

## REMARKS

### Crossing Boundaries

March 27, 2007

Good morning.

I want to thank Don Lenihan of Crossing Boundaries, Tim Barber from Canada 2020 and all the organizers of this conference for inviting me to be here today. Thank you to our co-chairs, Senator Hugh Segal and Former Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan.

Having been Premier of New Brunswick for only five months, I must admit I was still a bit awestruck to see my name alongside Salman Rushdie and President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. I feel both proud and challenged that you have seen the potential in New Brunswick to be a leader in the practical application of the ideals we are discussing throughout this conference.

New Brunswick's leadership role on this front certainly would not be possible without an individual who preceded me both on this stage this morning and in the Premier's Office: Frank McKenna. Frank, as always, you have inspired us and you have challenged us.

I had the opportunity to work in the Frank McKenna government as a young public servant and I want to tell you those were exciting times. They were times that truly inspired the best of public service. During those years, we witnessed how an active and dynamic government could be a force for good.

We were working for a Premier who was at the forefront of understanding how our changing world could change our province. He managed to be both a visionary and a realist – he had the imagination to envision what could be and the determination and decisiveness to make it happen.

That blend of vision and action is the legacy I draw upon as a new Premier facing a new era with new challenges and new opportunities.

Today I want to speak to you a bit about where New Brunswick is as a province, why this demands an evolution of our relationship with citizens and how our government plans to develop this new relationship.

New Brunswick stands at a crossroads. The world is changing and we know we must respond. We know the status quo is not an option. Too many young New Brunswickers are heading west. And we have become too dependent on transfer payments flowing east. We believe we can do better. We *know* we can do better.

Our goal as a government is straightforward and challenging. As many of you know, we want New Brunswick to be a self-sufficient province and we want to achieve this in the next 20 years.

Self-sufficiency is a goal that was central to our *Charter for Change* and it's been the driving force behind our government. And it is no small task.

Because the world is changing around us, change will come to New Brunswick. That much is inevitable. But whether we ride the wave or get swept away by the current is up to us. And by "us", I don't simply mean "we, the government."

I want to outline a couple of the key challenges we need to address in order to achieve this 20-year goal.

To achieve self-sufficiency, we will need to transform our economy in order to increase our economic output and productivity and raise our incomes to competitive levels. By creating new opportunities, we will create an economy that not only retains New Brunswick talent but attracts the brightest and best.

To transform our economy, we need to find those areas where we can be competitive nationally and internationally. Our economy won't be based on being an automotive capital like Ontario, it won't hinge on an oil patch like Alberta. It will depend on our ingenuity and our resourcefulness, on our ability to be leaders in specialized products and on niche markets.

Government can't simply declare one day, "Okay, New Brunswick, our future is plastics. Let's go." We need to engage our industries, our communities, our workers and our employers to figure out what it is that we can do better than anybody else. And then, as a government we need to make sure that we are doing our part to support that – what regulatory frameworks do we need? What infrastructure? Do we have the skilled workforce?

Government has a role to play but it will take all New Brunswickers pulling together.

Achieving self-sufficiency will also require us to reverse the population decline. Today, we face a perfect demographic storm in New Brunswick – more people are dying than are being born. We are witnessing a significant outmigration, particularly of young skilled workers, and we are not attracting new Canadians at high enough rates. These conditions affect our economy and our labour markets and they affect our people. There's not a day that goes by that I do not receive calls or e-mails from New Brunswickers with family members who have had to go elsewhere to look for work.

It would have been much easier when I was on a trade mission to Alberta in January if I could have driven around Fort McMurray and rounded up New Brunswickers to put on a plane back home. That would have been great. But it's not that simple. Government can lead on creating opportunities for people to come home, we can promote the province as a good place to live – and we will - but it will require all New Brunswickers to feel a stake in creating the kind of province people want to return to; a kind of province that welcomes new Canadians.

The challenges we face today, the barriers we need to tear down on the road to self-sufficiency – these are not simply the result of bad policy. If they were, then the answer would be much simpler – fix the policy and move on.

But that's not how it works. As societal challenges become more complex and the number of players more numerous, it will take more than tweaking policy to transform our province. It will take a sea-change throughout New Brunswick.

Historically, governments and citizens have had a top-down relationship. Governments produce programs and services, citizens consume them. Some progress has been made. More and more effort has been taken to consult citizens on exactly what they would like such-and-such a policy or program to look like, but ultimately it is still a producer-consumer relationship.

Got a headache? Here's an aspirin. Got high illiteracy rates? Here's a program change. We know it doesn't work this way. The defining issues we face – environment, wellness, literacy, population issues - these are not problems of government but challenges of society. Government has a role but so do individuals.

Take, for example, obesity. This is a problem across North America and in New Brunswick, we see particularly high rates. We have a generation of young people who may not outlive their parents and that has to change. Now, as a government, we can make policy choices to promote healthier living but we can't legislate people to be healthy. We can create more opportunities for physical activity in our schools but we can't visit every home and make sure kids are getting a balanced diet. That takes buy-in from individuals and families.

There's a very well-known quote from Albert Einstein that “the problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them.”

That's why the discussion that we're having here today is so important. It's why the new chapter that we are writing in New Brunswick is so important.

We need to raise the level of thinking. We need to look further down the road. And we need to engage people in a way they've never been engaged before.

Let me be clear though, this is not American Idol-type democracy where everyone phones in their opinion and that's how government decisions get made. It goes deeper than that. These are serious issues and they need serious discussions and at the end of the day they need serious action from government, from business and from individuals. A new era of citizen engagement places new responsibilities on governments but it also places new responsibility on citizens.

We are also not talking about the off-loading of responsibility on to citizens. This isn't an "everyone-fend-for-themselves" proposition. Government continues to have a very important role to play in creating the environment necessary to achieve self-sufficiency and to ensure that in the rising tide, no one is swept away.

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Self-sufficiency is a 20-year goal. I don't have to tell you that there will probably be someone else sitting in the Premier's Office in 2026. (I know my wife certainly hopes so.)

This can't just be the Shawn Graham Agenda. It can't even simply be the agenda of the Liberal government. I have a role as a facilitator; our government has a role to play in setting the necessary policy framework. But this vision must live on beyond me, beyond my colleagues. It will need to be a shared dream of the people of New Brunswick. They will need to feel some personal stake in this goal.

So how do we do this? We've taken some first steps.

We have launched a Community Non-Profit Task Force to strengthen our ties with this important sector and ensure that on the journey to self-sufficiency no one gets left behind.

We have also launched the New Brunswick Post-Secondary Education Commission to address the skills needs to achieve the self-sufficiency goal. This commission will examine the entire post-secondary education and training sector, including public and private universities, the New Brunswick Community College network, apprenticeship, private training and other aspects of literacy and lifelong learning.

And as many of you know we have established a Task Force on Self-Sufficiency. We want to kick-start the dialogue with New Brunswickers and inspire creative thinking. The first phase of the Task Force is set to conclude later this spring. But we must focus on keeping the dialogue going and truly involving New Brunswickers in the decision-making process.

That is why today I am very pleased to announce that next month, Don Lenihan, the President and CEO of The Crossing Boundaries National Council, will be joining us to craft this new era of citizen engagement in the Province of New Brunswick.

This project will focus on five key objectives:

- *Establishing a multi-stakeholder network that can provide leadership across the public policy community;*
- *Providing the necessary leadership, ideas and strategic direction to the network as it forms so that it shares a common understanding of the role of citizen engagement and collaboration in achieving the self-sufficiency goal; and that it has a common plan for moving it forward;*
- *Using new e-consultation techniques to help the network develop new ways to engage the public, understand their role in achieving success, and assume responsibility for it;*
- *Developing an ‘issues, skills and methods manual’ to guide the evolution of collaborative government and the use of engagement tools as the province moves forward toward 2026; and*
- *Engaging decision makers and opinion leaders outside the province in a discussion of the Self-Sufficiency Initiative to promote awareness of it and to provide feedback on the tools and processes it is using.*

During the panel session, my Principal Secretary, Joan Kingston, will further outline some of the “nuts and bolts” of this project.

I am very pleased that Don has agreed to lead this important initiative. I am excited that New Brunswick is taking a leadership role in a new era of citizen engagement. I am hopeful that other jurisdictions can learn from our experiences. And I am privileged to be able to play a role in beginning this journey.

Transforming New Brunswick won’t be the legacy of one premier.

It won’t be the accomplishment of one government or the work of one mandate.

It will be the story of a province that came together to write a new chapter, of a new generation inspired by our past and hopeful for our future. And as we move forward, I hope that all of you will continue to follow our story.

Thank you. Merci.