



Looking for Natural Leadership for NB's Economic Prosperity

As we approach the provincial election in September, New Brunswickers should be evaluating many questions. Are we satisfied with the policies that influence our province's financial health? Where should the government look to find money to pay for crucial services, such as: health, education and transportation infrastructure? What will it take to reverse years of decline in our population and economy?

Looking back, one government after another have pushed bills forward to future governments and generations. They continue to accumulate massive public debt (currently \$15 billion) paid for by tax levels that can decrease the attractiveness of living here. But the simple truth remains: if governments can't pay for services we expect them to deliver, they must attract more taxpayers and tax-paying businesses or make cuts and pay less for services. This challenge won't disappear until it is addressed in a meaningful way. It's a choice requiring courage and active leadership with a clear commitment to reverse the trend and the perception that our region is an 'example of the perils of decline' (recently stated in a national newspaper).

We need more than political platitudes about why their opponents should 'not' be elected, and more than passive leadership plans merely highlighting the opposite of whatever it is 'another leader' is doing—and that takes courage. It takes conviction to do what New Brunswick needs, not just what's needed to be elected. Economist after economist forecast our province's continued decline if we stay on our current path. The next leader must provide a clear plan for 'course correction' to put us on a new path to growth.

Of course, we have a lot of successes and a lot of good work is taking place in some new and exciting sectors, I am certainly not casting a shadow on these. But new sectors also take time to develop and there is a great deal of competition the world over to attract the companies and talent engaged in these sectors. We must diversify our efforts: build on what we currently have to offer, while we grow what we want to attract.

Forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, minerals and metals, farming and agriculture, and energy development from natural gas to renewables—natural resources have been the basis for life on earth and driving economies for centuries.

Other economies have demonstrated clearly that growth can be achieved by developing what is ready and available to boost our economy, which in turn helps grow and attract new sectors. One only has to look to Saskatchewan, a province that in 2005 faced a similar fate as New Brunswick. Saskatchewan focused on developing its natural resources, which in turn, drove growth in other sectors. New Brunswick is also rich in underdeveloped natural resources, a wealth that can be used effectively to spur economic activity.

Natural resources are the foundation of every economy. While some jobs can be mobile and migrate to lower-cost locations, employment and taxes associated with natural resource development are tied to

the province. Developing a mine, harvesting trees, and accessing new energy resources can be done responsibly, sustainably, and will create jobs for New Brunswickers who will continue to live here and pay taxes.

Accepting that natural resources provide direct benefits to economies who choose to develop them, and that virtually all human activity (including cleantech) has impacts on our natural environment; leads to a very basic choice: Will we use these opportunities to create prosperity, or will we concede those jobs and revenues to other provinces and countries? To date the political response has been to voice platitudes of support for development, but in turn, become notably absent in creating the conditions to protect our environment, resolving conflicting interests, and demonstrating New Brunswick offers a stable and predictable environment within which to operate.

In short, New Brunswick needs a government that will demonstrate courage, vision and leadership in safeguarding the public interest, leveraging all of our natural assets to spur economic growth, and at the same time ensure investors can depend on government regulations and standards to resolve questions of environmental and societal impacts in a reasonable length of time.

The province's indebtedness continues to grow, our economy has languished for more than a decade. We need leadership with the conviction to act, to find compromise among the territorial, environmental, and economic concerns. Progress can only be achieved through active leadership, dialogue and compromise, and we need our next government to provide the framework to allow our wealth of natural resources to power our future economy prosperity.

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