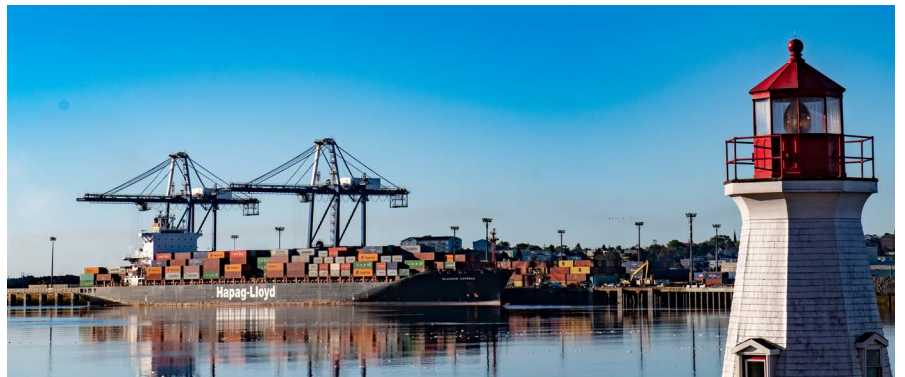


TAKING ACTION

Building a Stronger New Brunswick



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

OCTOBER 17, 2023

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



Speech from the Throne

Third Session of the 60th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick

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**Third Session of the 60th Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick
Speech from the Throne**

Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, and the people of New Brunswick, welcome to the third 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 and we strive for respectful relations with all the people of this province.

This session begins at a time of growth and diversity for our province, as people from across Canada and the world are discovering the many ways New Brunswick offers opportunity and an attractive quality of life.

While much makes our province special, it is New Brunswickers who make it unique, who work together, and support one another. While at times, divides can surface, they are not insurmountable. New Brunswickers have shown time and again that they are resilient, and that they care deeply about each other and our communities.

At this time of conflict in Israel, when we mourn the loss of innocent lives and pray for everyone affected by this unthinkable violence, we are all the more grateful for the peace and safety we enjoy here at home.

We begin today's session by recognizing some of the inspirational individuals who are making a positive impact on the world around them.

Congratulations / Recognition

Several New Brunswickers have had noteworthy recognition and achievements over the past year.

In May, New Brunswickers came together across the province to celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, a significant moment in the history of Canada and New Brunswick. We congratulate the over 3,000 New Brunswickers who were awarded the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal over the last year.

We congratulate Joanna Bernard from Madawaska First Nation for her appointment as the interim national chief of the Assembly of First Nations.

We extend congratulations to the athletes who represented New Brunswick at the 2023 North American Indigenous Games in Halifax.

Congratulations to Bradly Nadeau of St. Francois-de-Madawaska who was drafted 30th overall in the first round of the 2023 draft by the Carolina Hurricanes.

We congratulate the recipients of the 2023 Turnaround Achievement Awards which recognize students in grades six to 12 who have demonstrated success in personal and academic efforts.

We congratulate Jolene Johnson of Tobique First Nation for being one of four Canadian recipients of a Stacy's Rise Project grant, which helps women entrepreneurs.

Congratulations to the New Brunswick athletes, coaches, and officials who represented Team Canada at the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin.

We congratulate the teams behind the Area 506 Waterfront Container Village in Saint John, and the Mi'kmaq Heritage Path Tour at the Elsipogtog Mi'kmaq Cultural Centre in the Elsipogtog First Nation for winning awards at the 2022 Canadian Tourism Awards late last year.

Congratulations to the winners of the 55th annual NB Export Awards for their significant contributions to the provincial economy, including Corey Nutrition Company Inc., NorthTaste Flavourings Ltd., Bulletproof, Chinova Bioworks, Passiv Inc., Marshall Canada, and SHIFT Energy Inc.

Congratulations to the brewers recognized at last year's Annual Canadian Brewer's Choice Awards. Andrew Estabrooks of Foghorn Brewing in Rothesay was recognized with Brewer of the Year, and Tire Shack Brewing in Moncton earned the Brewery of the Year award.

Congratulations to the athletes who represented New Brunswick at the ninth Francophonie Games in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Congratulations to the authors recognized at the New Brunswick Book Awards 2023 by the Writer's Federation of New Brunswick: The Mrs. Dunster's Award for Fiction was awarded to Lee D. Thompson from Moncton; the Fiddlehead Poetry Book Prize to Sue Sinclair of Fredericton; the Writer's Federation of New Brunswick Nonfiction Award to James Mullinger of Saint John; and the Alice Kitts Memorial Award for Excellence in Children's Writing to Kelly Cooper of Sussex.

Six New Brunswickers were recognized as part of the third annual Minister's Awards for Excellence in Championing Gender Equality. VIVE awards were presented to: Everyday Champion – Abby David of Fredericton; Business Champion – Natasha Dhayagude of Fredericton; Community Champion – Hélène Savoie-Louis of Saint John; Community Champion – Louise Imbeault of Moncton; Youth Champions – Caroline Stephen and Kate Palmer of Rothesay; and Government Champion – Stephanie Sanford of Fredericton.

Congratulations to Service New Brunswick's Energy Management Team who were awarded the Institute of Public Administration of Canada Innovation Award in September for their work in helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in provincial buildings.

Two New Brunswickers were appointed as Members of the Order of Canada. Normand Caissie of Richibucto was appointed for his innovative entrepreneurship and generous philanthropy; and Léo-Paul Pinet of Bertrand for his decades of community service.

In September, we celebrated our unique status as Canada's only officially bilingual province by joining the federal government and other organizations across the country in recognizing Official Languages Day. We continue to work together in our province to strengthen ties between our two linguistic communities, supported by the new Secretariate of Official Languages.

Condolences

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

We honour long-time MLA and cabinet minister Omer Léger who was first elected in 1971 and served several terms, representing his home region and the Acadian community. Léger returned to his profession of insurance agent with Assomption Vie following his political career, but never stopped being an advocate for his community.

We remember Daniel “Dano” Omer LeBlanc, an artist, poet, musician, and filmmaker based out of Moncton best known for creating Acadieman. His art was enjoyed by all New Brunswickers, and beloved by the Acadian community for the representation and recognition of their culture.

Acadian actress Viola Léger will be fondly remembered for her role as La Sagouine, a beloved character she played over 3,000 times in both French and English between 1971 and 2016. Viola started her own theatre company as well as the Viola Léger Foundation to support Acadian actors/actresses and productions. She also served in the Senate from 2001 to 2006.

Tim Steeves, a writer and comedian from Sussex, will long be remembered for his humour and quick wit, and for his contributions to the Canadian comedy scene, including *The Rick Mercer Report* and *This Hour has 22 Minutes*.

We honour Colin Hume, the NB Power lineman who tragically passed while working to restore power in the Moncton region in January. Colin is remembered by his family and community for his bright smile and approachable nature. Colin grew up and resided in Ritchie, where his presence is dearly missed.

The world remembers Harrison Gilks of Fredericton, who succumbed to his battle with cancer earlier this year at only 18 years old. Harrison shared his story with hundreds of thousands around the world as he documented his bucket list on social media. Harrison was an athlete, a kind soul, and an inspiration to many.

We honour Order of New Brunswick recipient Marjorie “Mardi” Cockburn for her lifelong service to the province. She will be remembered for her devotion to her family and community, her love of reading, theatre and travel, and her work with many organization.

Introduction

As this session begins, people across the province are optimistic about our future. Every day, we see more businesses invest in New Brunswick and more people choose our province to build a career and raise their family.

This confidence comes from seeing a province that is strong in its financial management, consistent in delivering additional value to taxpayers, and absolutely committed to delivering on its promises. With a focus on accountability and transparency, your government tracks progress on its stated goals, and since 2020, has delivered on 73 per cent.

Your government is proud to be responsibly managing New Brunswick's debt which currently sits at \$12.4 billion, down \$1.9 billion since 2017-18. This year, service of the public debt costs are projected to be \$75 million lower than five years ago. This gives the province more fiscal flexibility to invest in our priority areas.

Unprecedented revenue improvements supported by strong population and income growth in recent years – in addition to smart fiscal decisions within the operations of government – have contributed to an annual surplus of \$1 billion for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

While New Brunswick is out-performing its peers in many ways economically, our province is also facing challenges in the form of addictions and mental health, access to health care and housing, and in some communities, over-crowding of schools. Furthermore, across the country, rising costs are making it harder for families to make ends meet.

In this session your government will unveil new spending and targeted measures to address these challenges and will remain vigilant in evaluating federal policies and implications on New Brunswickers.

Government Priorities

Your government continues to focus on key priorities that they are advancing through an affordable, responsive, and high performing government, including:

- Energizing the Private Sector
- Vibrant and Sustainable Communities
- Dependable Public Health Care
- Building a Better Education System
- Environment

Energizing the Private Sector

One of the first steps taken by your government was to launch a pro-growth agenda to energize New Brunswick's private sector. The economic development strategy, *Closing the Gap in One Generation*, has focused efforts on closing the prosperity gap between our province and the rest of the country.

This strategy is delivering significant improvements in population growth, private investment, employment levels, exports, and productivity gains.

New Brunswick's population continues to grow to record highs with over 847,000 people living in the province. This is fuelling our economy with skilled labour and ensuring we can meet our future workforce needs.

Our province is also becoming more attractive to private investors. Robust investment in the private sector is anticipated to lead New Brunswick's capital expenditures in 2023, increasing by 4.1 per cent to \$2.8 billion, the highest level reported since 2008. As a result, the private sector is expected to represent 62.9 per cent of total provincial investment in 2023, up from 53.4 per cent in 2016.

Another sign of our competitiveness as a province is that once again, WorkSafeNB has reduced the average annual assessment rate, set at \$1.18 per \$100 of assessable payroll for 2024, down from \$1.31 in 2023. This rate is the lowest average rate in Atlantic Canada and the second lowest in the country, providing employers with another reduction in costs as they grapple with rising interest and inflation rates.

To ensure New Brunswick remains attractive and competitive, in this session, your government will consider additional improvements to the *New Brunswick Income Tax Act* and the *Real Property Tax Act*.

By attracting new private sector investment, employment has grown substantially in the province. This is the 20th consecutive month the province has seen a year-over-year increase in the labour force.

Your government has implemented important supports for thousands of newcomers and displaced Ukrainians with immigration navigator services, job readiness training and cross-cultural training for employers.

At the end of September, a total of 1,753 nominations were issued to international students in 2023, an increase of 42 per cent over 2022. The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour refreshed priority occupations in the province to grow registered apprentices in trades for both manufacturing and construction, with a goal of 21 per cent growth by October 2024. Your government will also establish a New Brunswick Red Seal trades office overseas to pre-qualify and recruit priority residential construction occupations.

The *Fair Registration Practices in Regulated Professions Act* was introduced to help internationally educated people practice their professions in New Brunswick sooner by providing the minister with better oversight of regulatory bodies who register them.

Not only are more people working in our province, wages are increasing. Average hourly wages in New Brunswick have risen 23.6 per cent since the first quarter of 2020.

Your government increased minimum wage to \$14.75/hour, helping approximately 19,000 New Brunswickers, and tied future increases to the cost of living with the next increase scheduled for April 2024. As well, they successfully negotiated 19 collective agreements with unions within the wage mandate of government. While ensuring fair wages, your government is also looking at ways to transform how government can make better use of existing resources to deliver better service for New Brunswickers.

Another indicator of our province's growth is exports.

Your government promoted the New Brunswick Food Basket around the world for a total value of \$2.57 billion of agri-food and seafood exports in 2022. The farming sector generated a record \$1.1 billion in revenues in 2022, the highest in Atlantic Canada.

Your government continues to create a more business-friendly environment by reducing red tape. Since 2019, more than \$100 million in regulatory burden to business has been eliminated.

Your government is also supporting local businesses through the New Brunswick First Procurement Strategy and Action Plan. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, more than 81 per cent of the value of goods, services and construction contracts were awarded to local suppliers. This represents roughly \$2.3 billion in contracts, a contribution of \$1.1 billion to the province's gross domestic product, and \$133.4 million in employment income.

Opportunities New Brunswick is accelerating investment and growth by helping companies increase their payroll, grow exports and embrace productivity. In 2022-23, they helped fund 15 productivity improvement projects with a projected total capital investment of \$47.4 million.

With new offices in India and France, they are opening up new markets for local firms. They are also developing a Sustainable Economic Development Action Plan, which will align support for businesses and industries as they prepare for a low carbon future.

Infrastructure is critical to keeping businesses and our economy moving. Numerous transportation and infrastructure projects are currently underway, supported by your government's three-year transportation capital investment plan, *The Road Ahead*.

In addition to modern transportation links, a strong economy requires robust cellular and internet coverage, which is why your government will increasingly use procurement decisions to exercise buying power to work with telecommunications companies on rural broadband and cell service enhancements.

A NEW ENERGY FUTURE

Climate change and the need for decarbonization are creating an unprecedented energy revolution.

Your government's priority is to help residents adapt to this changing environment and ensure they always have access to secure and reliable energy at an affordable price.

New Brunswick has reduced more greenhouse gas emissions since 2005 than any other province. Furthermore, New Brunswick's electricity grid is up to 80 per cent clean.

Your government has taken several steps to help New Brunswickers with energy affordability, including a new \$30 million commitment this year to support the adoption of heat pumps and reduce the waitlist that NB Power is working through. That's in addition to the \$70 million already announced. Your government is also working with NB Power's board of directors to deliver cost savings, and it has extended the deadline for NB Power's debt reduction targets to give the utility some flexibility in setting rates for New Brunswickers during these challenging times.

In this session your government will release its integrated energy strategy to provide a pathway for New Brunswick to transition to a cleaner future while also positioning our province to be an energy gateway for economic development.

Working in collaboration with NB Power, specific targets will be established for wind generation and solar to continue to diversify the province's energy mix.

The growth in wind and new energy sources like hydrogen and small modular reactors offers investment opportunities for First Nation communities as well as attracting new business investment and job creation.

Interprovincial connectivity will be strengthened with Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, and regulations will be introduced to support new technologies and New Brunswick's evolution as an energy leader.

Vibrant and Sustainable Communities

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

As promised, your government has modernized the local governance system, reducing 340 local government entities to 89, and in doing so, gave an additional 35 per cent of New Brunswickers elected representation.

Over 10 years, your government will fund \$60 million through regional service commissions to support local economic development, labour force development, and newcomer retention services.

HOUSING

Recognizing the challenges facing New Brunswickers in need of affordable housing, your government re-established the New Brunswick Housing Corporation.

While currently there are almost 5,000 housing units under construction, the highest level on record going back to 1990, investment in residential building construction must continue to meet our growing needs.

In June, the *NB Housing Strategy: Housing for All* was launched and work is underway to implement the strategy's 19 action items.

Partnerships for housing developments will be key to solving our housing crisis. A recently announced partnership with Habitat for Humanity provides for a capital investment of \$70,000 per unit for up to 10 new homes per year.

As well, a development agreement with Neqotkuk First Nation will provide more than \$22 million over five years to support housing and road repair.

To help develop more subsidized housing units across the province, the funding provided to non-profits to build a one-bedroom was raised to \$77,000 from \$70,000.

Furthermore, an additional \$15,000 per unit is now being provided to develop accessible units built within mixed-income buildings.

To further encourage private investment in housing, your government established a three-year period to phase in the assessment values on newly constructed

apartment buildings with two or more rental units and existing buildings undergoing refurbishment resulting in additional rental units.

The *Residential Tenancies Act* was amended to provide better protections for tenants and landlords.

A new Rent Bank will provide \$3 million over the next two years to support renters with small, short-term loans to reduce the risk of eviction due to overdue payments of utility bills.

In this session, your government will introduce a legislated spike protection mechanism for all qualifying properties for the 2025 taxation year. This will ensure continued permanent protection for property owners following the temporary 2024 property tax relief program by limiting annual assessment growth for property taxation purposes to 10 per cent for all qualifying properties in New Brunswick.

Your government also recognizes the unique pressures on seniors with fixed income and will be introducing new measures to make life more affordable. In this session the Low Income Seniors Benefit will be increased. As well, the percentage of household income required to fund residential care for a spouse or partner is being reduced to allow more income to stay with the individual who continues to live at home.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

Your government understands that for people to truly feel at home, they need a safe place to live. That is why an additional \$52.4 million was invested in the 2022-23 Budget to reduce crime by improving policing, public prosecution, and inspection and enforcement.

These investments are producing results, including 457 weapons seized, 245 drug seizures, 1.5 million cigarettes seized, \$1 million in cash seized from traffickers, 462 arrests, 29 dispensaries shut down, and more than 110 drug houses vacated.

In July, it was announced that Grand Lake has been chosen as the site for the province's new correctional facility. This new facility is necessary for the safety of inmates and the people who work there.

By the end of this fiscal year, every inmate in every provincial jail will have access to rehabilitative programming. In other jurisdictions, this programming has proven to be effective in reducing the number of inmates who return to jail after being released.

Your government has authorized red light cameras, photo radar and higher penalties for extreme speeding. They have instituted mandatory coroner inquests for people who die in custody, or due to mental health reasons.

Justice and Public Safety officers dedicated to Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods work have increased from six to 41. In all, more than 130 Justice and Public Safety officers have received additional training and equipment to work in support of police at least part-time. As well, 80 additional RCMP officers and 30 more crown prosecutors are being hired.

The *Missing Persons Act* has been amended to share information to track persons across jurisdictions.

Your government will empower judges and hearing officers to order treatment for Severe Substance Abuse Disorder through the new *Compassionate Intervention Act*. This legislation is to help, in extreme cases, those individuals who are struggling with addiction and unable to meet their own basic needs. To help them, an intervention is required, one that includes a compassionate approach, and this legislation would set out the parameters on how it takes place.

To improve adult treatment, your government will double the capacity for drug rehabilitation with 50 new residential beds. The program will provide four to six months of detox and rehabilitation programming and has the potential to serve 100 to 140 individuals each year depending on length of stay. Programming will support patients to re-establish ties with their families and encourage social reintegration with skills and tools to help patients cope with everyday life.

Your government will continue to drive public confidence in community safety by: increasing law enforcement visibility and effect in rural communities; increasing training and access to tools, including carbines and tasers and disrupting illegal sale of drugs, cannabis and tobacco products.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Diversity brings important perspectives and ideas to our province and makes New Brunswick a more welcoming place for all of us to live.

We have observed and participated in the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day as a province since 2021.

Your government implemented a five-step Duty to Consult process which provides a whole-of-government approach and ensures that the First Nations consultation process is clear, carried out in a transparent manner and respects the rights of First Nations.

Economic partnership agreements have been implemented with Elsipogtog First Nation and Neqotkuk First Nation, to provide a stable source of funding to help enhance living conditions and economic opportunities. These agreements provide a direct benefit to residents in the areas of housing, infrastructure, employment, and other priorities identified by First Nations.

Your government continues to work to implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Work is currently underway or complete on 27 of the 31 Calls to Action.

Around the province, persons with a disability continue to face barriers that prevent full and equal participation in society. After consulting with experts, your government developed a framework for accessibility legislation in response to the Interim Report of the Select Committee on Accessibility in New Brunswick and work is ongoing.

Amendments were made to the *Employment Standards Act* to ensure minimum wage protection for persons with a disability.

Your government is working to establish a new Disability Support Services Model to provide a single-service pathway for individuals with permanent disabilities.

To better support emergency shelters and help reduce chronic homelessness, \$3.2 million is being invested in 2023-24 and a new homelessness strategy will be released during this session.

Through Women's Equality, your government has committed more than \$4.7 million in violence prevention initiatives, providing funding to more than 30 organizations who offer shelter and crisis support to those experiencing family, intimate partner and sexual violence.

They are also in the process of completing all year-one recommended actions from the *Weaving our Voices Together* report in response to the Commission of the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Your government has reviewed the report on systemic racism and is in the process of operationalizing an actionable workplan based on data that can make an impactful and positive difference in New Brunswick.

The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission has recently reminded residents that we must educate ourselves and question misinformation that stokes fear, distrust, and division. We must never condone violence, intimidation, or intolerance in any form. In order to move forward, it is imperative that we keep communicating in a respectful way and that we show acceptance of one another.

TOURISM RECOVERY AND GROWTH

Tourism in the province has hit record highs post-COVID. Annual room sales in 2022 were 88 per cent of 2019 levels, surpassing our goal of 80 per cent. So far in 2023, room sales are the same as they were in 2019, a 13 per cent increase over the same period in 2022.

The World Juniors highlighted the province's many tourism attractions on the international stage, resulting in over 4,000 visitors and \$8 million in overall economic activity in the province.

Over the last year, visits from the United States are up three per cent and overseas visitation is up 44 per cent.

The connector road between Alma and St. Martins was opened, making exploring the Fundy coastal region easier. As well, the Vaughan Creek Covered Bridge opened to provide residents and visitors an improved transportation link between Fundy Trail Parkway and St. Martins.

As part of The Invitation, \$1 million was invested in festivals and events this year, with over 80 festivals and events supported this summer.

Your government has invested \$5 million in the film sector, supporting 44 film productions to-date, the largest number of projects ever seen in the province.

Your government is reviewing the highway commercial signage regulation under the *Highway Act* to modernize the process and criteria to better serve local businesses and tourism operators.

Significant progress has been made towards the reinvention of the New Brunswick Museum to securely preserve and showcase our province's natural and cultural history for the future.

Your government recognizes the importance of tourism to our provincial economy and will continue to strive to position New Brunswick as the top destination in Atlantic Canada.

Dependable Public Health Care

New Brunswickers have every right to expect excellence from the health-care system in this province. By implementing a patient first strategy our health care providers will provide patients with the option of accessing care anywhere in the province with the goal of being treated sooner. Through utilization of our entire network, we can provide the best health care in the country.

Your government has invested historic levels of funding of nearly \$3.6 billion in health care and developed the Provincial Health Plan to stabilize the system and position it for long-term sustainability. They are taking action to break down silos and finding opportunities to do things differently to create an innovative system that always puts the patient first.

The challenges we face can seem numerous, but we have experienced several successes.

One-at-a-Time Therapy was implemented in 14 Canadian Association of Mental Health centres plus three satellite offices throughout New Brunswick, resulting in a 62 per cent decrease in the number of people on a waitlist, and providing same-day access to services.

Fifty-one new mental health full-time positions have been funded for emergency rooms to provide immediate response in times of crisis. As well, the addictions and mental health helpline has diverted 88 per cent of crisis calls from emergency rooms since March 2023.

The Centre for Hope and Harmony, a new addiction treatment facility managed by the Vitalité Health Network in Campbellton, is now open. The centre is part of a \$24.5 million effort to improve access to detox programs and concurrent disorder treatments for those who are struggling with addiction.

Access to primary health care has also been improved. Since the NB Health Link program was launched, more than 40,000 patients have registered.

The launch of the MyHealthNB health portal has supported the enrollment of more than 225,000 New Brunswickers who are now able to access their vaccination records, blood test results, prescriptions and diagnostic imaging analysis. Putting more information in the hands of residents to enable them to better manage their own health-care needs is a priority for your government.

The gap between new hires and exits continues to widen. Gains are being seen across professions, with a net increase of 100 doctors since 2018. This year alone, extensive recruitment efforts have resulted in 28 doctors and 425 nurses being recruited. Your government is working to create a credential recognition fund and process for specific internationally educated health-care professionals.

Through the Step Up to Nursing program, 62 students enrolled can now work in the health-care system while attending school. There is also increased capacity for those interested in pursuing nursing thanks to a partnership with Beal University in Maine that allows up to 100 New Brunswick students to enroll in its bachelor of science in nursing program in 2023.

Your government created the *Health Facilities Act* to enable the health system to provide surgical services outside of a hospital.

To help ensure we have a more connected health-care system in the province, your government is working to decrease the percentage of doctors working in a solo practice model. It has also expanded the use of virtual appointments for rural health care.

Your government has re-introduced the emergency medical technical training program to help ensure more ambulances are on the road, with 19 emergency medical technicians trained to date.

Enhanced clinical care is being provided in over 100 special care homes to reduce rates of hospital admissions, emergency room visits and non-emergency 911 calls, impacting more than 2,000 seniors. The mobile x-ray service has also been extended provincially to long-term care residents.

Investments continue to be made to support seniors so they are able to age in place. The Nursing Home Without Walls model has been expanded to 14 more locations and will hit 20 by December. As well, a pilot project to enhance clinical care provided in adult residential facilities has been implemented in 102 locations, with more to come.

Building a Better Education System

One of the best things we can do for the future of our province is to invest in the education of New Brunswickers, starting with our earliest learners.

Your government has amended the *Early Childhood Services Act* and implemented the Federal-Provincial Early Learning and Childcare Action Plan to create 550 new designated childcare spaces this year and reduced out-of-pocket fees for families on average by 50 per cent. The funding agreement aims to provide New Brunswick families with an average fee of \$10 per day childcare by 2025-26.

Your government has also increased early childhood educator wages by 24 per cent and increased retention by 46 per cent.

To ensure students are energized and ready to learn, your government is investing \$2 million to bring a food program to 135 schools. This will ensure there is a food program in every school by the end of the school year.

Improving early learning outcomes requires a strong focus on the basics. Your government is implementing the Building Blocks of Reading, which is a phonics based system. In the anglophone sector all K-2 teachers are being trained, and literacy support personnel in the francophone system have received training in early literacy education best practices.

In April of this year, an executive steering committee was established to improve the anglophone education system. It is co-chaired with the New Brunswick Teachers' Association and made up of professionals in the sector and community. Meeting with over 1,000 stakeholders, short-term recommendations were developed, many of which are in the process of being implemented.

Your government will also receive longer-term recommendations from the committee, which are focused on larger topics such as classroom composition, recruitment and retention, the role of community partnerships, and recommendations on digital literacy and modern learning tools. The system in New Brunswick must improve, and your government is taking a bottom-up approach, listening to the professionals and parents who guide students every day.

As we work together, your government is committed to creating a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students, while still respecting the role of parents.

Your government is currently adding more resources to aid with classroom learning and create an environment that is safe and constructive for students and teachers. Behavioural intervention mentors are increasing by 25 per cent. Approximately 100 new academic support teachers are being placed in schools to work directly with students to support literacy and numeracy. In addition, your government has been implementing the Positive Behaviours Intervention Supports program to improve student behaviour in the classroom, and this year 15 additional schools have access, bringing the total to 25.

The francophone sector is also focused on improving early learning outcomes through improvements in provincial reading assessment success rates for Grade 2 and 3 students; literacy and numeracy competencies for all grades; and confidence of Grade 12 students in their decisions about post-secondary education or the labour market.

To help students determine what they want to do with their lives, your government is increasing opportunities for educational and career pathway exploration.

The anglophone sector currently has four successful centres of excellence, offering more hand-on learning and exposing students to more career paths in high demand sectors. Two new centres are being launched this fall: French language learning and skilled trades and manufacturing. Plans are underway with the

McKenna Institute and the Research Institute in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence to enhance learning in education with artificial intelligence.

The francophone sector introduced 12 centres for trades exploration in primary schools and engaged over 4,000 students in 89 environmental and climate change action projects.

Your government is also opening career pathways to the skilled trades by re-introducing the teen apprenticeship program for skilled trades careers, building a mobile welding classroom that travels to schools across the province, and by launching a new program in partnership with the New Brunswick Road Builders' Association that offers hands-on learning for operating heavy equipment.

In addition to equipping students with the required skills to succeed after high school, your government is also focused on ensuring that post-secondary education is affordable for students. It has increased the maximum amounts available for New Brunswick Student Loans and New Brunswick Bursary to align with the increasing cost of living and has eliminated interest on student loans.

As your government makes improvements to prepare students for success, it will also improve our infrastructure. Our growing population requires additional funding for new schools. In the coming years, your government will open new schools across the province in Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John as well as Campbellton, Florenceville and Shediac.

Your government reviewed and augmented civics, Indigenous and Black history curriculum in anglophone and francophone sectors to ensure a more inclusive educational experience for all students.

Environment

Your government recognizes the importance of protecting New Brunswick's vast natural spaces for future generations and is proud to have achieved a goal of permanently protecting 10 per cent of New Brunswick's lands.

In August, your government released a new forest management strategy *Our Forests are for Everyone* that aims to restore balance and fulfill a commitment to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes through a focus on conservation, sustainable forest management principles, and economic development.

A new Private Woodlot Sustainability Fund has been created to support private woodlot owners while improving management and silviculture practices, and an additional \$4.5 million was invested in the Crown land silviculture program.

As well, your government improved transparency and accountability from the private woodlot sector by allocating more resources to the Forest Products Commission and are working with stakeholders on improvements to the governance structure of the Forest Products Marketing Boards.

Your government also allocated an additional 5,000 hectares of Crown land to grow the maple syrup industry.

A newly established Ministers' and Chiefs' Forestry Advisory Table will help improve the integration of Indigenous participation into the forest management governance structure.

In 2023-24, \$47 million will be invested to support projects under the Climate Change Action Fund. As well, \$9 million has been allocated for Environmental Trust Fund projects in 2023-24.

Your government introduced New Brunswick's solid waste management 2023-30 strategic plan aimed at achieving a 40,000-tonne reduction in solid waste being landfilled.

They established three extended producer responsibility programs for packaging and paper products, pharmaceutical products and medical sharps, and beverage containers. As well, glass collection drop offs were installed in 31 locations, diverting more than 101 tonnes of glass from provincial landfills each year. They will continue to expand extended producer responsibility programs for additional products.

Your government wants to encourage more New Brunswickers to take part in outdoor activities, such as hunting and fishing. Government has made a number of amendments to the *Fish and Wildlife Act* and its regulations so that more people are able to participate in additional diverse opportunities and by reducing fees for minors.

Conclusion

Your government is proud of what it has been able to achieve in service to New Brunswickers since taking office. They have taken the action necessary to build a stronger New Brunswick.

They have achieved this through strategic planning, regular consultation, and innovative thinking. Working together, we have overcome any challenges we have faced and are moving forward as a province.

This is an exciting time for our province, as we continue to grow, attract new residents and businesses, and show what we are truly capable of.

Your government knows that its work is not done. They are progressing on plans in key priority areas and look forward to continuing to create vibrant and sustainable communities we are all proud to call home.