

New Brunswick self-sufficiency: Hype or hope?

by Ed Bowes

On November 23, Premier Shawn Graham finally released his plan on how New Brunswick will become self-sufficient by 2026. The 33-page document involves a series of proposed changes aimed at transforming the workforce, economy, and government. It is titled 'Our Action Plan to be Self-Sufficient in New Brunswick' and is described by the Graham government as "a comprehensive action plan on self-sufficiency which deals with transforming government, transforming relationships, transforming the workforce, and transforming the economy."

The release follows the May 2007 final report of the province's Self-Sufficiency Task Force, a governmental organization created in early 2007 with the mandate of finding a way to end the province's dependence on equalization payments from Ottawa. The report outlined 91 recommendations for change and improvements, 60 of which had a 12-month deadline. This wide-ranging list of recommendations included everything from a population boost to 850,000, increasing the workforce to 400,000, a province-wide pay increase of 20%, and the diversification of the economy.

The Task Force warned the Graham government that without a substantial increase in wages for the civil service, public-sector workers will be hired by the private sector. Also recommended was a 20 year strategic plan to sell more

energy to the American northeast, a modern daycare system, an increase of lumber cut on private land, and a review of the mandatory retirement age. The document also informed the government of an impending severe worker shortage.

The CBC reports that Friday's Action Plan, however, contains vague goals and few specifics as to how these recommendations will be met. The document offers no proposed legislation and makes no commitments. Instead, the pages contain language that suggests the government will "investigate," "explore," and "undertake" ways to improve life in the province on various fronts.

"We have a focused, tangible plan to bring self-sufficiency to our province," Graham said. "We have looked at every facet of our province, from our economy and workforce to our relationships with all levels of government, business, labour, and the non-profit sector. We're outlining an action plan that all departments must utilize as their template, but it's also a document that allows New Brunswickers to become engaged in the process."

Graham's report also contains a number of previously announced goals, such as raising education levels.

The government's target is to ensure that each and every child leaves the fifth grade having mastered the tools to learn – reading, writing, and numeracy, and that they graduate from high school having had the opportunity to discover their personal strengths and to find something they love doing. The province intends to create a post-secondary education system that is student-focused, highly integrated, and capable of preparing students for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The plan also states that New Brunswick should work to become an energy hub in the Maritimes, and as such, develop an energy cluster with the goal of entering the global sector. The province hopes to enhance competitiveness through productivity improvements and diversification.

Upon its release, leader of the opposition Jeannot Volpé mocked the proposed plan, holding up his own version of the report with the words "self-sufficiency" and "hope" on the cover while the inside pages were blank.

"I'm waiting for the Premier to provide the specifics," said Volpé. "Hope and wishful thinking... you can't put food on the table with it. You can't pay your power bill with it. So they do need something they can touch, that they can see: what's in there for myself? This is what New Brunswickers are looking for and they haven't seen it yet."

Volpé said the people of New Brunswick want specific initiatives with timetables to measure the government's progress.

It is too early to determine the impact of this proposed shift toward self-sufficiency on current post-secondary students, mainly due to the lack of tangible measures. While the document states that its target is to keep graduates in the province, there is much work to be done to achieve this goal. The province of New Brunswick needs to market itself as a viable option for graduates entering the workforce. Measures need to be taken to make wages competitive to those of the rest of the country, and more importantly, the jobs themselves must be here. The coming weeks will truly determine the success of the province's new initiative to become independent.

Free rides, Giveaways and more

by Jennifer McKenzie

We all know that being a student is stressful. VP Student Services Keely Wallace is trying to ease that burden for students.

Some of the perks of Wallace's position include giving away 65 computers, providing a free ride home for students, and offering free legal information.

At the beginning of the semester, the Student Union hosts the Great Computer Giveaway, where working alongside ITS and Financial Aid, the UNBSU gives refurbished and reformat computers to students.

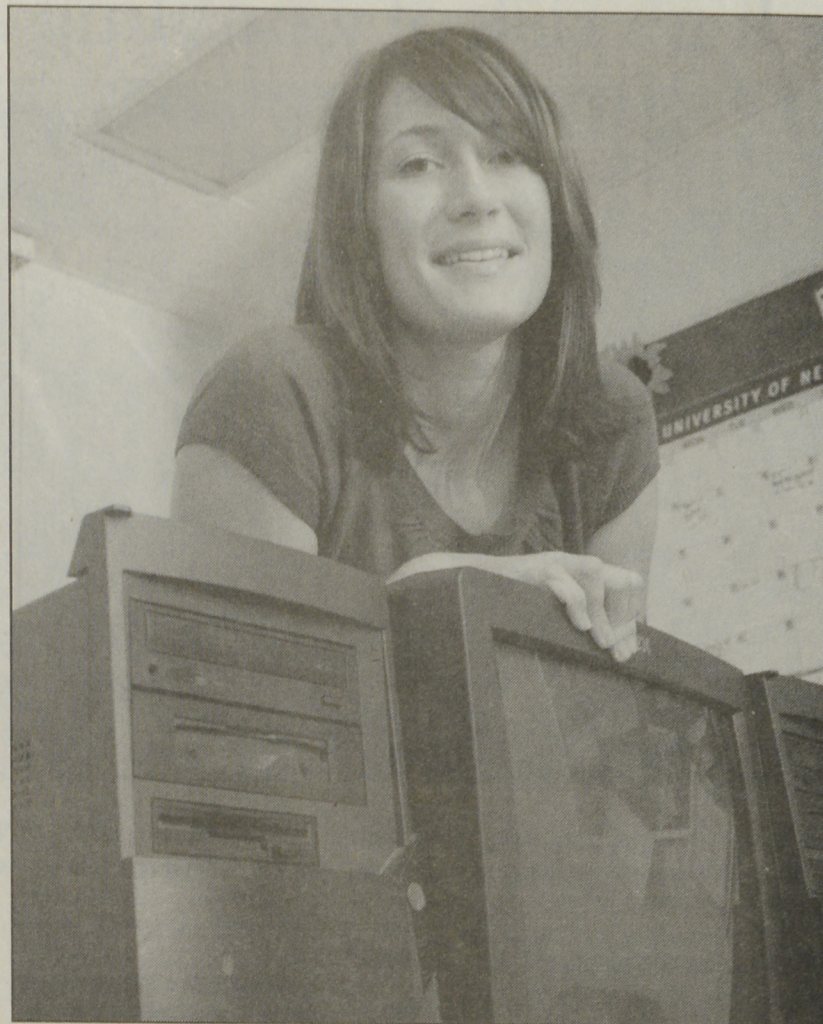
"The library renovation was good for the program this year – we ended up with a lot of computers. Usually we don't have many applicants, so anyone who applies definitely gets one. We do it again second semester; we start advertising for in mid-January."

As it gets colder and darker earlier, students looking for a free, but most importantly safe, ride home can turn to the Student Union's SafeRide van. From Sunday to Thursday, between 6-11pm, students can get a lift anywhere within walking distance in the city. Pick ups are at Head Hall and the front of the Student Union Building, where there are white boards letting students know where the van is and when it will be back.

"It really comes down to safety. We don't want students walking home alone after dark – we're trying to look out for them and their well-being," explains Wallace.

SafeRide will remain operational throughout the exam period and will start again next semester. Wallace is also looking to give the program a face-lift, including handing out suggestion and comment cards to riders in hopes of improving the service. "We're working for students, so I'm looking to get feedback from them. I think this way, we'll be able to improve the service to fit students' needs best."

Also continuing next semester is the Student Legal Information Center (SLIC). Room 123 of the SUB is dedicated to offering legal information to students dealing with small claims matters, landlord-tenant disputes, academic issues, and anything else pertaining to students.



Andrew Meade / The Brunswickian

VP Student Services, Keely Wallace, who just finished up the Great Computer Giveaway, is working on programs for students for next semester

Students can drop by to talk to a qualified law student or call the Student Union office to make an appointment. SLIC is open Monday to Friday, from 9:30am to 4:30pm.

The Red n' Black Revue is marking its 60th year in February and making a return to the Playhouse. Jessica Stutt is returning to direct for her second year (after taking last year off to perform), and Jason Henry is joining after playing in it for a couple years.

"This is where Anne Murray was discovered, and we're bringing it back to the Playhouse for the first time in years. We're really excited," exclaimed Wallace.

Coming in January, students can look for a new service from Wallace and the SU. She'll be working with Counseling Services to start up the second chapter of Active Minds in Canada.

Active Minds is an organization that works to "develop and support student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy groups" on university campuses. The University of Windsor is

the only other Canadian university with a chapter, and Wallace hopes following in their footsteps will be beneficial to students.

Wallace says one of the goals of the program is to help give students the tools to lead normal lives. "I'm looking at holding events and hosting seminars. First, I need to figure what students need," said Wallace.

The UNB chapter of Active Minds is planning for a January start date.

"I'm really looking to prevent the stigma surrounding mental health. I don't think students should be ashamed to admit they went to see a counselor. I think that's brave. It's really important to dispel the myths."

Wallace is really looking forward to what next semester is going to bring for the Student Union. "I'm really excited about what's coming up. I hope students get involved. They can always drop by my office or send me an email at services@unb.ca. The more involved they get, the more they benefit from the Union."

Old laws deny thousands citizenship

by Melanie Bell

Canadian citizenship is something most of us take for granted, but for Joe Taylor, the son of a Canadian veteran of World War II and his English bride, it is something of great value.

His family landed in Canada in 1946, at a time when the government promised citizenship to all war brides and their children. Months after their arrival, his parents' marriage fell through. Jenny Taylor moved back to England with her son. Both made the journey on Canadian passports.

Taylor grew up thinking of himself as Canadian, until he started looking into the matter of his citizenship in 2002. Despite having a Canadian father, he learned that thanks to an arcane set of laws, he did not possess the citizenship he had been promised. Taylor is far from being alone; with the new border laws requiring a passport to enter the United States, many who considered themselves Canadians are just discovering that they do not possess this status.

The term 'Lost Canadians' falls under several categories. One includes children who were born in hospitals across the border before Canada's public healthcare system came into existence. Censuses cite a number of 10,000 border babies, which many believe to be a gross underestimate. Another group of

people affected are the war brides and their children, who were not granted citizenship certificates. Their numbers are estimated to be between 25,000 and 30,000. Still more Canadians' citizenship has been lost due to illegitimate birth, whether it be their own or their ancestors'. The Citizenship Act passed in 1947 specified a number of provisions for loss of citizenship: "naturalization [of oneself or one's parent] outside of Canada, marriage, lengthy absence from Canada [ten years for veterans' wives and children, six for others], service in foreign military, [and] failure to apply for retention of citizenship or take up residence in Canada" by the age of 24. Many Canadians took one of these actions without knowledge of these stipulations until recently. Taylor, for no one, heard no mention of this new law in England. By the time he looked into the matter of his citizenship, his 24th birthday had long passed. Taylor's case has been complicated by the fact that his father's commander refused his parents permission to marry due to the upcoming D-Day strike, causing him to be "born out of wedlock," even though his parents officially married four months after his birth, before they set foot in Canada.

Due to the efforts of Don Chapman, a Canadian-born man who lost his citizenship when his father became an American, a law was instated in 2005 that nullifies the denial of citizenship due to foreign naturalization of parents. Most of the other conditions of the 1947 Act, however, are still in effect.

The United Nations' Refugee Agency has compared the plight of Lost Canadians to that of the stateless in nations such as Vietnam and Zimbabwe. To date, 450 Lost Canadians have approached the Department of Citizenship and Immigration regarding their citizenship. Despite CBC's studies showing the existence of 200,000 possible Lost Canadians, the Department refuses to acknowledge the existence of more.

Taylor appealed for citizenship at British Columbia's Federal Court and won, but the Federal Court of Appeal overturned this decision on November 2. If he can find the funds, he plans to take his case to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The current Canadian Citizenship Act states that anyone who is born in Canada to Canadian residents or has one or more Canadian parents is a citizen. Under these conditions, many Lost Canadians should qualify. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms denies discrimination based on factors such as birth out of wedlock, yet our country's courts will not recognize the predominance of the Canadian Constitution over an arcane set of laws instated more than a half century ago. 2006 has seen the approval of a new citizenship act that has transferred the duty of citizenship from political to judicial hands. Yet Diane Findley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, says that "overhauling the [1947 Citizenship] Act is a major, major effort and quite frankly, it's more than we could take on to help these people at this point in time."

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