Phase 4 will be developed in the coming year.

Preserving New Brunswick's natural resources and ensuring a healthy environment is critical for today's residents and future generations. The Department of Environment and Local Government is leading specific initiatives aimed at protecting clean air and water, advancing sustainability, and adapting to environmental challenges that will help us enhance our province's natural beauty and health.

Currently, 10.5 per cent of the province's lands and freshwaters are protected and conserved areas. The Department of Natural Resources is dedicated to increasing this number to 15 per cent, with a long-term goal of protecting 30 per cent of New Brunswick.

New guidelines were developed and released to help plan erosion control projects in freshwater and coastal areas, offering clear, practical advice on natural, engineered, and hybrid solutions. In collaboration with stakeholders and rightsholders, government will release a State of the Coast report in 2026 to serve as the foundation for identifying policy options and future action.

Government has set a goal to improve our outdoor air quality to "good or better," with a target of 74 per cent for this year – which has been achieved – and 76 per

cent for 2026. In September, the Department of Environment and Local Government launched public consultations to ensure a broad range of perspectives are included in updates to the *Clean Air Act*.

NB Power, in collaboration with the provincial and federal governments and First Nations partners, is investing in wind projects that will support the province's clean energy transition. With as much as 450 megawatts of new capacity, these projects will deliver clean, affordable power while supporting economic growth and local job creation. These projects represent a major step toward decarbonizing the province's electricity grid and securing a more sustainable energy future.

As well, your government continues to work towards net zero emissions to help combat climate change.

Government has allocated \$2.95 million in climate change funding towards our commitment to strengthen the resiliency and adaptation of our transportation network and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the government's fleet and buildings. Overall, more than \$55 million has been invested toward achieving targets established in the Climate Change Action Plan.

Trusted leadership

Trusted leadership continues to be a focus of government, as elected officials get out of the office and into communities to listen, rebuild relationships and regain the trust of New Brunswickers.

In order to deliver on the ambitious agenda laid out by government, things need to be done differently. In recent years, government expenditures have continued to rise, and revenues have not grown at the same pace. Your government is committed to a balanced approach and has challenged departments to find ways to reimagine how they can deliver services to New Brunswickers that are more responsive, effective, and efficient. There are more tough decisions ahead, and government is committed to making them with you.

Government continues to track progress and action recommendations from the Systemic Racism Commissioner and is working to develop an anti-racism strategy in the coming year.

New Brunswick's two official languages are not just a reflection of our history; they are a living strength that enriches our culture, strengthens our social fabric, and creates unique economic opportunities that set our province apart in Canada and the world. Recognizing this, your government has acted on key recommendations from the 2021 Review of the *Official Languages Act*. A Standing Committee on Official Languages has been established and a deputy minister of Official Languages has been appointed. Continued progress on the recommendations will ensure that both official languages continue to thrive for generations to come.

Enhancing relationships with public sector unions is essential for fostering mutual trust, collaboration, and a shared commitment to achieving organizational and societal goals, thus creating a stable work environment that benefits employees and public services alike.

Five collective agreements have been signed since November 2024. Two other agreements have been ratified and are awaiting signing. Two tentative agreements are waiting a ratification vote.

In 2026, your government will introduce pay transparency legislation which will promote fairness, accountability and equity across all sectors by ensuring compensation practices are open and inclusive.

Legislation is coming this session that will amend the *Public Health Act* to enhance the independence of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This will help to ensure unbiased and evidence-based decision making and research, further protecting New Brunswickers.

Finally, a review of the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* is currently underway, a commitment your government made to ensure more accessible and less restrictive access to the public.

Conclusion

Change doesn't happen overnight, but we are starting to see it happening here in New Brunswick.

Your government has a strategic vision for our province and is committed to working with residents to make things happen. It won't be easy, and there will be times that we will need to adjust as new opportunities and obstacles arise, but what won't change is our shared determination to do better and to be better.

Over the past year there has been measurable progress made, and there is much more work to be done to realize New Brunswick's full potential. Your government is more motivated than ever to continue listening to you, collaborating with you, making change, and putting in the hard work to serve all New Brunswickers and create the brighter future you deserve. Thank you.