



Office of the Premier

[Home](#) | [Français](#)

State of the Province Address

Fredericton
January 29, 2009

Premier Shawn Graham

Good evening. Thank you, Jamie, and thank you to Brunswick News, which is again sponsoring this event.

I want to welcome everyone here tonight, and thank all those New Brunswickers who are tuning in across the province on Rogers TV.

And, of course, a big thank you to all our sponsors for making tonight possible, and especially to our host, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce...which by the way, in 2008 was named Best Chamber of Commerce in Atlantic Canada...for the fifth year running! (Let's give them a hand.)

I also want to acknowledge CFB Gagetown tonight. Whether they are bringing order to war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, or bringing relief here at home as they did during last year's flood, the contributions and sacrifices of these men and women in our Armed Forces are something we are all grateful for.

I'm glad to be joined tonight by my friends from the Provincial Legislature, as well as some of our federal colleagues.

I want to welcome all the mayors and councillors from across the province who are joining us tonight, in particular, Fredericton city council members and Mayor Brad Woodside. I know Brad would agree with me that this has been a great year for Fredericton.

In 2008, Fredericton was number three on MoneySense magazine's list of Canada's Best Places to Live.

Fredericton is also a 2009 Cultural Capital of Canada.

And of course, what more can we say than: Matt Stairs, World Series champion!

We were all thrilled when our capital city was named one of the Top 7 Most Intelligent Communities in the world in 2008. And this year, our pride is doubled as both Moncton and Fredericton have been recognized. There are only two Canadian cities that made this list, and yes, ladies and gentlemen, they're right here in New Brunswick. That's something to cheer about.

Last week, we signed an agreement with Microsoft Canada. Among other things, Microsoft agreed to assemble a team of international experts and award-winning teachers to work with Microsoft and the province on the design, governance and teaching at two new schools - one being the new Marysville-Devon school.

Tonight I am pleased to tell you that we will be including two other schools in the Fredericton Microsoft Innovation Zone: Devon Middle School and Leo Hayes High School.

With tonight's announcement, even more students and teachers will benefit. We will also explore ways of linking this K-12 Innovation Zone with early childhood education, the wellness complex at Willie O'Ree Place, and the community college system.

Tonight, I want to thank Microsoft for showing confidence in New Brunswick's future.

As many of you may know, I walk to work each morning. And every morning I see my neighbours leaving for work, children heading for school; I see the campus on the hillside, the sun sparkling on the St. John River; I watch the leaves change and drop and emerge again, and I think how blessed we are to be here...in this place.

But , ladies and gentlemen, as blessed as we are...as blessed as we are to be surrounded by family and friends...to be part of our communities that care about one another...as blessed and grateful as we are, today many among us are also anxious and uneasy. There can be no question that 2009 will challenge each of us, here at home, across Canada and around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, since 2006 I've been talking a lot about the three Es. And standing here at the beginning of 2009, in the midst of the worst global economic slowdown since the Great Depression, the three E's go something like this: the economy, the economy, the economy.

Now, so far we've been fortunate here in Canada. Compared to our neighbours, we're weathering the storm reasonably well. But when the world faces a global economic crisis, no one is immune – large or small, developed countries or emerging economies – no one is immune.

Last month, our minister of finance presented an economic and fiscal update that painted a stark picture of the foreseeable future. While growth was reasonably strong and as expected until the fall of last year, slower growth and the impact of the financial market meltdown, along with other factors outside the government's control, all mean we are still projecting a significant deficit for the current fiscal year.

And as we head into our next budget, the situation is projected to become even more challenging, with very little -- if any -- economic growth, and subsequent increased budgetary pressures. And as the minister has stated, the province is facing a large deficit in 2009-2010. That said, our government remains firmly committed to fiscal responsibility, and it is our intent to return to balanced budgets as quickly as the state of the economy allows us to do so.

These are worrying times. And I realize that in times like these, people are looking to government not only to make the right decisions, but to demonstrate leadership -- strong leadership -- equal to the serious challenges we face.

Ladies and gentlemen, I pledge to you tonight that in 2009, providing strong and determined leadership through this economic storm is without a doubt our government's number one priority.

Tonight, I want to talk about where we've been, and more importantly, talk about where we're going and why I believe New Brunswick will do more than survive the challenges ahead. We will come out stronger. In fact, I believe that by making the right decisions now, we will be much better positioned than many jurisdictions in Canada to realize our full economic potential.

Ladies and gentlemen, a couple of years ago we were elected to implement a bold agenda of change to address many challenges in the short term, and set us on the course to self-sufficiency over the medium-to-longer term.

Over those first 18 months, we lowered gas taxes, secured lower insurance premiums, raised the minimum wage, invested record amounts in our roads and infrastructure, increased social assistance rates, increased daycare spaces, and improved care for seniors.

We moved quickly in the short term and we also set about to lay the foundation for long-term transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen, you may recall that, on this very stage last year, I said we would look back at 2008 as a turning point in our province. Because transforming our province's destiny meant changing the way we do things.

And what a year it's been. While some of the choices have sparked heated debate, early results are very encouraging.

First, a look at health care. Today we have a health-care system that clearly puts the needs of patients first, now and into the future.

- there are 107 more doctors working in New Brunswick since we took office;
- we expect another 18 new physicians to establish a practice in New Brunswick within the next two months. And soon we will be training our own doctors right here in New Brunswick with our new medical training programs in Saint John and Moncton;
- there are 140 more nurses today than when we took office;
- midwives have been added to our public health-care system;
- ambulance services have been consolidated under a single public-sector company; and
- last year, we became only the second province in Canada to permit pharmacists to prescribe certain medications.

In education, over 94 per cent of the 113 actions in Phase 1 of *When Kids Come First* have been undertaken, and the transformation of our education system is beginning to take place:

- 691 projects have been approved through the Innovative Learning Fund;
- we've created 61 community schools
- recent Grade Seven literacy scores show a five percentage point improvement over last year's results;
- we've seen a seven-point increase in literacy proficiency among anglophone Grade 2 students since 2006;
- second graders in the francophone system saw their results increase by 10 percentage points; and
- our dropout rate remains at an all-time low of 2.4 per cent.

These children are the future of this province, and they're now getting a stronger start than ever before.

Last year, we introduced an action plan to ensure that post-secondary education in New Brunswick is affordable and accessible. It will give New Brunswickers the education and skills they need to build our economy and make them attractive to employers such as you.

- For the first time we have established a Forum of University Presidents and College Executive Directors who will collaborate on improved student accessibility, the development of a provincial credit transfer system, improved research and graduate studies, increased foreign student recruitment, and improved applied learning and training.
- We are addressing affordability by developing strategies to help students better finance their education and reduce their debt loads.
- Over the next two years we are investing a record-breaking \$160 million in capital investments in universities and community colleges.
- We established 440 new community college seats in 2008-2009, and plan a further 500 seats in 2009-2010. Our new capital investments will add another 1,200 full-time seats in our community colleges by 2011.
- By April 2010, the community college system will be autonomous from government, with two independent structures respecting linguistic duality in our educational system. Tonight I can announce that the head office for the francophone college communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick will be in Bathurst, and the head office for the anglophone New Brunswick Community College will be in Fredericton.
- This new community college system will build on our success. Our college graduates are finding work at historic rates. The 2007 graduating class has a 92 per cent employment rate a year after graduation, and 90 per cent of these graduates are working right here in New Brunswick.

I believe you can't manage what you can't measure. That's why last year I set out four benchmarks for evaluating our performance over the next couple of years, benchmarks that make us more accountable to New Brunswickers. So how are we doing?

- First, we made the commitment that by the end of 2009 we would increase our population by at least 6,000 people. We have made impressive progress towards meeting this goal. The most current figures from Statistics Canada reveal that, despite setbacks in the economy and revisions to Statistics Canada figures, our population continues to grow. In the two years before this government took office, New Brunswick's population dropped by just over 4,200. Since October 2006, our population has increased by almost 2,900. In the last year, the Population Growth Secretariat invested record funds to attract people and provide services that will help newcomers better integrate into New Brunswick. These efforts will continue into the coming year, building on this momentum, so that more and more people will choose to be...in this place.

- Secondly, we announced that we plan on dropping the social assistance caseload by 2,500 over the course of our mandate. From October 2006 to October 2008, the caseload dropped by 1,433. Halfway through our mandate, we are more than halfway to our goal.
- Thirdly, we made the commitment that, barring unforeseen circumstances, the maximum average power rate increase for each of the next three years through 2010 will not surpass three per cent. We maintained that commitment even as Nova Scotia was hit with a 9.3 per cent increase, P.E.I. a 7.8 per cent increase, and Saskatchewan a 13 per cent increase. Despite a year of economic uncertainty, oil prices reaching close to \$150 per barrel, and a major refurbishment project at Point Lepreau, I am very pleased to announce tonight that we will renew this commitment, and NB Power will limit its annual rate increase to a maximum of three per cent for 2009-2010.
- Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we made the commitment that from our last election to the next, we will have created 25-30,000 new jobs in New Brunswick. As of December 2008, employment has increased by 15,800 since the beginning of the mandate.

And while at this point we are on track to meet our job creation goal, it is true that the current economic climate will make attaining it very difficult. No question, there are challenges. However, there are also many bright spots, many New Brunswick success stories.

Take for example, Accreon. You might remember that I mentioned them in last year's address. They had recently been created after the merger of three New Brunswick IT companies and employed 50 people. Today I am pleased to tell you they have doubled - now employing 100 people.

We're home to companies such as SwiftRadius, which took home the KIRA Award for Employment Growth last year, and was named by Progress Magazine as **the** Best Place to Work in Atlantic Canada.

And Chalk Media. Recently, Research in Motion, (makers of the world-famous Blackberry) acquired Chalk Media, based in large part on the mobile technology developed right here in the Fredericton office. I want to congratulate Chalk Media, and I am pleased to welcome Chris Wormald from RIM. Thank you for showing confidence in New Brunswick.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Jim Balsillie last week, and I am very excited about the potential this represents, not only for the ICT sector, but for government as well.

With success stories such as this, our government is confident that our ICT sector will play an increasingly key role in building a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

New Brunswick is also home to companies such as Groupe Savoie up in Saint-Quentin. Thirty years ago, Jean-Claude Savoie and his dad, Hector, bought a cedar shingle mill and Restigouche Hardwood Mill. Early on they lost the hardwood mill to fire, but they didn't give up. They're now one of the largest employers in the region, and more than 500 workers report to work with Groupe Savoie every day.

Another success story is Ocean Pier in Scoudouc. Since its beginnings as a fish-packing plant in 1989, Ocean Pier has seen new opportunities in value-added products, and now, nearly 20 years later, its hors-d'oeuvres and entrées can be found on tables here at home and around the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, laying the cornerstones of self-sufficiency did more than provide the foundation for 20 years down the road. It gave us the base upon which these companies could build, and it gave us a solid foundation on which to stand when the storm clouds began to gather last summer.

Late last year, as the crisis facing the global economy became apparent, New Brunswick moved quickly to respond. This was a time to act bravely, decisively and boldly. It was a time for leadership on the economy.

Leadership such as that demonstrated in December by our minister of finance when he outlined our initial four-point plan to deal with the faltering economy. New Brunswick became one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to outline a responsible and balanced approach to confront these economic challenges. This balanced approach consists of restraint and efficiency in some areas, and targeted and strategic investments in others. Just as all of you must do in your businesses, government too must balance both sides of the ledger.

Tonight I want to briefly update you on that plan.

- First, on the restraint side, an extensive program and service review is currently underway to focus our spending in areas where it's most needed, where it can have the greatest economic impact, and can of course contribute to our overriding goal of self-sufficiency. I have to tell you, this exercise of identifying areas to target for restraint is not very easy, nor is it very pleasant. Tough choices have to be made, but, ladies and gentlemen, they will be made. We also know that government investments need to be focused during an economic downturn, and we believe it is important that our government be there to help and support New Brunswickers during their time of greatest need.
- Second, on the strategic investment side, we're empowering New Brunswick businesses and individuals to be part of stimulating our economy. We might not be blessed with an abundance of oil or gas resources, like some provinces, but we have been blessed with ideas and ingenuity. Government is working to ensure that small, medium and large businesses with solid business plans have access to the funds they need to maintain and create jobs here in New Brunswick. Businesses such as:
 - Nanoptix, in Dieppe, which will create 15 new jobs thanks to a loan guarantee, or
 - Future Alternative Wood Products, which is expanding its value-added operation in Bathurst, and
 - Air Plus Mechanical, in Cap-Pelé, which will use funds from the New Brunswick Growth program to expand its operation and modernize its equipment.
- Third, we have introduced the largest capital budget in New Brunswick's history.

Over the next two years, more than \$1.2 billion in capital investments will be made across New Brunswick. These projects will generate about 6,000 person-years of employment. They'll stimulate the economy and create jobs in the short- and medium-term, and help build the infrastructure necessary for self-sufficiency in the longer term.

And ladies and gentlemen, we have strategically targeted projects with the greatest need and where work can begin virtually immediately. "Shovels in the ground" really means "people at work" and however you want to say it, that's good news for the thousands and thousands of New Brunswickers around the province who will work on these projects.

They'll go to work building new schools and upgrading health-care facilities across the province.

And they'll go to work on important infrastructure projects, including the Princess Margaret Bridge, as well as the Route 8 Nashwaak / Marysville bypass right here in Fredericton.

In addition to these capital projects, the private sector is stepping up to the plate and shouldering some of the risk involved in bettering our infrastructure.

For example, we will undertake a public-private partnership to complete Route 1 as a twinned highway, and to rehabilitate, operate and maintain it from the U.S. border to Route 2. I can tell you tonight a request for qualifications will be coming shortly.

A psychiatric hospital will be built in Campbellton as a public private partnership, providing much-needed new infrastructure at the Restigouche Health Centre. Expressions of interest for this project will be issued this spring.

Last week, we announced the details of the \$50-million Moncton courthouse project and our partnership with CitiGroup. I am also pleased to tell you tonight that the expression of interest documents to seek potential private partners in the building of a new Saint John courthouse will be released tomorrow. With the right partners, we hope to start the construction of this project later this year, with completion slated for spring 2011.

I am also pleased to tell you tonight of the results of the expression of interest for the \$25-30 million construction of two new schools in Rexton and Moncton North.

We have received six submissions, which is an excellent response from the private sector.

The short list of proponents will be selected early in February and a request for proposals issued in March. Construction will start this fall and be completed in 2010 on both schools.

And through a public-private partnership with Shannex, we are building three new nursing homes: in Quispamsis, Riverview and here in Fredericton.

Work is underway on the new \$90-million destination casino complex in Moncton. This exciting project is being entirely designed, built, equipped, financed and operated by the private sector. It will result in more than 770 jobs during construction, and the equivalent of 400 full-time jobs when it is up and running by the summer of 2010.

- And, fourth, we will lower taxes and position New Brunswick as having one of the most competitive tax regimes in Canada, and indeed in North America.

Tonight I want to tell you why this is so important. First, of course, we want to lower personal income taxes for New Brunswickers and reduce the corporate tax burden on companies that do business in our province. In addition, we want to attract ex-pat New Brunswickers back home to be with their families and friends, by creating a more competitive business environment and lowering the tax burden on people living here. We are convinced that lower taxes can create the investment and economic activity and jobs for our sons and daughters to return home and be with their families and friends right here in New Brunswick, right where they should be. And of course, more economic activity means more revenues to maintain and enhance important social services such as health care and education.

Ladies and gentlemen mark my words: our March 17th budget will contain considerably lower taxes for New Brunswickers. How much lower? Well, what I can tell you tonight is that in the first year alone our plan will contain a total tax reduction valued at well over \$100 million.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to be very clear. Leading New Brunswick through these difficult times requires that we all do our fair share. For our government's part, it means making some very tough decisions balanced with strategic investments -- investments that bring not only short-term relief such as jobs and more money in New Brunswickers' pockets, but truly long-term benefits like significantly improved infrastructure and a much more positive investment climate.

And as Canadians we have the right to expect no less from the federal government.

I was encouraged that the federal government promised significant investments in infrastructure and tax relief in its budget tabled on Tuesday. It seems the federal government has taken notice of New Brunswick's balanced approach and is following our lead.

However, I do have concerns about how the funding promised in the budget will reach Canadians, and especially New Brunswickers. Earlier this month at the first ministers meeting, my colleagues and I were unanimous in requesting that any new federal funding must flow quickly and it must be flexible. As always, the devil is in the details, and the speed at which these funds are disbursed and how they address the immediate needs of New Brunswickers remains to be seen. Now, more than ever, communities, organizations, businesses and individuals are looking for nimble and timely responses from government, not more layers of bureaucracy.

It is imperative that you and I and our members of Parliament insist that the funds that are due to New Brunswick flow quickly and flow freely. And that they flow to all areas of the province, including our rural communities.

And nowhere is this more important than for the communities affected by the downturn in forestry.

A thriving and sustainable forest industry in New Brunswick requires targeted investments and responsive policies from both levels of government. The provincial government is doing its part. In the last two years, this government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in this sector. And tomorrow, I look forward to participating in the unveiling of a new long-term management approach for our Crown lands that balances economic and ecological priorities.

I am personally committed to working with world-class forestry leaders such as Jim Irving at JDI, the folks at Groupe Savoie, the leadership of the New Brunswick Forest Products Association, and all other forestry stakeholders to ensure the future viability of this very important industry. But we can't do it alone.

The minister of state for ACOA, Keith Ashfield, a former provincial minister of natural resources, understands these challenges first-hand. And I trust that he will make New Brunswick's forest industry and, in particular, the need for increased funding for silviculture, priorities for investment through the Community Adjustment Fund.

Although it is still facing short-term challenges, we firmly believe that there are growth opportunities for New Brunswick's forest industry today and in the long term.

We are also confident in the potential of our other resource industries - agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and mining. They are the economic engines that drive many of our rural communities, and they will help our province ride out this economic storm.

Our province's fishing and seafood-processing industry took up government's challenge to be innovative, and has embraced a vision that is focused on harvesting, processing and exporting, based on market demands. As a result of its commitment, that industry is now much better positioned to take advantage of new export opportunities.

Our marine resources include the province's aquaculture sector, which has experienced significant growth and shows great potential. Directing and developing that potential is critical, and is the main reason we will be hosting an important aquaculture summit this spring.

World-class companies are investing in the enormous potential of our agriculture resources. Ocean Spray, the world's largest cranberry grower, recently chose Rogersville as its new regional hub. In choosing New Brunswick, the company praised our cranberry industry, and intends to invest \$90 million setting up 769 hectares of cranberry bogs, and creating as many as 100 jobs in rural New Brunswick.

In Sussex, the new \$1.7-billion potash mine is on schedule. About 200 people are working on the site today, and employment could reach as high as 800 during the summer construction period. The Province of New Brunswick provided a royalty holiday of three years in order to secure this project. By forgoing \$35 million in royalties in the short term, we secured an estimated \$330 million in royalties over the life of the mine. Add to that the 140 permanent jobs to be created, and I think we can all agree: that was a worthwhile investment.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank PotashCorp for its recent million-dollar donation to the new Sussex civic centre, which will be renamed the PotashCorp Civic Centre. Congratulations and thank you.

We have a strong base of traditional industries in rural New Brunswick, but they must be connected to the global economy. That is why early next week we will announce the details of our plan to provide broadband Internet access to everyone in New Brunswick.

I am pleased to tell you tonight that we are now finalizing an agreement with New Brunswick's own Barrett Xplore Inc. to deliver affordable high-speed Internet access to the about 10 per cent of New Brunswickers who don't have it.

And I am very pleased to say that not only will customers benefit from this great news, getting the work done will create an estimated 200 new jobs.

I see representatives of the Tourism Association of New Brunswick are here tonight. Their sector benefits every corner of our province, generating \$1.2 billion each year and creating 33,800 full-time-equivalent jobs, many of them in rural New Brunswick. In 2009, New Brunswick has more reasons than ever to be a destination of choice. This year also marks the 225th anniversary of the founding of our great province, and to promote this milestone, New Brunswick will be showcased next month during Winterlude, Ottawa's winter celebration. In August, the eyes of the Acadian and francophone communities worldwide will be focused on the Acadian Peninsula as it hosts the 2009 Congrès mondial acadien.

Although there are challenges to be addressed in northern New Brunswick, the region has an important role to play in self-sufficiency.

Our government is working hard to tap into the enormous potential of the region and its greatest assets, including the Port of Belledune, its roads, railways and infrastructure, and the biggest strength of all, the highly skilled, loyal and hardworking people who live there.

We're excited to have identified leads on several projects that have the potential to create hundreds of highly skilled, sustainable jobs for the people of northern New Brunswick.

As well, we worked hard to help Norway's Umoe Solar come to the Miramichi. This government convinced the company of the benefits of doing business here, encouraged the sale of UPM assets, and helped plug this region into the green-collar economy and New Brunswick's energy hub.

While many major energy projects throughout North America have stalled, the major projects in the New Brunswick energy hub are moving ahead nicely.

In November, Irving Oil, in partnership with BP, announced that in order to increase the feasibility of the new Eider Rock refinery, the company would explore the possibility of constructing over two phases. Each phase would represent an investment of at least \$4 billion, and create a peak of 2,500-3,000 construction jobs.

Canaport LNG is nearing the 95 per cent completion mark, and there are still over 1,000 workers on the site each day. We expect the first ship carrying liquefied natural gas to arrive in Saint John later this spring, preparing Canaport for its first commercial shipment through the Brunswick Pipeline to the U.S. market.

And on that note, completion of the 145 km Brunswick Pipeline natural gas transmission pipeline, is just weeks away.

Corridor Resources plans to invest \$60 million in 2009, primarily for drilling and completing additional natural gas production wells in the province.

Refurbishment continues on Point Lepreau. This is an incredibly technical and advanced project and a world first. I want to commend the refurbishment team on its work thus far, and I am hopeful, despite any current delays the project faces, that it can still be delivered on time.

And just this morning I had the opportunity to meet with Howard Shearer, president of Hitachi Canada, and Joe Howieson, president of AECL, to discuss the progress on a second nuclear generating station at Point Lepreau. Financed and led by the private sector, this project has the potential to create up to 4,000 jobs during construction, and 500 permanent, high-paying jobs to operate the facility by 2018. As well, it presents an opportunity for New Brunswick to develop a nuclear cluster around research, training, manufacturing and design.

In addition, we're harnessing the power of our winds and waters to develop renewable energy. This year the first commercial wind farm came online in New Brunswick. As we speak, the Kent Hills wind farm, a \$170-million project, constructed by TransAlta, is providing electricity to more than 17,000 Moncton-area homes.

And last May, Crown land leases were awarded to Irving Oil, in partnership with the Huntsman Marine Science Centre, to explore tidal power on the Bay of Fundy.

I can tell you tonight, our vision of creating a New Brunswick energy hub is becoming a reality.

World-class companies such as RIM, Hitachi, Microsoft and Ocean Spray, and home-grown success stories such as Acceon, Ocean Pier, Groupe Savoie and J.D.I., have chosen to be in this place. From innovators in the emerging energy sector to leaders in our cornerstone resource sectors, it's clear that there are many reasons to be optimistic about New Brunswick's potential for economic growth. That's the foundation on which we are building.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we grow our economy, as we build our traditional industries and expand new sectors, we want to ensure that no one is left behind.

In December, New Brunswick became the first province in Canada to take a new funding approach to First Nations education. Agreements are being signed with 16 First Nations communities to help close the achievement gap between First Nations and non-First Nations schools. This continues our province's commitment to ensure that our First Nations communities can be full participants in a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

Last year, when New Brunswick's ombudsman and child and youth advocate outlined ways in which services could be improved for our young people – particularly at-risk youth – we not only listened, but began immediately to take action. These are complex issues that require a co-ordinated approach. And so, in the weeks to come, when we release our official response, you'll see that our plan is to better integrate services and co-ordinate our efforts to ensure that these young New Brunswickers have access to the services they need, when they need them.

At the same time, the Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat is building the relationship with this important sector through one-on-one meetings and regional conferences. The secretariat recently announced its strategic plan

and outlined the timeline for addressing the recommendations of *Delivering on the Blueprint*.

And we are currently working with the business and non-profit-community sectors in a comprehensive public engagement initiative called Bringing the Pieces Together. The co-chairs, Léo-Paul Pinet and Gerry Pond, are with us tonight. Bringing the Pieces Together will ensure that by the end of 2009, our province will have a comprehensive plan to reduce and prevent poverty so that no one is held back in the shackles of poverty while we move forward to self-sufficiency.

Over the last two years the dialogue we have had with New Brunswickers has both challenged and inspired us. And above all, the input has given us great confidence that this is a province ready to embrace change, a province with the aspirations and the abilities, the tools and the talent, to confront the challenges of today and build a brighter future tomorrow.

And it's our faith in New Brunswickers that energizes and inspires the team around our cabinet and Liberal caucus table. And what a team they are! Since taking office two years ago, they've confronted challenges with courage and compassion, with wisdom and with strength. There is no team I would rather stand shoulder-to-shoulder with to face the days ahead.

But, ladies and gentlemen, we are not standing alone. Outside of those things we are doing as a government, beyond those things I have shared with you tonight, more and more people in this province are joining us in pursuit of a self-sufficient New Brunswick.

The Benefits Blueprint team developed a plan for how New Brunswick can seize the opportunity of a growing energy sector to build a stronger, more sustainable economy across the entire province.

The New Brunswick Business Council, a group of 20 business leaders, is working diligently to boost New Brunswick's capacity to grow.

New Brunswick business icons such as Wallace McCain and Derek Oland, among others, are sharing their decades of experience through the Institute for Business Leadership.

Young leaders from all walks of life and all corners of the province have come together through 21inc. Together these young people organized the very successful Ideas Festival in New Brunswick, a first for Atlantic Canada.

Chief Noah Augustine and Bud Bird are leading the First Nations/Business Liaison Group, working to create new training and business opportunities for Aboriginal people in this province.

Le Conseil économique, l'Association des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Forum de concertation des organismes acadiens are working to ensure that all regions of the province can contribute to and benefit from a stronger, self-sufficient province.

Across this province and in a multitude of ways, people are taking up the cause of building a self-sufficient New Brunswick. We want to bring together this energy and these aspirations behind our common goal and shared destiny.

That is why last month we established an ongoing round table on self-sufficiency. I am pleased tonight to announce that the first round table will be held by the end of March.

Ladies and gentlemen, now, more than ever, we must be focused on that journey to self-sufficiency.

Now, more than ever, we must pledge that the province we leave our sons and daughters rests not on the shifting sands of federal transfers, but on the strong foundation of our own self-reliance.

Now more than ever, we must strive to stand on our own two feet; to be a place where through our individual talents and hard work, each of us has the opportunity to create the kind of life we want right here, in New Brunswick.

And now more than ever, each of us must take up our share, each of us must do our part. This is more than the labour of one government, more than the task of one mandate. Building a self-sufficient province must be a shared mission for all of us.

Each of us here tonight, each of you at home, is being called upon.

Will you as an investor put your confidence in New Brunswick?

Will you as an employer help put New Brunswickers to work?

Will you as community activists, as labour leaders, as municipal officials, as provincial and federal representatives, provide the leadership that this moment demands?

Ladies and gentlemen, now, more than ever, New Brunswick needs you. It is a call I believe each of us is ready to answer.

The extent of our abilities, our talent and our character often lie undiscovered in times of prosperity, but they can be discovered in times of adversity.

When faced with difficult choices, let us greet them with courage and wisdom.

When we are tested, let us respond with perseverance.

When we are confronted with unprecedented challenges, let us counter with unparalleled ingenuity.

And let us be able to say that each of us – here in this room and across the province - did our share to build a better New Brunswick.

Thank you.
Good night.

Office of the Premier
[E-mail](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)