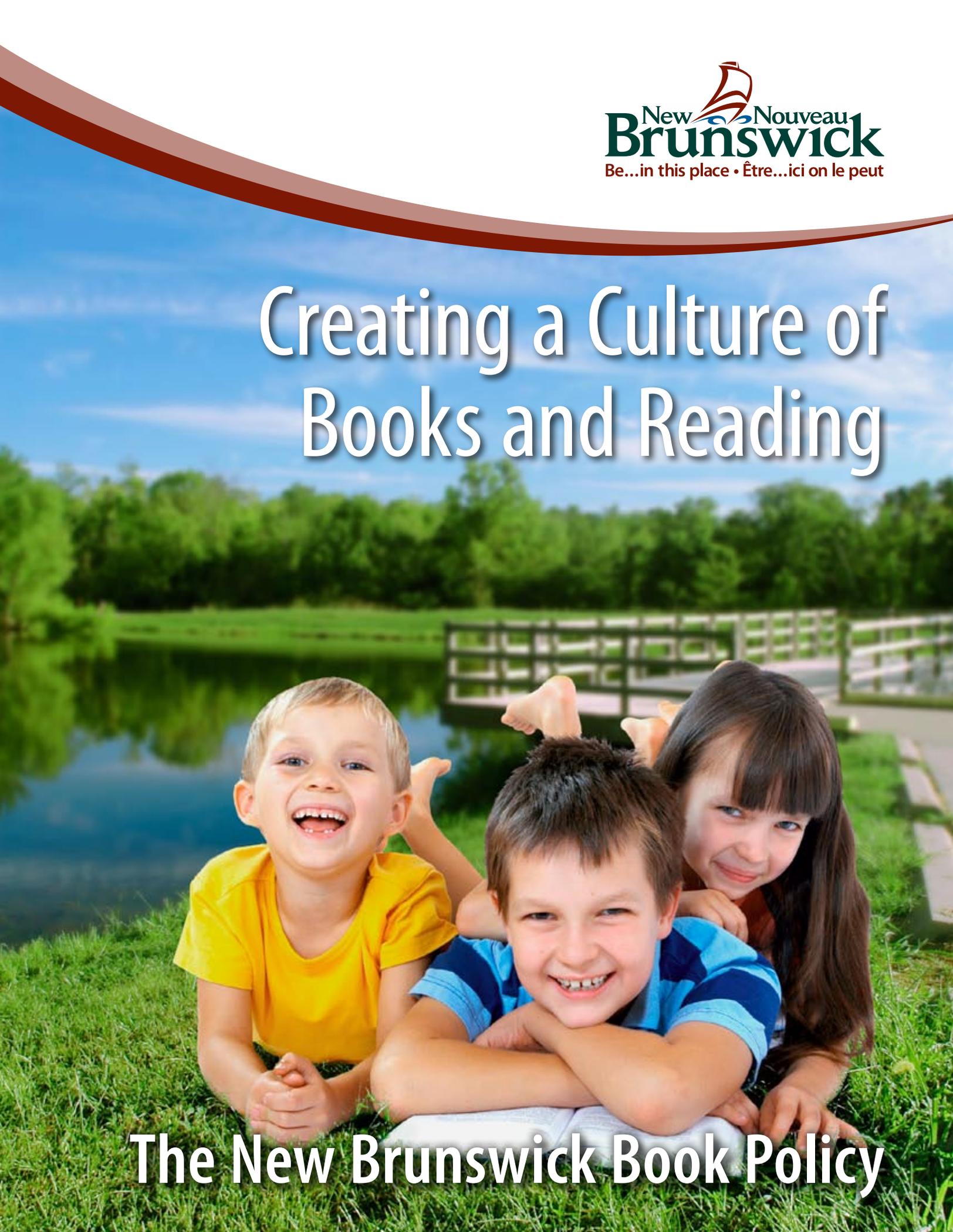


# Creating a Culture of Books and Reading



The New Brunswick Book Policy

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**Creating a Culture of Books and Reading:  
Be Inspired**

**The New Brunswick Book Policy**

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## Acknowledgements



On behalf of the representatives of the cultural community and our cultural partners, it gives the province great pleasure to present the first ever Book Policy for New Brunswick.

By adopting its first Book Policy, New Brunswick sends a clear message to its authors and its book industry stakeholders: their role is key to support the growth and to continue building the identity of our province.

By strengthening our publishing industry, increasing access to New Brunswick books and by promoting books and reading, the Book Policy will assist the New Brunswick book industry in dealing with a global economy that is constantly changing and a technology environment that is forever evolving.

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the participation of representatives from the arts and literary community who contributed to the development of a Book Policy for our province.

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Because of their commitment, this document is a strong base to build upon, a milestone to help us continue our journey in the right direction.

*Hédard Albert*  
Minister

*"Celui ou celle qui détient le discours, celui ou celle qui écrit, celui ou celle qui lit, détient un pouvoir. C'est un fait que lire est la seule école d'écriture. Il n'y en a pas d'autre car c'est dans le plaisir qu'on acquiert un intérêt qui ne peut faire autre que développer le talent et le génie."*

Herménégilde Chiasson

*"Wherever literacy is a problem, it's as fundamental a problem as getting enough to eat or a place to sleep. The native language takes precedence over every other subject of study: nothing else can compare with it in usefulness."*

Northrop Frye

*"Qu'est-ce que le genre humain depuis l'origine des siècles? C'est un lecteur. Il a longtemps épélé, il épelle encore; bientôt il lira."*

Victor Hugo



## Books as Unique Expressions of Our Culture

Was Victor Hugo mistaking his dreams for reality when he predicted that human beings, still passive receivers of the written word, would soon begin to read actively? The fact is that, more than a century after he made this observation, many New Brunswickers are still far from being fully engaged readers.

The Government of New Brunswick wants to encourage the people of this province to become active readers, and it recognizes that books are a special gateway to the realm of the imagination. Reading opens this gateway into new worlds, inviting individuals to create a limitless universe while developing personal values and defining his or her relationships with the world. At all stages of life, reading continues to be a constantly renewed source of personal enrichment. As the late-nineteenth-century French author Jules Renard said, *everything we read plants a seed that germinates*.

In expressing a vision of the world, authors convey a unique point of view, reflecting to their community an image of itself, its own realities and fundamental values. Authors help to generate dialogue, promote better understanding and greater mutual respect, and facilitate change. Literature is a means of communication with the world; it gives access to diverse realities and cultural experiences, and it creates connections that enhance harmony among cultures.

Books are a mirror for their readers, showing them the many imaginative possibilities of their own environment. Each novel, each



short story, each tale, each poem represents an opportunity to interpret the universe that the author suggests to us, and thus, in turn, we become creators. The imaginary places and characters created by our authors inhabit our personal worlds today because they have become real, because they have meaning, because they are true.

Self-expression through literature is essential to a people. Literature helps to build a common identity. It strengthens the sense of cultural belonging and of social cohesion around shared values and collective undertakings. Through this sharing of cultural referents, a population develops a sense of collective pride.

Herménégilde Chiasson, an Acadian author and Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, suggests that *readers gain power: the power to understand the world, to make the world their own, and to create*. Everyone with access to books has the opportunity for self-understanding and fuller participation in the social and cultural environment. Books are an essential ingredient in the acquisition of knowledge and the development

of skills; they accompany and enhance numerous aspects of our lives; and they are indispensable for individual development and personal growth. Books must be accessible everywhere, at all times, to everyone.

Books are not a product like any other. They provide us with a means by which to capture, express and disseminate even the slightest nuances of our culture. As such, they deserve special attention and exceptional status. By

adopting a Book Policy, the Government of New Brunswick recognizes the richness and excellence of the province's literary output and the importance of books as bearers of our unique identity, both individual and collective. The Book Policy represents a social decision: to take the lead in a collective undertaking that will be a priority for everyone, an undertaking that must engage, not only the government, but also society's leaders, its book professionals, and the entire community.

## Introduction

New Brunswick can take pride in its rich and varied literary production. Thanks to Fiddlehead Poetry Books, founded in 1954 and continuing as Goose Lane Editions, Les Éditions d'Acadie, active from 1972 until 2000, and the publishing houses established during the last few decades, New Brunswick books and authors today are read and enjoyed throughout the world. Some of our authors have received prestigious national and international literary awards. New Brunswick authors, their individual works, and our literature as a whole are now studied in the largest universities, presenting a unique vision that enriches world literature. New Brunswick publishers have been successful in launching and promoting our authors; they have invested in the dissemination of the stories that reflect our vision of the world.

Authors and publishers function as cultural ambassadors throughout the world.

The Government of New Brunswick recognizes the vital role they play in the expression and dissemination of our diverse cultural experience. It also recognizes and appreciates the essential contribution of booksellers and libraries, which help to ensure the distribution of books from the province and elsewhere, make books accessible to the public, and promote reading.

New Brunswick is fortunate to be enriched by the contributions of several cultural and linguistic communities. Books are a vital means of disseminating different points of view and enabling well-informed dialogue among people of differing cultural heritages. Each book offers an opportunity for dialogue among communities and encourages mutual respect for cultural expression, thanks to the deeper understanding that comes from appreciation of literary works. New Brunswick authors must be known and



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read throughout the province so they can help to forge links among our various cultures.

New Brunswick's book sector is facing significant challenges. Well funded publishers in larger markets attract many of the province's best authors. In some cases, New Brunswick's independent booksellers are suffering as they are competing with larger national and international retailers. Compared to most provinces, the book market in New Brunswick is limited in size. Consequently, New Brunswick publishers and independent booksellers face greater costs of sales than their competitors, inhibiting their ability to compete on a national and international scale. In order to stop and, more importantly, reverse the erosion of the province's book sector, it is essential for New Brunswick to promote, strengthen, and develop these organizations.

building a society that values knowledge, a culture of imagination, and an openness to the world. The impact of reading on the quality of learning has been shown time and time again. This is why books must be an essential ingredient in any strategy aimed at enriching knowledge and skills.

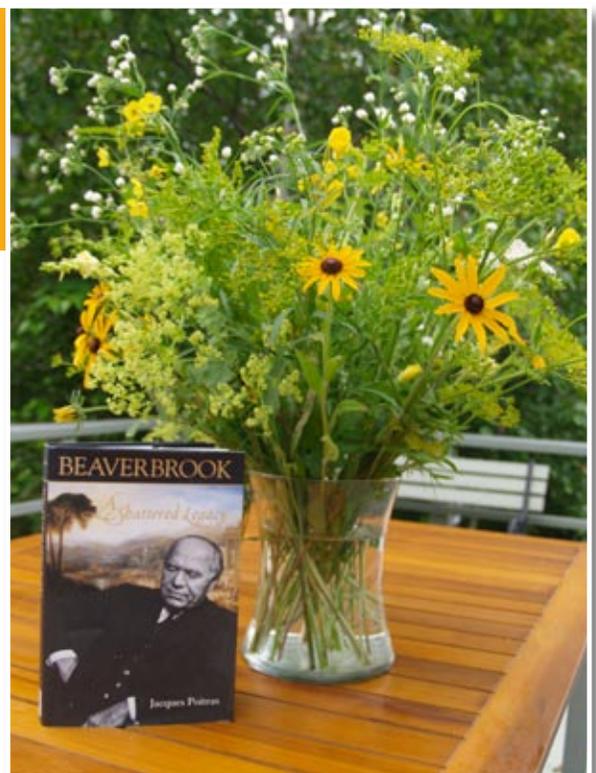
The book sector is one of the cultural industries that is important to our communities. The Government of New Brunswick believes in the need for a strong book supply, and for access to books in every community. Above all, our authors must be recognized for their essential contribution to the expression of our culture, and publishers must have sufficient means to continue to produce high quality books and to sell them in national and international markets. To participate in community enrichment, libraries must contain diversified collections and, to ensure their continuation, New

## Vision

The Government of New Brunswick wants to ensure that books become part of our daily lives.

Books impart knowledge of society, language, and history, and are strong transmitters of our identity and our culture. Books remind us of our origins and allow us to express our own vision of the future; they bring the world to us and celebrate the diversity and richness of human experience; and they enable our stories, our culture, and our history to be passed on to future generations.

The Government of New Brunswick considers books and reading to be critical factors in



Brunswick's independent booksellers must have the means to retain strong book sales within their local markets.

The government acknowledges its duty to put forth a vision to ensure that New Brunswick offers unprecedented opportunities for personal and collective growth and that books and reading must be at the heart of it.

New Brunswick is committed to increasing access to books and reading, and to promoting the development of a literate population. Through exposure to books, we can become better readers and writers; through exposure to books and authors, we develop a passion for reading.

## Values

The Book Policy is based on a number of values:

- Books are a vital cultural product that must be given special treatment.
- Literature gives a voice to the richness and diversity of our cultural expressions; literature affirms our collective identity.
- New Brunswickers are entitled to having access to books, regardless of where they live.
- Books and reading must be part of the everyday reality of all New Brunswickers throughout their lives.
- Authors and publishers are entitled to fair remuneration for their work, and users of these publications have a duty to respect this right.



## Desired Outcomes of the Policy

Celebrating books and reading as being fundamental to our society demands the commitment of the entire population. It requires that reading be integrated into social activities and valued as a unique opening onto the world.

In order to make this celebration possible, the Book Policy fundamentally seeks to strengthen the book production and distribution network in New Brunswick to ensure the production and dissemination of the province's literary works and to increase access to books and reading throughout the province.

## Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of the Book Policy demonstrate the fundamental role of books in the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the province and the values of New Brunswickers. Based on a holistic vision of growth in the book sector, these objectives are complementary. They are intended to consolidate all aspects of access to books and reading for the purpose of enhancing the expression of our culture in writing and of enriching our intellectual environment.



The Book Policy is reflective of those people who choose to include education, well-being, and personal development among their life principles. In this context, the Book Policy will become part of the foundation on which the province of New Brunswick will build a better future.

#### **Objective 1:**

**Foster the development and visibility of New Brunswick books through increased support for writers and publishers.**

There can be no literary works without the creative impetus of writers. Proud of the cultural diversity that comes from a bilingual and multicultural environment, New Brunswick boasts a large number of authors whose high-quality works receive national and international recognition. Writers are an invaluable resource for the province. They help to express our cultural identity, convey the values we hold dear, and mirror the world as perceived and experienced by New Brunswickers.

While there can be no literary works without authors, these works could not take shape without the publishers who invest time and money in publishing and promoting them. A book lives only if it is known and

read. That is the publisher's major task. However, New Brunswick publishers face significant challenges that are inherent in their environment. New Brunswick is one of the smallest markets in the country and its literacy rate is among the lowest. In itself, the province's small population does not provide the critical mass necessary to ensure the profitability of book projects. Moreover, the increased expenses incurred to generate sales outside of the province often make this step cost prohibitive. Together, these factors greatly reduce the long-term viability of New Brunswick's publishing houses.

The government recognizes the tremendous contribution made by New Brunswick publishers in promoting works from the province. It also recognizes the difficult situation facing publishing houses and the need to develop solutions adapted to the specific realities of New Brunswick publishers. The Government of New Brunswick will play a role in developing and implementing measures that strengthen and support the publishing houses in the province.

Strategies for attaining this objective:

1. Encourage creative work among authors and value their contribution.
2. Support the translation of works by New Brunswick authors.
3. Establish and maintain programs that ensure the development of a strong publishing industry.
4. Ensure that public institutions remain sensitized to copyright requirements and to the entitlement of authors

and publishers to fair remuneration for the use of their works.

### **Objective 2:**

#### **Improve access to books and foster reading in the public library system.**

Public libraries are key partners in the dissemination of books and the promotion of reading. Through their services and their role as cultural and community facilitators, public libraries are an important hub around which communities congregate, and with which people strongly identify.

Through their collections, their promotion of reading and local authors, and their involvement in literacy programs, libraries become not only places of leisure, but also centres that offer access to knowledge and a window on the world. Librarians often steer readers towards less-famous authors worthy of being discovered. Through bookmobile services, public libraries come to rural communities, providing people with access to books. Public libraries offer New Brunswickers a common, trusted place to experience and actively engage in a culture of reading and continuous learning.

However, our public libraries and bookmobiles face a challenge in providing access to quality, up-to-date collections that meet the diverse needs of our communities. In most New Brunswick communities, the public library is the only place people can obtain a wide range of reading and resource materials in their official language of choice. Public libraries are one of the few places

people can go to access local, historical New Brunswick and Canadian content.

It is important that public libraries be equipped with quality collections and resources to promote reading, lifelong learning and New Brunswick's cultural heritage.

Strategies for attaining this objective:

1. Make public library services accessible throughout New Brunswick.
2. Enrich New Brunswick public library collections, particularly collections of New Brunswick books and cultural periodicals.

### **Objective 3:**

#### **Introduce measures to ensure increased access to books throughout New Brunswick.**

Access to books requires a strong book supply chain throughout the province. In New Brunswick, only a few communities have independent bookstores. It is impossible for people in many communities to visit a bookstore without travelling, sometimes for long distances.

Independent booksellers are nonetheless key partners in the dissemination of books. Unlike many large surface retailers, independent booksellers invest more in the promotion of New Brunswick books, particularly works of regional interest. The success of independent booksellers is primarily



dependant on the buying practices of the public and also of educational institutions.

Enhanced access to books throughout the province is essential to a high-quality standard of living. It depends on improving the supply chain by strengthening the book industry through its independent bookstores, and their e-commerce infrastructure. This support is vital for the enrichment of our province and for the creation and dissemination of our own cultural products.

Strategies for attaining this objective:

1. Encourage public institutions in the province to continue and enhance book purchasing through New Brunswick's independent bookstores.
2. Explore innovative mechanisms for providing growth assistance to independent bookstores.
3. Support efforts by independent bookstores to take advantage of e-commerce opportunities.

#### **Objective 4:**

**Give a predominant place to books, particularly New Brunswick books, and to reading at all levels of education.**

Schools and, by extension, all educational institutions play a dominant role in developing a culture of books and reading. As part of their mandate, schools must celebrate books as personal development tools and sources of pleasure and entertainment.



Schools must teach students to cherish the power of reading as a means of learning and as a key to success. Creating a culture of reading gives learners the opportunity to develop their inventiveness, understanding, and creativity; it unlocks the imagination, the intellect, and the potential for excellence.

Books help students develop a sense of identity and belonging, not only by introducing them to local authors but also by enabling them to recognize themselves in the pages of books whose landscapes, characters, expressions, and surnames portray a reality that resembles their own. They must learn to recognize the province's outstanding authors and also become aware of Acadie's role in the development of francophone literature. Students must have frequent contact with many local, talented writers who are skilled in the use of words and language. In the books at their disposal, they must be able to recognize our values, our way of looking at life, our accents, our dialect, and our characteristics — in short, all that distinguishes us from others. Throughout their schooling, students must also discover the many career opportunities related to the world of books that are open to them: poet, novelist, screenwriter, publisher, bookseller, librarian, journalist, critic, and others.



We must all work together to create an environment in which children are able to develop to their full potential and in which no effort is spared in the quest for excellence. It is essential to bring together conditions that promote success and offer each child — indeed, each individual, regardless of age — the maximum number of opportunities to learn and develop: that is the hallmark of a society enriched by the personal growth of its citizens.

Strategies for attaining this objective:

1. Work with parents and child care providers to promote the development of pre-literacy skills in young children.
2. Ensure that a sufficient number of books are present in New Brunswick schools to support literacy efforts.
3. Include high-quality literature, including works by New Brunswick authors, in curricula, and integrate these works into learning strategies.

4. Enrich New Brunswick schools' collections, especially those of New Brunswick books.
5. Foster the participation of New Brunswick students in activities revolving around reading and writing.
6. Facilitate access to books for adult literacy learners suitable for their needs.

#### **Objective 5:**

**Encourage New Brunswickers to further integrate books and the joy of reading into their daily lives.**

As previously stated, the objectives of the Book Policy include improving access to books and reading, developing a reading culture, and promoting interpersonal and intercultural exchanges based on written expression. Achieving these objectives will require participation and commitment from everyone. The Government of New Brunswick is committed to working in partnership with the people of New Brunswick to create a literate environment.

Strategy for attaining this objective:

1. Encourage and support initiatives and events that promote New Brunswick authors and works, as well as books and reading.

#### **Objective 6:**

**Make access to books and reading a pervasive and ongoing commitment within the provincial government.**

The government's adoption of a Book Policy, implemented in partnership with New Brunswickers, represents a vision for the future and a promise over the short, medium, and long terms to develop a literate society in which books are present throughout every person's life. Consequently, dialogue

between government departments and agencies, stakeholders in the book sector, and society at large must be encouraged. Such dialogue will ensure that steps taken to produce the desired changes will be coordinated and effective.

Strategies for attaining this objective:

1. Foster dialogue within government to strengthen the book sector and to increase access to books and reading.
2. Improve knowledge of the book sector in New Brunswick by developing a greater capacity for data collection, research, and analysis.
3. Align provincial initiatives pertaining to books and reading with the Book Policy.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms**

Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the implementation of the Book Policy. The government will oversee the establishment of a working committee charged with monitoring the implementation of the Policy and of the Action Plan. This committee will consist of representatives from each of the departments involved and representatives of the literary community.

In three years, the government will evaluate the implementation of the policy and its management mechanisms, and will take the necessary steps to continue carrying out the policy in light of the findings and recommendations that emerge from this evaluation.





## Conclusion

By adopting the Book Policy, the Government of New Brunswick is formalizing its commitment to current and future generations that our people will have ready access to New Brunswick books – particularly those that capture and preserve our unique heritage.

The objectives and strategies outlined in this document give us the needed orientations to strengthen the publishing industry, to increase access to New Brunswick books and to promote and foster reading.

By addressing some challenges faced by our publishers, our independent booksellers, our authors and our public libraries, this document represents an important milestone in New Brunswick's book industry. It is part of the foundation on which the province will build a better future.

Increased access to books provides us with a critical means by which to improve our literacy rates. A stronger book sector and greater literacy will result in long-term economic benefits for the province.

New Brunswickers will also be provided with new opportunities to embrace their culture and heritage by telling and sharing their stories to the world, and by exploring their struggles, their successes, their ideas and the aspirations of previous generations.

The Book Policy was developed in consultation with representatives from the arts and literary community. We must build upon this foundation and continue to work together to ensure that the Policy evolves over time.