

ELECTION ISSUES in New Brunswick - 2018

Under each heading you will find a short explanation of the issue, followed by questions you might ask of candidates at your door or in a meeting.

1. Strong Transition Economy - Keep Your Job

Humanity is facing a social crisis of income inequality and an environmental crisis of climate change. These crises have a common cause and need a common solution. The major cause of each is public policy that supports the right of private wealth accumulation over people's right to live in a supportive natural and social environment. In NB, the social crisis is expressed most clearly in:

- I. the challenge the majority face in having employment that pays a living wage,
- II. a declining assurance that education, health and welfare services will be there as needed.
- III. the increasing concentration of socially produced wealth in the hands of a declining number of wealthy individuals and families, who together control more than enough of the financial means needed to solve the first two problems.

- What legislative actions do you propose to:
 - Move New Brunswick toward a clean energy economy?
 - Support workers (displaced by this shift) in making the transition to new jobs needed within a clean energy economy?
 - Guarantee that any costs of this transition will be equitably shared?

2. Tax Breaks for Big Corporations

New Brunswick has 50 tax exemption programs, including property tax relief, tax credits, and exemptions to individuals and corporations. In 2003, the Auditor General recommended that the amount of revenue lost in these programs appear in the yearly budget, but it does not. In some cases, programs to exempt corporations from tax have outlived their purpose or deadline for termination but continue under the radar, decreasing available public funds for social, environmental and infrastructure programs.

- In NB, individuals overall are shouldering a higher tax burden than business. BC and the Federal Gov't report tax exemptions annually, thus letting legislators and the public know who is getting tax breaks. The Auditor General has recommended this for NB. Will you support action to fully account for these tax breaks? How?

3. Indigenous (Native) Treaty Rights / Honouring the Treaties

The 1725 Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed by the Wabinali Confederacy, which included the Mi'kmaq (Micmac), Passamaquoddy, and Wolastoquiyik (Maliseet) peoples in NB. It was also signed by two Indigenous groups not in NB. These Indigenous peoples ceded no territory to the European settlers and they didn't give up custodial stewardship or land use rights. No other treaty has superseded this document which has been largely ignored as more non-Indigenous people moved here and governments have pursued industrial activities on so-called Crown land. Settler governments have deprived these people of their livelihoods and way of life by forcing them onto reserves and taking away their traditional hunting and fishing territories. The Supreme Court of Canada has found in favour of Indigenous nations against settler governments and their willful breaching of these agreements. By ignoring treaty obligations, the Province of NB violated the provisions of this legally binding document. The Treaty of 1725 must be observed and honoured, as must the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

- Considering the 1725 Peace and Friendship Treaty, are you prepared to support initiatives which would return stewardship obligations over Crown land to Indigenous groups?

4. 2014 Forestry Plan

This plan was implemented in March 2014 by the Conservative Alward government after behind-closed-doors development with industry. It increased the allowable annual forest harvest on Crown (unceded) land by 21% per year, and is in place for 25 years. 180 scientists and foresters spoke vehemently against the plan in open letters to government. In the fall of 2014 the Liberal government vowed to review the plan's sustainability but has failed to demonstrate that watersheds and wildlife will not be impacted. As a result NB's old growth forest, important ecological areas, including wetlands, steep slopes, buffer zones and deer yards continue to be decimated. The glut of (unceded) Crown wood now on the market has put tremendous pressure on small, self employed woodlot owners, most of whom can no longer make a living from their land because of cheap public wood.

- Will you advocate for a full review of the 2014 Forestry Plan, including public consultation on concerns about the over-harvesting, flooding, and wildlife impacts resulting from fulfilment of the plan's provisions?
- The current Crown Lands and Forests Act requires government to give private woodlot owners preference over Crown wood. This requirement is being disregarded by the Liberal Gov't. How would you address this?

5. Privatization of Home Healthcare and other Essential Public Services

By privatizing home healthcare, hospital cleaning, and other services, the government is putting important services into the hands of multi-national corporations which have no stake in the wellbeing of our communities and thus often cut personnel and the level of service while being more expensive. Hospitals in BC, ON, and QC have found this out and reinstated their own personnel. Corporate managers answer to their shareholders, not to the public. Recent transfers of home care services to Medavie were objected to by Vitalité and its CEO, as well as seniors groups and healthcare advocates throughout NB.

- What are your thoughts on privatizing essential public services and utilities (like healthcare, water, power)?

6. Electoral Reform / PR

With a Proportional Representation (PR) voting system every vote counts. Under the current First Past the Post electoral system, a party which wins the election with only 39% of the vote can have 100% of the decision making power (61% of the voters cast ballots which elect no-one). In a Proportional Representation system 39% of the votes have 39% of the decision-making power. Proportional Representation means you can vote for what you believe in and there would be no need to vote strategically. No matter where you live, your vote will really matter to all of the parties. They'll be working hard to get it.

- Nearly every liberal democracy in the world embraces some form of PR to ensure their electorates are genuinely represented by their political leaders. Does your party support Proportional Representation?

7. Water Strategy

Fresh water is our most precious resource. It is at risk by privatization (water bottling and water exports), contamination (lack of oversight of the resource), and poorly regulated mining and industrial development. Forest cover removal, sedimentation, erosion and algal blooms also threaten our fresh water. The Liberal government introduced comprehensive regulation (water classification) to protect surface water in 2002 and upgraded it in 2008. However, they have ignored their own legislation and have shelved water classification. Pressured to enact a comprehensive water strategy, they did develop a new plan in 2017. Sadly, this plan lacks a legislative framework, assignment of responsibilities for completing tasks, and even a timeline for completion. In 2017, there was one positive inclusion, watershed management plans are to be developed for NB watersheds.

- Is a Water Strategy important to you? If so, will ensuring it's provisions are enacted be a priority?
- Would you be in favour of examining the effects of widespread clear-cutting on the health of our rivers, streams, and lakes, and taking action to reduce any negative impacts?

8. Sisson Mine

One of the world's largest open-pit tungsten mines, with one of the largest tailings disposal sites in Canada, is proposed for the upper reaches of the pristine Nashwaak watershed. The NB EIA Expert Review Panel warned that the mine is economically risky due to low-grade ore and may fail prematurely, leaving the province with massive reclamation and water treatment costs and the risk of contamination from catastrophic failure of the tailings dam. The parent company, HDI, has a history of sponsoring losing mine ventures.

- What regulations and bond requirements would you put in place to protect against the kind of catastrophic failures seen at Mount Polley, BC in 2014?
- Do you support the continued investment of taxpayer money and resources in this mine? Please explain.
- What are the likely impacts on our water resources and fish stocks if this mine proceeds?

9. Plantation and Right-of-Way Spraying

NB government has ignored 35,000 voters who signed the petition opposing herbicide spraying on Crown forest land and by NB Power. In 2017, NB tax payers paid \$2.4M to spray herbicides (glyphosate mixtures) on crown forests, for the sole benefit of companies that are growing softwood tree plantations. If spraying was replaced with manual silviculture practices, 1,000 direct jobs would be created. Further, the conversion of high quality diverse forests into plantations is a lost opportunity for NB to have value-added products from our trees. The effect of herbicide spraying on animal and fish health is a major concern in NB where hunting and fishing are important economically and culturally. 30% of all forest spraying in Canada happens in our small province of NB which may contribute significantly to NB's diminished deer population (30% of what it used to be).

- Will you actively support a ban on herbicide spraying on Crown land and on NB Power right-of-ways?
- What will you do if a ban on spraying is not in your political party's platform?

10. Shale Gas

By executive order, the provincial government has declared an indefinite moratorium on shale gas. As it is not legislated it may be cancelled at any time by the government in power. Since the moratorium was declared, there have been hundreds of scientific studies on every aspect of shale gas. The overwhelming majority of these studies document increasing problems with water usage, water contamination, air pollution, public health, wastewater disposal, earthquakes and are a significant contributor to climate change. The shale gas industry is presently in a poor economic state, borrowing money, and experiencing many bankruptcies, due to oversupply and low prices, competition with lower cost renewable energy, and the demands of fighting climate change. The ensuing need to cut costs and add automation has also reduced the number of jobs in the industry.

- Given the documented threats of shale gas to health, water, the environment, and the need to address climate change, why should we bring this industry to New Brunswick?