

Speech from the Throne 2015

General Opening Remarks

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and all New Brunswickers. Welcome to the opening of the Second Session of the 58th Legislative Assembly of the Province of New Brunswick.

Your government remains focused on three priorities: making the choices that must be made to get our finances in order so we can invest in the priorities of New Brunswickers; growing the provincial economy to create new jobs; and making strategic investments in programs like health and education to make New Brunswick the best place to raise a family.

Governments across Canada and around the world are facing change. Whether these changes are due to shifting demographics or financial pressures, these governments are looking at ways to deliver services in a better and more cost-effective manner to meet the needs of their citizens. Strategic Program Review is the means by which government will deliver on these priorities.

Strategic Program Review is about more than just achieving balanced budgets. It is about making choices that will allow the province to have a sustainable budget into the future and afford the health, education and other social services that New Brunswickers expect and deserve, while creating the conditions for new jobs.

Congratulations

Much has occurred that warrants our recognition since the last session of the New Brunswick Legislature.

On behalf of the Province of New Brunswick, I offer my congratulations to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the New Brunswick Members of Parliament: Dominic LeBlanc, René Arseneault, Serge Cormier, Matt DeCoursey, Pat Finnigan, TJ Harvey, Alaina Lockhart, Wayne Long, Karen Ludwig and Ginette Petitpas Taylor. This team will be working with the provincial government to advance the interests of the people of New Brunswick, Atlantic Canada, and all Canadians, in order to create jobs, grow our economy and support families.

I also thank outgoing Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his years of service to his country and former Members of Parliament for New Brunswick Robert Goguen, Rob Moore, Rodney Weston, John Williamson, Yvon Godin, Bernard Valcourt, Mike Allen, Keith Ashfield and Tilly O'Neill Gordon.

On behalf of this Assembly, I welcome Stewart Fairgrieve, to his first Session as the Member for Carleton. I also want to take this opportunity to extend thanks and congratulate former Premier David Alward for his years of dedicated service to his province and congratulate him on his appointment as Consul General in Boston. Boston has always been a strong economic partner for New Brunswick.

Recognition

New Brunswick is full of gifted and giving individuals who contribute to our cultural fabric, our quality of life and our economy with their multiple talents, leadership abilities and generosity of spirit. I am pleased to take the opportunity to recognize the following New Brunswickers who have served in various ways to move our province forward over the past year.

Camille Albert, Sister Arleen Brawley, Gary Gould, Rev. Dr. Brent Hawkes, Thaddeus Holownia, Carol Loughrey, Sister Adèle Morin, Dr. Réjean Thomas, Marlene Unger and Kevin Vickers were named as members to the Order of New Brunswick.

Mr. Vickers, who was named the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland in January, also received the RCMP Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery and a medal of valour from the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

On the national stage, Sandra Irving of Saint John, Patrick Darrah of Saint John, Russ Howard of Moncton and Serge Patrice Thibodeau of Moncton were invested into the Order of Canada this year.

Warrant Officer Brenda Di Bartolo of Burton, Major Stephen Gallagher of Burton, and Master Warrant Officer Troy Charles Chiasson, Chief Warrant Officer Terry Ronald Serge Joseph Garand, Warrant Officer Suzanne Kavanagh, Chief Warrant Officer Walter Allan Laughlin, Warrant Officer Erica Oliver, Warrant Officer Derek Ashley Thompson, all of Oromocto, were invested as Members of the Order of Military Merit.

We are also proud to recognize our police forces for their courage and commitment in serving and protecting others.

RCMP Constable Ryan Lewis earned a Medal of Bravery for saving the life of a person attempting suicide in Moncton.

Fredericton RCMP Chief Superintendent Wayne Gallant, Moncton RCMP Superintendent Marlene Snowman and Fredericton RCMP Inspector Roderick Shaw were also invested as members of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces for excellence in police work.

Bernard Touesnard of Riverview, Patricia Lafford of Sackville, Samar Effendi of Edmundston, Brahim Benahmed of Pointe-Alexandre, Germain Blanchard of Caraquet, Raymond Chiasson of Shippagan, Rose-Marie Collin of Saint-Léolin, Brenda Daigle of

Miramichi, Bernice Doiron Chiasson of Shippagan, Raymond Gionet of Caraquet and Roseline Paulin of Tracadie-Sheila were recognized with the Governor General's Caring Canadian award.

I am a firm believer in honouring excellence, and again this year, I was pleased to pay tribute to those in our province who strive to do their best, not for recognition or reward, but because it is the right thing to do.

Don Dennison, posthumously, and Roberta Clowater received the Award for Excellence in Land Conservation.

Muriel and Robert Buckley, and Don Bossé received New Brunswick Youth Orchestra Awards.

Lou Duffley posthumously received the Award for Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation.

Bernard Richard received the New Brunswick Human Rights Award.

Frederic Arsenault, posthumously, Fred Beairsto, and the Bathurst Youth Centre received Dialogue Awards.

Bill LaPointe, posthumously, and Fred Beairsto received Awards for Excellence in Aging; and

Thaddeus Holownia, Jules Boudreau and Jacques Savoie received Awards for High Achievement in the Arts.

Richard J. Currie received the Canadian Red Cross 2015 Humanitarian Award and Kyla LaPointe received the Red Cross Young Humanitarian Award.

On the music scene, the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra was bestowed with the Prime Minister's Volunteer Award for the success of Sistema New Brunswick, the orchestra's after-school program for children.

At this year's Music New Brunswick Awards, John and Lisa McLaggan of Saint John, and Tristan Horncastle of Fredericton were triple award winners. David Myles of Fredericton was named Expat Artist of the Year and the Directors' Lifetime Achievement Award was presented posthumously to Marc Chouinard of Moncton.

City Natives, Tobique First Nation, Hero's Last Rite of Fredericton and Les Hay Babies of Moncton were recognized with 2015 East Coast Music Awards.

Brenda Best of Campbellton, James Cunningham of Loggieville, Tammy Morris of Sussex and David Palmer of Fredericton were inducted into the New Brunswick Country Music Hall of Fame. George Allain of Miramichi was also inducted posthumously.

The family of Luke, Bonnie and Lindsay Weaver of Benton were named Trio of the Year for the second straight time at the Maritime Gospel Music Association Awards.

Matt Andersen of Perth-Andover was nominated for a 2015 Juno Award and a Maple Blues Award, honoring the best musicians and performers in Canada. Ross Neilsen of Fredericton and Theresa Malenfant of Dieppe were also nominated for Maple Blues Awards for their contributions to the genre.

Mélanie Massé and Christa Piercey were recipients of the Council of the Federation Literacy Awards.

Line Pelletier of Moncton earned national acclaim as the first runner-up in the MasterChef Canada home cook-off competition.

Ziyuan (Sam) Song of Saint John won first place at the 27th Annual Canadian Chess Challenge.

Monica Adair of Saint John was named the 2015 Young Architect of the Year by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Dominique Doucette of Campbellton was named Miss Canada.

Brooklyn Douthwright of Riverview was named to the Guinness Book of World Records as the Youngest Person to swim the Northumberland Strait.

N.B. River Watch earned a KIRA Award for excellence in innovation in the public sector.

Business leaders David Hawkins, Larry Nelson and Camille Thériault were named to the New Brunswick Business Hall of Fame this year.

2015 is the Year of Sport in New Brunswick with many citizens earning accolades for their participation and dedication to sports.

Edmond Gagnon of Grand-Barachois, John G. LeBlanc of Campbellton, Peter Murray of Saint John, Marc Pepin of Fredericton, Everett Sanipass of Elsipogtog and Brigitte Soucy-Anderson of Bouctouche, were inducted into the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame.

Matt Stairs of Tay Creek was named to Canada's Baseball Hall of Fame.

Gardiner MacDougall was recognized as CIS Coach of the Year for his work with the UNB men's hockey team.

At the Canada Winter Games, Team New Brunswick won its first ever Centennial Cup for most improved performance with 13 medals during two weeks of competition.

Louis Fortin won two gold and one silver in para-Nordic cross country skiing. Scott Ring earned gold in air pistol target shooting. Emily Dean and Delayne Donahue won silver in team air rifle target shooting. Miranda Dedam earned a silver medal in Special Olympics figure skating, the N.B. Women's Short Track Speed Skating relay team took home silver, Alyssa Murphy and Hailey Baisley each won bronze in archery, the N.B. Ringette team and Men's Short Track Speed Skating relay team each won bronze, and Jédrick Imbeault and Maxime Emond, also each won bronze in judo.

Six New Brunswick athletes participated in the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto. Mandy Bujold of Moncton won a gold medal in boxing. Catharine Pendrel of Harvey Station won a silver medal in mountain bike racing. Kate Campbell of Fredericton earned silver in karate and Geneviève Lalonde of Moncton captured bronze in the steeplechase. Jamie Allan of Saint John competed in sailing and Charles Thoms of Fredericton finished fourth in wrestling.

Nathan Cumberland of Keswick Ridge won first place at the 2015 Timbersports Rookie World Championships in Florence, Italy.

David Tatta of Riverview won one gold, one silver and two bronze medals for swimming at the Special Olympics World Games in Los Angeles.

The Purple Pirates Special Olympics Bowling Team in Bathurst Chaleur captured 16 medals at provincial bowling championships in Saint John, while the Miramichi Special Olympics Bowling Team brought home a total of 10 medals.

Condolences

We pause to remember the individuals we have lost over the last year.

We pay our respects to the victims of the recent attacks in Paris, France.

We also pay tribute to Gilbert Finn, New Brunswick's 26th lieutenant-governor and also a Member and later an Officer of the Order of Canada, who left a legacy in the development of institutions which continue to act as cornerstones to the Greater Moncton community and to the province.

We pause to remember J. Alfred Roussel, former MLA for Restigouche West, who also served his community in a leadership role as an RCMP officer, the Edmundston Fire and Police Chief and mayor of Saint-Quentin.

We remember Marc Chouinard, executive director of the Capitol Theatre in Moncton and a Member of the Order of Canada, for his steadfast promotion of Acadian culture.

We pay tribute to Sgt. Andrew Joseph Doiron of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment who died while serving in Iraq.

We also pay tribute to RCMP Constable David Wynn who died in the line of duty.

Also in our thoughts is Pte. Samuel Nadeau a Canadian Armed Forces reserve soldier who died during training at CFB Gagetown.

We remember Robert (Bob) Kenny, a Fredericton lawyer and philanthropist, for his work with the United Way, the University of New Brunswick, the Canada Winter Games, the East Coast Music Awards, as well as his volunteer work.

We pay tribute to Dr. Marie MacBeath, a professor of chemistry at the University of New Brunswick and the founder of Fredericton's Science East Centre.

We celebrate the life of Robert Scott, a professor of electrical engineering and the founder of University of New Brunswick's Institute of Biomedical Engineering, who led a team of researchers that achieved world leadership in the development of electronic control systems for artificial limbs.

We celebrate the life of James (Jim) Morrison, former editor of the *Bugle* and *Telegraph-Journal*.

We remember Kenneth Taylor, Ambassador to Iran, who was awarded the United States Congressional Gold Medal for his role in helping six Americans escape from Iran during the hostage crisis.

We pay tribute to Kathleen (Kaye) Rafferty, former president of the Moncton East Liberal Association and the Moncton East Women's Liberal Association, who volunteered for many years with the Open Hands Food Bank.

Getting our Fiscal House in Order

The upcoming legislative session will mark the end of the decision phase of the Strategic Program Review initiative. With the help of New Brunswickers, your government plans to restore a sound fiscal foundation in this province. Governmental expenses have exceeded provincial revenues for close to a decade now. The situation is not sustainable.

Without action, our province faces mounting debt. This will increase our interest payments which already represent our province's fifth-largest expense after the departmental budgets of Education and Early Childhood Development, Health, Social Development, and Transportation and Infrastructure. We are now spending more on servicing the debt than we are investing in post-secondary education. The combined budgets of Environment and Local Government, Energy, Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, Tourism, Public Safety, and Justice do not add up to what we spend on interest for our debt annually.

If we keep going down the same path and our credit rating were to be downgraded, as a result our interest costs would go up. This would hinder your government's ability to invest in education and health care.

Your government is not the first to sound the alarm bell. But until now, no one has really heeded that alarm. The inability for a government to balance the books since 2007 means the problem has compounded. That has to end. As a province we need to make better choices.

Strategic, long-lasting changes are necessary to protect the province's future. A significant challenge for government is balancing revenue and spending measures to address the fiscal challenge, with the need to grow the provincial economy. Creating the right conditions for job-creation must be a priority and Strategic Program Review is about setting the table so we can invest in the priorities of New Brunswickers such as jobs, health care and education. Instead of tinkering around the edges, significant choices need to be made in the upcoming budget. Your government needs to bring deficit budgeting to an end. All the decisions that will get our province there will be presented to New Brunswickers in this session.

It is important that all of the New Brunswickers who have taken time to participate in Strategic Program Review and provide input into the choices we must make as a province are acknowledged.

More than 1,200 New Brunswickers took part in 14 public sessions and more than 100 attended 5 regional stakeholder sessions. Twenty-eight groups hosted their own meetings on Strategic Program Review. Sixty-seven community and business leaders from around the province took part in a Strategic Program Review forum. Youth were engaged in sessions hosted by 21 Inc. and 550 students from the Francophone and Anglophone education sectors also submitted ideas.

More than 9,000 New Brunswickers also submitted ideas online, by email or regular mail. It is important that we thank New Brunswickers for recognizing that a problem exists, and why it needs to be fixed once and for all.

This examination of government spending and the ideas brought forward through the consultation process has identified opportunities where we could better focus programs and services, streamline operations and transform the way we do business to achieve better results and meet the needs of New Brunswickers. The ideas and suggestions raised during the consultation processes also identified opportunities to increase revenues.

Changing how government works will lead to better, more effective programs and services that have improved outcomes. By taking control of change, your government will be able to operate with greater efficiency and ensure expenditures are invested in our collective priorities of jobs, health care and education.

Your government has made some early decisions under Strategic Program Review that were part of the 2015-16 Budget that found \$115 million in savings.

Those savings included swearing-in the smallest cabinet in 50 years, a pay cut of 15 per cent for the Premier and 10 per cent for members of the Executive Council, freezing MLA salaries for the eighth consecutive year, freezing funding levels for officers of the Legislative Assembly, reducing the numbers of senior civil servants, and centralizing some government services.

Your government created a new centralized common services organization to consolidate and modernize the way services are delivered across government and to regional health authorities. The new crown corporation, Service New Brunswick, was proclaimed on October 1, 2015. It is responsible for shared services including finance, information technology, and procurement. The business case estimates an annual savings of more than \$42 million by 2020. This is a great example of how government can do things better, smarter and more efficiently.

It is also an example of how as a government we first need to look at our own operations to eliminate waste and do things in the most cost-effective way. Your government recognizes that we all have a role to play in making the decisions necessary to get New Brunswick back on its feet financially and live within our means.

There are opportunities to make services better and more suited to the realities of our province by eliminating waste, and also by better integrating innovation and technology into how government works and interacts with New Brunswickers. The status quo is not sustainable and changes need to be made for New Brunswick to thrive again.

Strategic Program Review is not about broad cuts that force the public service to do more with less, nor is it about randomly cutting programs. These approaches have been tried in the past and they did not work. Now is the time to transform government by focusing on investing in the needs and priorities of New Brunswick's changing population.

It is time to build a responsive government that is focused on the job, health and educational needs of New Brunswickers now and into the future. Today, New Brunswick has the opportunity to make government more responsive to New Brunswickers, but choices cannot be delayed any longer.

New Brunswick's net debt stands at \$12.4 billion. The amount spent paying interest on New Brunswick's debt each year is greater than the individual budgets of all but four government departments. Our economy is now smaller than it was in 2010 with real GDP in 2014 at \$28.4 billion – more than \$200 million less than the level reached in 2010.

Your government is committed to make changes now to protect services like health and education and to allow us to better focus on job creation. Your government recognizes

that action is required now or else many more difficult decisions will have to be made in the future.

Over the past number of months, your government has been exploring a number of options that would help address the financial challenge. A variety of ideas have emerged since the launch of the Strategic Program Review process in January 2015, and many of them can be found in the recently released report on the choices we face as New Brunswickers. These are ideas that New Brunswickers brought forward. These ideas have been analyzed for financial impacts, economic impacts, gender impacts, children's rights impacts and broader public policy impacts.

Some of the choices contained in this report are a significant departure from current practice and processes, while others would have an impact on a large number of New Brunswickers. Some have large financial implications; some are not so much about the bottom line but about doing government better. The implementation of all of these ideas is not required to right the financial situation in the province but some tough choices will need to be made.

Thank you to those New Brunswickers who took the time to participate in the Strategic Program Review process so far, whether in person, online or by other means. It is now time for us as a province to make those choices on the best way forward to a strong fiscal foundation so we can create more jobs and invest in health and education.

Investing in Jobs

The best way to get our finances on the right track is through economic growth. Job creation continues to be the top priority of your government. To achieve this, your government is working with the private sector to create the right conditions for businesses to start up, expand, and invest, so they can thrive and succeed.

Recently, your government participated in the biggest job announcement ever in New Brunswick's history. An international firm, BMM Testlabs, is adding 1,000 jobs in Moncton and \$75 million to the province's economy. The historic announcement with BMM is but one of the opportunities your government hopes to bring to New Brunswick.

Your government is working to spur economic growth through a diversified approach and strategic investments. The small business tax was reduced, and will continue to be reduced until New Brunswick has the lowest small business tax east of Manitoba. There is a focus on red tape reduction to eliminate barriers to skills training and business. The Small Business Investor Tax Credit was expanded to ensure businesses have access to capital.

Opportunities New Brunswick was created, led by outstanding private sector experience, to be a single point of contact to navigate government. Removing the burden of bureaucracy from these businesses is working. To continue the momentum, as a province, we need to invest strategically in skills training and education. It is a great

way to create opportunity for New Brunswickers, but also ensures job creation and economic growth over the long term.

New Brunswick is seeing results. From October 2014 to October 2015, employment rose by 3,500 according to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. Over the same period, the unemployment rate went down to 9.0 per cent.

Your government has been hosting a series of Opportunities Summits around the province to identify new prospects for creating jobs and economic growth in New Brunswick. The growth opportunities identified through these summits will be reviewed and evaluated for development as part of an economic plan for the province. The Jobs Board will develop this economic plan which will focus on fostering job creation and economic growth in all regions of the province.

Your government will ensure that each department in government will have an economic mandate. The Jobs Board will oversee the implementation of these departmental economic mandates and work with departments to find opportunities for economic growth. In partnership with Opportunities New Brunswick, your government will transition to an 'opportunities-led' model of economic development that supports the departments to achieve these economic mandates together.

The forestry sector continues to be one of the key economic drivers in New Brunswick, providing more than 20,000 jobs across the province, many of them in rural areas. Therefore, your government will continue its work on evaluating and deciding on a course of action on the forestry strategy.

The Minister of Natural Resources has held consultations with more than 54 individuals and groups, including a number of First Nations representatives. The goal is to move forward with a plan which is more balanced and ecologically sound in the near future. Your government will continue to be transparent in this and other sectors, and ensure that New Brunswick's industries are competitive and able to grow and create more jobs and opportunities in the future.

Your government will work diligently on issues related to export of our lumber products by working in partnership with Atlantic counterparts to ensure any future softwood lumber agreement continues to exclude New Brunswick from tariffs and quotas.

Opportunities for economic development and growth in a number of areas related to natural resources will be explored, including opportunities related to crown lands, fish and wildlife sectors, and the maple sugar and blueberry industries.

Your government provided 38 new leases to companies and individuals to make 4,000 hectares of crown forests available to the maple sugar industry through a Request for Proposals. These leases represent an investment of \$25 million in the industry.

Your government recently released a Request for Proposals to enable new and established blueberry producers' access to targeted crown lands for wild blueberry development and expansion. By the summer of 2016, up to 3,800 acres of land will have been provided to producers to begin developing these wild blueberry fields. This availability of new lands for development will assist the wild blueberry industry in becoming the largest global production area.

Fishing and hunting provide enjoyment for thousands of New Brunswickers and also benefit our economy by creating jobs and generating much-needed revenue. More than 150,000 licenses are issued for those sports annually. Work will continue this year on the new e-licensing system so that New Brunswickers have more efficient and easy access to get the licenses they need to enjoy their one of their favorite pastimes in the bountiful, natural areas of New Brunswick.

Your government's job is to create the best possible conditions for job creation. It is a job that your government takes very seriously.

There has been a lot of conversation nationally, within every province, at boardroom tables and kitchen tables, in every city and every community recently about our shared economic challenges. There's no doubt about it, we face challenges. As we are facing our budget challenges together and the choices that must be made, we are also working together on the challenges New Brunswick faces in terms of job growth.

The business community is finding it increasingly challenging to find qualified workers. Your government will grow the workforce through a more focused effort to ensure skills alignment between the workforce and available jobs. Programming will be targeted to support young workers as they start their careers. To ensure that more New Brunswickers have the option to stay at home and build their careers, your government will better promote available jobs now and in the future.

We need to grow our population by keeping New Brunswickers here and bringing them back, and also by welcoming new New Brunswickers. Your government is committed to growing the number of immigrants that settle in the province and has reached out to the federal government to discuss accommodating approximately 1,500 Syrian refugees. These immigrants could be new customers for our existing businesses and fill vacancies with employers that have hard-to-fill positions. They could bring entrepreneurial ideas and skills to our province. This would not only help provide workers for industry now but would also help grow the province in the future.

To give municipalities the powers they need to promote development and become hubs of job creation, your government is committed to working closely with our stakeholders. Your government will continue to work with municipalities to help our communities succeed while looking at ways to collaborate to develop new ideas and innovative ways to grow our economy.

Your government will continue to work with First Nation communities to advance opportunities in the areas of education, training, culture and language preservation, economic development and partnerships. Your government is also committed to facilitate the platform commitments of the Government of Canada aimed at improving service delivery to First Nations as well as opportunities to advance economic independence.

To spur economic growth, your government continues to invest in New Brunswick businesses, people and infrastructure. The Strategic Infrastructure Initiative allows for focused investment in projects that have the potential to encourage economic growth and job creation in the short term, and sustain that growth by supporting the expansion and growth of New Brunswick industry, businesses, and communities going forward.

Your government is supporting other projects, such as the Port of Saint John. As Eastern Canada's largest port, it connects our neighbours and businesses with 350 ports worldwide. It handles an average of 28 million metric tonnes of cargo annually, and with your government's investment of \$68 million, its capacity and impact will only grow.

These investments will move New Brunswick forward now and in future decades. New Brunswickers benefit from the immediate jobs created by construction and also from the jobs that will be generated through improved competitiveness and productivity. Your government works to ensure that every dollar spent on infrastructure provides a solid return in terms of employment and GDP. This is demonstrated in projects like the Moncton Centre, Route 11, the Dieppe Industrial Park, the Lorneville Barge Terminal in Saint John, the Centennial Bridge and many, many more.

This summer, we saw a major private investment of \$200 million at the Irving oil refinery create 3,000 construction jobs in Saint John. As previously mentioned, your government announced the largest ever government-supported job expansion through a historic partnership with BMM Testlabs, a Las Vegas-based gaming testing laboratory.

It is stories like this that remind us that we can seek out new opportunity, work together, and build something great. But it truly has to be a collaborative effort. New Brunswick has opportunities to create jobs from coast to coast, but we will only proceed when we know that our health, water and environment are protected.

Your government supports the Canaport LNG terminal in Saint John in increasing their business case and their exploration of the potential conversion to an export facility. This is good for the economy, it creates jobs and liquefied natural gas can play a role in reducing emissions from other sources of energy. There are also many exciting mining opportunities on the horizon, including the proposed Sisson Mine in central New Brunswick, the PCS Picadilly potash expansion project in the Sussex area and a re-start of the Trevali lead-zinc mine at Caribou Mine.

Your government has also been active in discussions at the national level as strong proponents of the Energy East Pipeline project. An important part of these discussions has been how to create a diverse and responsible portfolio of energy resources that will help meet future demand for Canadian crude oil, reach new global markets and develop new products.

This project would create thousands of jobs in this province and bring tremendous growth for our country. According to a report by the Conference Board of Canada, the Energy East pipeline in New Brunswick would generate \$1.6 billion in GDP growth during the planning and construction, and another \$1.5 billion during the first 20 years in service, for a combined total of more than \$3 billion in GDP growth.

Nationally, it means more than 14,000 direct and indirect jobs in the development phase, and billions of dollars in tax revenue. According to a September 2014 report from the Conference Board of Canada, the project will create more than 2,300 jobs annually and 6,300 during peak construction in New Brunswick.

Of course, all of this must be in a context of responsible development and with our safety, health and environment in mind. Moving oil by pipeline is both safer and better for the environment. Also, it's expected that the direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the transport of oil from Alberta to New Brunswick will be less by pipeline than by rail. This is largely due to the fact that much of the energy needed to transport oil by pipeline will come from low or emissions-less electricity sources, while oil by rail is based on diesel.

Your government wants to be part of the solution and we believe Energy East is a better and safer option that will help meet our shared goal of managing greenhouse gas emissions while safely delivering the oil that millions of Canadians and countries around the world rely on in their daily lives.

New Brunswick is ready to play a key role in this. We have the largest, most sophisticated oil refinery in the country, in Saint John. With a deep-water, ice-free port, we are ideally positioned for energy exports. We have a skilled work force with energy sector experience, and we continue to invest in skills training to meet industry needs. New Brunswick is the ideal geographic location to pursue energy exports.

This nation-building project is about challenging the status quo, redefining the problem and finding a transformative solution. It is also a key factor in addressing the other major challenges governments across the country are facing to provide quality health care, education, create jobs and fix finances.

Innovation is key to job creation. It leads to successes in emerging sectors, and allows our traditional industries to compete on a national and international stage. We need innovative ways of doing the things New Brunswick is already good at, even better. Innovation can also help your government to deliver better services in a more efficient manner. Many of these initiatives will be discussed in the legislative session ahead. A

new focused innovation strategy and approach to help the province become more innovative and competitive in the global economy will be developed.

Agriculture is an essential and historical part of New Brunswick's rural economy. Increasing production and sales of locally grown products creates jobs, advances economic growth and plays a vital role in improving the quality of family life in rural communities. Farmland is a non-renewable resource and is the backbone for all agricultural activities. Your government will complete an engagement and consultation process with agricultural producers and the public, as a first step towards developing an agricultural land policy that will help preserve and recognize the importance of prime agricultural land.

Your government has committed to develop a local food and beverages strategy that will support farmers, producers and processors in supplying more products to the local market and growing their business.

The value of aquaculture production in the province rose in 2014 to \$124 million and is an important contributor to the vitality of our coastal communities, creating the equivalent of 1,150 full-time jobs for New Brunswickers. The province's enterprises have been world leaders in salmon and oyster production and are making strong progress in alternative species and innovative culture methods. Your government will establish a framework to support industry in growing the aquaculture industry to take advantage of new opportunities.

New Brunswick is the second-largest fish and seafood exporting province in the country, accounting for 22 per cent of Canada's exports. The value of New Brunswick fish and seafood exports rose by eight per cent to reach \$1.09 billion in 2014. Your government will revise our export strategies to ensure our enterprises are in a position to increase the value of our fisheries and seafood products and to benefit from the opportunities available from the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union and developing Asian markets.

There is also opportunity with our technology infrastructure, such as the Fibre Centre in Moncton, to connect our region to European markets. Venture capital firms from across the continent are noticing some of New Brunswick's successes in start-ups and the technology sector. To encourage this, your government has invested in companies to support start-ups in early stages of development.

New Brunswick cannot have long-term and sustained economic growth if we are not first protecting our land, water and air.

Just this summer, during the 39th annual conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers in Newfoundland, Premier Gallant joined Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard and their colleagues in unanimously adopting ambitious targets. Together, they set a target of decreasing carbon pollution by between 35 and 45 per

cent below 1990 levels by 2030. By 2050, the goal is to reach 75-85 per cent of 2001 emission levels.

Your government is moving closer to finalizing a new Climate Change Action Plan. It will provide a road map of concrete actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the resilience of New Brunswick to climate change through adaptation efforts. The plan will represent a large step forward to combating climate change and growing our economy in a sustainable manner.

This session, work will begin in partnership with stakeholders and communities to develop a Provincial Water Strategy. The Water Strategy is a comprehensive approach to managing New Brunswick's surface and ground water resources to ensure quality and availability for people, nature and the economy, now and into the future.

Investing in Education

Your government will invest in New Brunswick's priorities by investing more money in education and early childhood development than any other government in history. While efficiencies will be identified to ensure the system operates in the most effective manner possible, all funds saved will be reinvested in the system to better support youth and their families. These investments will be guided by expert-led strategies for education and literacy.

Your government is committed to the development of a 10-year education plan to bring stability to New Brunswick's school system, and the implementation of an aggressive literacy strategy.

By July 1, 2016, a plan will be introduced to chart the course for New Brunswick to become a national and world leader in nurturing the skills, talents and attitudes of children and youth in this evolving 21st century society. Consultation with citizens has included, among other important initiatives, engagement sessions in 15 communities across our province and some of our provinces top teachers, as well as contributions from a non-partisan advisory panel.

The literacy strategy will foster improved literacy skills among residents of all ages, so they are able to participate fully in school, at work, at home and in their communities. The literacy strategy will build on current successes in the early learning and education system, and will also recommend new ways to address this critical challenge.

Your government is investing in New Brunswick's priorities through skills development and programs such as the Youth Employment Fund. To date, over 1,200 positions have been created for unemployed young people between the ages of 18 and 29. The program helps youth to close the skills gap and find the jobs, training and experience they need to find permanent work right here in New Brunswick.

That is why education and skills training is such a sound investment. It is a lifetime return for these individuals, who will go on to thrive in New Brunswick communities. They create and fill jobs, get to stay here at home with their families, and they contribute to building our province.

As stewards of the public purse, your government is committed to requiring greater public accountability for its finances. Therefore, your government will be requiring the province's four publicly funded post-secondary institutions to appear annually before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. This will ensure your government's investment in universities is supporting the province's vision of a relevant post-secondary education system that contributes to the economic growth of the province.

Helping Families

Investing in priorities means investing in programs that will make life better for New Brunswick's families.

New Brunswick's population is aging and the magnitude of that shifting demographic brings with it considerable social and economic challenges. Every province is struggling to address the financial, infrastructure and system challenges associated with an aging population and a growing demand for health care and long-term care supports and services. These challenges are particularly severe in New Brunswick.

Discussions on the aging population are too often framed in terms of the daunting financial pressures and sheer scale of additional investment required to existing infrastructure in order to meet the projected demand for institutional care. There is growing evidence that much more can and must be done to alter the traditional trajectory from an individual's home to a lengthy hospital stay to a nursing home. It is also clear that immediate attention must be given to addressing the growing number of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) clients in hospital beds throughout the province and the associated impact on the overall acute care system.

There has been a lot of discussion on the challenges we are facing as a province and your government will continue to reach out to New Brunswickers for their advice and ideas for addressing these challenges to invest in New Brunswick's priorities.

In joint efforts to find innovative solutions, it is important to build on the work completed to date and to consolidate all of the information and feedback provided by seniors, stakeholder groups, service providers and health care professionals. Taken together, the Home First strategy, the Wellness Strategy and platform commitments related to seniors represent a broad menu of actions and initiatives that are innovative, responsive to the needs identified by seniors, and reflective of the latest research and international best practices.

In light of the immediate attention required to address the challenges associated with Alternate Level of Care clients in hospitals, and the longer-term projected demand and

expenditures for long-term care services, it is critical that all of the actions and initiatives identified to date are considered and prioritized with the objective of arriving at a progressive new strategy on aging that represents a reasonable balance of responsiveness, effectiveness and sustainability.

At the recent Alternate Level of Care Summit, participants were challenged to identify potential options and solutions for alleviating the immediate challenges associated with hospital congestion, reducing wait times, improving access to hospital beds and reducing the number of surgical cancellations in hospitals. It is clear that a transformation needs to occur and will require deliberate and purposeful action in the short-term to address the most immediate challenges.

The mobilization, engagement and involvement of seniors and stakeholder groups through a new council on aging will be instrumental in developing a new strategy on aging that will help guide our collective efforts to achieve a shared vision. Your government has invited those interested in serving on this council to do so. These are the people who will help us develop a sustainable system based on the province's vision for long-term care.

Your government is committed to invest in New Brunswick's priorities by improving access to primary health care and maximizing the use of health professionals and ensuring that all professionals are functioning at their full scope of training and practice.

In 2016, a *Health Quality and Patient Safety Act* will be introduced to enhance the quality of patient care by ensuring that patient safety incidents are properly reported, investigated and addressed. Your government will also introduce Good Samaritan legislation to ensure that off-duty health professionals and New Brunswick citizens are protected from civil liability when they render first aid or assistance to persons in an accident or other emergency situations.

Your government will build on its Atlantic partnership to promote a strong regional voice to engage the new Federal government on health care investment and innovation and a renewal of the Health Accord to address the unique needs and challenges of New Brunswick's rural communities and aging population.

Your government also recognizes the role of first responders in this province, and the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on those who choose this profession. Last session the Official Opposition introduced a Bill concerning this issue that has yet to make it through Law Amendments. A Bill that respects the spirit of that original Bill will be supported by government in the upcoming session.

Your government is focused on making life more affordable by putting more money in the pockets of low-wage earners, the majority of whom are women. One of the ways your government will do this is by raising the minimum wage.

In addition to these increases, your government has amended the *Employment Standards Act* to require a comprehensive review of minimum wage. The first review will be completed by December 31, 2016. In conducting this review, your government will consider, among other things, the social and economic effects of minimum wage rates in the province.

There will be ups and downs, but as a province, we are taking the right approach, making the right investments, and following a strong plan. With the help of job creators, we can work together to overcome our challenges and move New Brunswick forward.

Conclusion

Throughout the Strategic Program Review process, New Brunswickers have identified choices that need to be made to invest in priorities such as jobs, health care and education, and provide the services we rely on sustainably into the future of our province. Your government is focused on making decisions based on these choices to control expenditures and increase revenue measures in this session's budget.

New Brunswick continues to face significant fiscal challenges and deficits. Your government has a plan to change that by building a strong fiscal foundation, reinvesting in New Brunswickers priorities of jobs, health care and education, and restoring confidence in our province's economy.

Over the course of this session, ministers will provide more details regarding the initiatives contained in this Speech from the Throne. This session will also include Capital Budget Estimates and, over the coming days, amendments to a variety of Acts of the Legislative Assembly will be introduced and debated in order to ensure your government continues to improve services offered to the public.

Your government will also provide details on additional policy and program matters of importance to the people of New Brunswick.

Setting New Brunswick on the road to a bright future is within our grasp but there is still work to be done. Decisions need to be made and there are opportunities at our fingertips. Your government is committed to making these with the participation of New Brunswickers. We all have a role to play in making the decisions necessary to get New Brunswick back on its feet financially and living within our means.

By repairing our finances and investing in priorities, we will position New Brunswick for a bright future. If we take action now, we can start down a new path of hope and success. There are tough choices to be made. But those choices will lead to better days ahead.

May divine Providence continue to bless New Brunswick and its residents, and guide this Assembly in its deliberations.