



New Brunswick
A story of transformation



presented by

Next NB/Avenir N-B

In this and virtually every other culture, a university represents knowledge and enlightenment. We are a repository for cultural values and we can be an instrument of reform.

In our commitment to truth, we can and should challenge the status quo.

*John D. McLaughlin
President, University of New Brunswick*

It is time for New Brunswickers to talk to each other. Our province and our region face some challenges, which means both must confront some difficult questions. Just as our nation seeks to redefine its role in the world economically, militarily and diplomatically, so too must New Brunswick's citizens decide for themselves their place in Canada.

Next NB/Avenir N-B will do that through a series of discussion papers it will release between February 2004 and June 2005. These papers will be supported by public forums held throughout New Brunswick and will culminate with a conference in Saint John. Next NB/Avenir N-B will be a bilingual project to reflect New Brunswick's bicultural nature and its distinction as the only officially bilingual province in Canada. Next NB/Avenir N-B is a unique opportunity to explore what New Brunswickers think about themselves, their province and its place in Canada and the world.

Please join us in the conversation.

To obtain additional copies of this discussion paper or to offer your comments, please visit our website at www.nextnb.ca.

New Brunswick

A story of transformation

New Brunswickers are proud of their stories. The original Francophone settlement on St. Croix Island, the Loyalists who came ashore in what was to become Saint John, the Germans who travelled up the Petitcodiac River and the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) who held onto their identity through the development of a province. Within those historical tales are the stories of individuals who succeeded in building their home, raising their children and leaving their family with a little more than they had inherited.

These are the stories we like to remember. But New Brunswick has its share of sad stories and too often these are the stories that resonate in the rest of the country. Stories of dependence. Stories of poverty. Stories of hands held out.

Over time these stories have become perceived truths and these truths have become myth. For too long New Brunswick has been ensnared in its myths. It is time for New Brunswick to tell a new story. To weave a story of independence, a story of creating wealth, a story of hands grabbing hold of a future decidedly different than the one foretold in the myths others have crafted for us.

As New Brunswickers we face a great challenge. Between 1999 and 2003 only two of Canada's 10 provinces failed to see their populations increase; Newfoundland and Labrador, which watched its population fall by 1 per cent and New Brunswick, which experienced no change at all.

Today, New Brunswick is home to approximately three-quarter of a million people, roughly equal to the city of Ottawa. Coupled with the lowest birth rate in Canada and the continued loss of young people to opportunities beyond our borders, New Brunswick is on a downward slide that must be halted. That is why we must transform New Brunswick society – economically, socially and culturally – to become a place worth coming home to, a place more people will want to call their home.

What does it mean to transform a province? The dictionary defines transformation as a complete change, usually into

something with an improved appearance or usefulness. In the world of science, it is the permanent change in the genetic makeup of a cell when it acquires new, or foreign, DNA. A permanent change caused by the arrival of something new.

New ideas and new stories, these must be at the heart of our transformation. This is how we will mould the next New Brunswick.

Who are we?

New Brunswick is a place of great history, a place that has been marked by the accomplishments and struggles of many people. The story starts with the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqewiyik (Maliseet) people who lived here, greeted the Europeans when they arrived and were, in return, marginalized and ignored.

It continued with the explorers and the soldiers such as Samuel de Champlain. Françoise Marie Jacquelin (Madame La Tour), Governor Charles Lawrence and General Charles Deschamps de Boishébert who laid claim to this land and fought to control it. Their actions, particularly the expulsion of the Acadians between 1755 and 1762, continue to shape this province.

Then there were people such as Colonel Thomas Carleton, Nancy Morton, Sir Pierre-Amand Landry, Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, Andrew Wetmore and Valentin Landry who helped guide the transformation from colony to province. There were standard bearers such as Frances Fish, Peter Venoit, Captain Molly Kool, Brenda Robertson, Graydon Nicholas, and Sandra Lovelace Nicholas who dared to be first and in doing so, proved that New Brunswick is better when it celebrates the diversity of its voices.

Joseph Cunard, Max Aitken who became Lord Beaverbrook, K.C. Irving, Sir James Dunn, Philip Oland, Harrison and Wallace McCain and Whidden Ganong proved that entrepreneurs with big ideas can come from some of the smallest towns.

Athletes such as Charles Gorman, Dorothy Brockway, Giovanni Corazza, Rhéal Cormier, Yvon Durelle, Willie O'Ree, Everett Sanipass, Matt Stairs and Maryanne Limpert gave us a reason to cheer.

And then there were those who made us think and feel, people such as Arthur LeBlanc, Pascal Poirier, Miller Brittain, Alden Nowlan, Anna Malenfant, Roger Simon, Antonine Maillet, Herménégilde Chiasson, Peter Paul, Don Messer, Molly Bobak, Mary Pratt, Freeman Patterson and David Adams Richards. These are our artists, writers and musicians, people who lifted us up and carried us off, sometimes back to something familiar, other times charting a path to something new.

Each of these names has a story behind it and there are thousands of others who in their own way nudged New Brunswick further down its path. In their individual accomplishments we may find our shared story.

Of late, an increasing number of our citizens are making their way in the province's urban centres. For the first time in its history, more than half of New Brunswick's citizens now live in one of six cities or the surrounding suburbs. Just over 402,000 New Brunswickers (55 per cent of the population) live in cities and the majority of them – 322,000 – live in either Saint John, Moncton or Fredericton. That's 44 per cent of the population living in one of the three southern centres.

Ensuring that national policies reflect the balance found in New Brunswick between town and country will be a challenge as the federal government turns its attention towards the concerns of Canada's cities. What will that mean for New Brunswick, a province that despite a recent emphasis on information technology, remains largely tied to traditional natural resources.

Forests, fish and farms; this is rural New Brunswick. The land and the sea have traditionally been a source of income for a significant number of New Brunswickers, but what has that wrought? Have we been good stewards? As we determine New Brunswick's future we must strive to establish a balance between commerce and conservation.

Within New Brunswick's communities live citizens who know what it means to be a good neighbour. Preliminary results from the University of New Brunswick social capital study found that the province has a vibrant level of volunteerism, with at least 65 per cent of New Brunswickers polled indicating they belong to at least two volunteer organizations. The project surveyed 850 people between July and September 2003. The study also found that New Brunswickers not only want to help each other, but they trust each other too. About 61 per cent answered yes when asked if they thought that generally speaking, people could be

trusted. That general faith in each other could help us as we begin this conversation about our home.

Where does it start?

By standing in front of the mirror and acknowledging what we see. New Brunswick is a lovely place but it has its problems too. We cannot hope to transform our home unless we acknowledge what needs to be fixed.

New Brunswick is a small province – 71,356 square kilometres – making it just slightly smaller than Panama. To put it in a Canadian context, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI would fit quite comfortably within the boundaries of the northwestern Ontario riding of Kenora-Rainy River. We are small, and we are old.

According to the 2001 Canadian census, the median age in New Brunswick was 38.6 years, slightly higher than Canada's at 37.6 years. Like the rest of the country, which has seen its median age rise, we are experiencing the result of an increasing number of us choosing to have smaller families, or no children at all.

Even New Brunswick's aboriginal population is old by Canadian standards. The average age of the province's 16,770 aboriginals is 28.2 years, the oldest in the country. The national median age is 24.7 years.

But New Brunswick's demographic challenge is more than just a low fertility rate. We continue to see moving vans – the majority packed with younger New Brunswickers – going down the road, a caravan that exacts a price. With its shrinking population and decidedly small group of young people, New Brunswick might look to immigrants to increase its population. To do that, the province will have to significantly readjust recent immigration trends.

Between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002, Canada accepted 255,888 immigrants; 762 of them came to New Brunswick, almost equal to the 761 who arrived here in 1964 when the province's population was approximately 600,000. In 2001, 24,155 New Brunswick residents claimed to be immigrants or non-permanent residents. Compare that to Halifax, a city with about half the population, which claims 26,335 immigrants or non-

permanent residents in its numbers. This illustrates a Canada-wide trend that sees immigrants settling in urban areas.

In all these population numbers there are some worth bragging about. Canada's two official languages are well represented here, with 65 per cent of New Brunswickers listing English as their mother tongue and another 33 per cent listing French as their first language. That makes New Brunswick home to the largest percentage of francophones outside Quebec.

Also important to note is the level of bilingualism. Just over 34 per cent of New Brunswickers claim to speak both French and English, second only to Quebec at 41 per cent and well above other provinces. The majority of those francophone New Brunswickers live on the eastern side of the province. Moncton has emerged as the new Acadian centre and this has drawn young people from northern New Brunswick. A significant number of them have opted to stay, particularly in Dieppe, a community whose population ballooned to 14,951 in 2001, a jump of 19.6 per cent, the largest percentage increase in New Brunswick. In 2002 the provincial government granted Dieppe city status because of that growth. But Dieppe's population boom comes at the expense of northeastern New Brunswick, which, more than any other region, is feeling the effects of our increasingly mobile population.

We will have to address the growing disparity between our regions because if we are to transform our province, we must transform all of it, not just the areas where prosperity is easier to find.

How do we get there?

We must create more wealth. In 2000 the median family income in New Brunswick sat at \$60,136 for two-income households. That means there were an equal number of two-income families earning more and an equal number earning less than this figure. The Canadian median was \$72,524 and the country's three wealthiest provinces – Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia – had median incomes of \$79,697, \$73,897 and \$73,294. In fact, every province except Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador had better statistics than New Brunswick.

Sadder still, is how little the median for two-income families has grown in this province over the past decade. For New

Brunswick families that median increased only 3.2 per cent between 1990 and 2000 at a time when the national median jumped by 5.5 per cent. But that's not even the worst of the bad news when it comes to how much New Brunswick families earn. Remember that in 2000 the median family income here was \$60,136. In 1990 six Canadian provinces (Ontario, Alberta, B.C., Quebec, Manitoba and Nova Scotia) had median family incomes higher than New Brunswick's median in 2000. Only two-income families in Saskatchewan, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador had lower median earnings in 1990 than New Brunswick families reported 10 years later.

We earn less because we produce less. In 2002 New Brunswick's gross domestic product – the total market price for all goods and services produced – was 81.6 per cent of Canada's overall GDP per worker. This gives us a basic picture of New Brunswick's standard of living because the GDP reflects productivity.

We must recognize that everything links together and so we must look at every aspect of New Brunswick – its economy, its culture, its social makeup – and then choose very specifically to reform, to change and to invest in those aspects of New Brunswick society that will have the greatest effect and furthest reach.

What do we want?

To be a province of creative and confident citizens. To do that we must raise children enamoured with knowledge and impassioned to use it to further New Brunswick's evolution. We cannot transform New Brunswick without our children. They are our Sable Island. Our Hibernia. Our oil sands. New Brunswick has one major asset – its people – and they must be well educated.

At the heart of learning is the issuing of a challenge. That push to reach beyond existing talents and discover that you can achieve more than you might have thought. We must do that for ourselves as we craft the next New Brunswick. We must do that for our children as we prepare them to inherit this province.

If we are to have transformational change in New Brunswick it must start in our classrooms by giving our children the skills they need to learn, to be nimble of mind and to seek out new ideas. It will continue in our universities and community

colleges. Just fewer than 17 per cent of New Brunswickers have a community college diploma and 16 per cent have a university degree. That places us sixth and eighth on a ranking of Canadian provinces.

But we must also address the skills and literacy levels of adults who have long ago left the education system. Between 1994 and 1998 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) studied adult literacy levels in 22 countries. In a pattern that mirrors a similar OECD study of school children's aptitude, Canada as a whole did very well but country-wide, New Brunswick scored near the bottom. Participants were ranked by level between one and five with level three representing the bare minimum someone would have to achieve to be able to cope effectively in everyday life. According to the results, 59 per cent of New Brunswick adults did not achieve that level. That means they are unable to effectively do things such as fill out a job application, figure out how much to leave behind as a tip in a restaurant or read and comprehend the morning news.

As our economy changes and jobs are created that demand special skills and higher education, we must be cognizant of the effect this will have on people with less than a high school education. In the past, many of these people have found work in the natural resources sector, but those opportunities are disappearing.

If our future depends on the strength and abilities of our citizens, we must ensure that all have an opportunity to participate.

Why?

Because we owe a great debt, a debt to New Brunswick's story. To build a province takes great perseverance, initiative and chutzpah. Our predecessors did this – and their descendants continue to do it – because they believed that Canada truly was a country that stretched from sea to sea and that a life worth living could be created and supported on the country's eastern edge.

Now it is our turn to take our step forward, to write our chapter in New Brunswick's collective story. We will challenge each other with difficult questions. We will inspire each other with

thought-provoking answers. And together, we will transform our province. We will mould the next New Brunswick.