



1. What are your top three priorities that you will make happen during your term if elected?

As a longstanding business owner myself, and as a past member of both the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce and the Mactaquac Chamber of Commerce, my priorities, from a local business community perspective, would be the following:

1- Economic recovery

Small to medium-sized businesses make up the heart of the business community. These businesses provide exceptional products and services, often with less financial and government support. They often do far more, with far less resources. Economic recovery must address the unique challenges that all businesses encounter. I will ensure that the interests of the Greater Fredericton area are represented in the discussions on how we can best support our businesses, by building on our existing strengths, and leveraging new opportunities. This means providing provincial programs to supplement federal programs. This also means investing in a greener economy, so that present and future businesses are sustainable without a greater cost to the environment, while continuing to generate new employment opportunities.

2- Expanded access to high-speed internet

Coming from an Information Technology background, I understand that fast and reliable communication is critical. Internet services are the vehicle for education, information, communication, banking, and employment, not just entertainment. In today's world, internet access is as important as electricity and telephone service. High-speed internet has to be available to all, and there is currently an unacceptable disparity between urban and rural areas. I recognize this, and will work with the government and internet providers to improve services to outlying areas.

3- Teamwork

It is important for the local MLA to work closely and in tandem with our municipal and community and business leaders to have a strong, united voice on issues that are important to our region and our province. My priorities will be the priorities and opportunities we forge together. In the past, we have seen what can be accomplished when a region speaks with one voice. I am committed to working in a spirit of cooperation to advance our common objectives.

2. What opportunities do you see arising for the Fredericton Region as a result of the pandemic?

COVID-19 has brought about many changes, including how we do business. In business, as in life, challenges often provide the greatest opportunity to find creative solutions. Where possible, many businesses have adapted by having employees work remotely. There are advantages to be seen from this approach, including cost savings from having meetings and conferences through teleconferencing web applications, which eliminates the need to travel. There is also the opportunity for remote employees to have flexibility in work hours. A flexible workday can increase productivity in some cases as well as employee job satisfaction.

Fredericton is often referred to as the Smart City and there is a cluster of IT businesses that are world class. As we adapt to this new reality, there is an opportunity to develop an economic growth strategy to take advantage of these new business opportunities and Fredericton can be a leader in doing so.

The most encouraging opportunity I see comes from the renewed recognition in the value of local products and services. The pandemic prompted a greater interest in buying local and in supporting local food sources. Businesses that provide local products and services, or supply material for local projects, can continue to benefit from this.

3. The private sector, especially small business which is the engine of the economy was severely impacted by the pandemic, how will your government support the recovery of our economy?

The pandemic has been hard on local businesses. Many have been able to reopen after the initial shutdown brought on by the emergency measures that occurred as a result of COVID-19. However, according to the CFIB, many of these businesses are operating at levels far below their regular profitability and they will need a government that is prepared to step up and support them. I will be a strong advocate for business support and a champion for growing new business opportunities.

As I indicated previously, economic recovery must be a priority. The federal government has provided generous infrastructure programs that can help us address pressing infrastructure needs while generating jobs and growing our economy. In some cases, we are able to leverage 20 cent dollars. As we all know, there is a difference between spending and investing, especially when those investments generate financial multipliers and avoid future costs. Economists recognize it and other provinces recognize it. We must support existing businesses that we cannot afford to let fail. We must have comprehensive economic development strategy. We must aggressively pursue investment attraction. We must look at strategic investments.

4. Prior to the pandemic, an aging and declining labour force was a top concern of businesses in our region. Immigration will be more challenging in the short-term – how can government help labour force participation in the province?

With international travel restrictions, the pandemic has put a strain on the usual channels for increasing the labour force. We need population growth, and government has a significant role to play in that. In planning for the long-term, we need to enhance our programming on immigration, retention and repatriation. We need to look at best practices in other jurisdictions and determine what programs are most effective. However, in the short term, we can focus on our province and our country. We need to market New Brunswick as a land of opportunity and a safe environment with much to offer. This means we need to have the infrastructure and

services that support a growing population, which includes providing more affordable housing options, and increasing access to healthcare services. We must partner with our universities to attract and retain students. We must partner with business to identify labour needs and address them. We must create new relationships with our business community and our post-secondary institutions. We must support trade schools and co-op programs. Finally, we must offer incentives for New Brunswick students to stay in the province after graduation.

5. What natural resource development opportunities are most important to growing the New Brunswick economy? How can government help move these industries forward?

There is much opportunity for economic growth in agriculture. Local farming should be a priority, not just for economic growth, but for food security. We have the resources and expertise in this province to provide local food, but government quotas, red-tape and lack of skilled labour are often obstacles for local farmers. Government needs to consult with farmers about policy along with supply management.

There continues to be great benefits from our traditional resource industries like forestry and mining. We must continue to support these industries that contribute significantly to our economy. However, we need to apply best practices and ensure that these industries are operating in a sustainable way. We will only get “buy in” from New Brunswickers if environmental concerns are addressed rigorously. There must be guaranteed, protected funds set aside for restoration of sites after projects have completed.

6. The Fredericton Region has been building expertise and capacity in cyber security over the course of several decades. What role can government play in ensuring we remain a global leader in this sector?

As we become more reliant on digital information and communication, it is crucial that we remain vigilant in the area of cyber security. Fredericton has done well in growing the cyber security industry and it is a priority growth area that I strongly support. For that reason, I believe that the Cyber Centre at the Knowledge Park needs to be reinstated, creating a digital security hub that will attract a highly skilled workforce. As well, the partnership with the University of New Brunswick must continue to be supported by government. The partnership with the university ensures that our community continues to benefit from innovation and emerging knowledge.

7. How should New Brunswick handle a second wave of COVID-19 in New Brunswick? What are the appropriate metrics to trigger another public health shutdown?

We have been fortunate that New Brunswick has been able to contain the spread of the COVID-19. Our appreciation goes out to Dr. Jennifer Russell and her team, along with the frontline workers who have put their personal safety at risk to help others.

New Brunswick is better prepared to handle a second wave of COVID-19. Although there is still much research needed, we understand more about the virus than we did earlier in the year. We are better equipped to deal with new cases through protocols like testing and contact tracing. Protective equipment has been obtained

and installed. Operational plans have been adapted by businesses and other organizations to reduce the risk of exposure. If these measures are followed, there is a possibility that the infection rate could stay low enough to prevent the level of shutdown by public health that we experience in March and April. It remains to be seen. However, the metrics used to determine if a shutdown is warranted remains in the jurisdiction of the Chief Medical Officer.

8. What are your views on the New Brunswick's 10-year education plan and Green Paper? How do you intend to ensure consistency in the province's education plans?

The 10-year education plan was developed with impressive consultation from all areas of education. The goals of the plan move beyond academics, and include fostering leadership, healthy values and diversity, among many other cultural and social values. I believe this multi-dimensional approach has much merit, but I also understand that putting ideology into practice is often difficult, and requires the ability to assess, adjust and reassess. Our education professionals need support to make this a success. Parents need support. With the current pandemic, there is added stress and uncertainty that must be addressed and it will require additional resources. We must ensure that the goals of the plan can move forward despite current strains on the system.

With respect to the Green Paper, there is grave concern as to how the plan was developed which impacts on its credibility. I would hesitate to commit to moving forward with any major educational reforms that were not the result of an extensive and legitimate consultation with educators, experts, parents and other stakeholders.

To ensure consistency in the province's education plans, I would suggest that we cannot continue to introduce significant educational changes with every change in government. This puts a great burden on educational professionals, parents and students. I had anticipated that the introduction of the 10-year education plan would circumvent this cycle of rotating educational reforms. If it was not one of the goals, I suggest that it should be.

Best regards,

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Working together.
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