

**Press Statement  
For Immediate Release**

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**Parties Graded on Environmental Issues**

**Green: 100%      People's Alliance: 64%      NDP: 61%      PC: 55%      Liberals: Did not respond**

For the seventh provincial election in a row, political parties have been rated on their commitment to New Brunswick's environment. The Green Party scored the highest with a rating of 100%, followed by the People's Alliance at 64%, the NDP at 61%, and the Progressive Conservatives with 55%. The NDP's score fell significantly by over 30% since the last provincial election, while the PC Party improved by over 10%. The Liberals declined to answer the survey, indicating that if they were re-elected, they would be willing to discuss environmental issues at that time.

The most disagreement among the parties is on the topics of forest management and energy policy. The Greens and the People's Alliance would both work to reduce clear-cutting on Crown Lands. These parties would also reverse the current government's decision to reduce forest conservation areas on Crown Land. The Green Party would ban herbicide spraying of public forests and the NDP would eliminate aerial spraying.

The Green Party is the only party that indicated they would work to increase the amount of public forests that will be managed to conserve old forests and wildlife habitat, place an upper limit on plantation establishment, and increase protected areas. The other three parties did not take positions on these issues. The NDP promised to undertake a comprehensive review of forest management practices, while the PC Party committed to hosting a provincial summit of forestry stakeholders to address forestry issues.

"Regardless of who is leading the government after the election, it's our hope that we will finally see forward-thinking improvements to Crown forest management, protected areas, and provincial parks management," said Roberta Clowater, Executive Director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, NB Chapter (CPAWS NB). "These are all sorely needed to keep New Brunswick on an equal footing and competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada and North America."

All responding parties would support a province-wide ban on uranium exploration and mining. On the matter of the refurbishment of the Point Lepreau nuclear power plant, the Green Party is the only party that would immediately cease the refurbishment. The NDP suggested that nuclear power should be phased out. The PC Party indicated that they fully support the nuclear industry.

The PCs and the Greens would implement a province-wide ban on hydraulic fracturing ("fracking"). According to the People's Alliance, this issue requires further study. The NDP would not commit to a ban.

On the climate change front, the Greens and NDP will work to develop strong emission-reduction targets for 2013-2018. The People's Alliance indicated that this issue would need further study. The NDP, the People's

Alliance, and the Greens would implement a plan for promoting micro-energy generation at the household and small business level that includes the option of selling surplus micro-energy to the provincial grid. The PC Party did not respond to these questions, indicating that they would appoint a new energy commission to study energy issues.

"The energy sector is in transition around the world. The high score of the Greens reflects their desire to guide this transition with environment in mind while noteworthy engagements from other parties include a PC ban on hydro-fracking for shale gas in the Province and support by the NDP and the People's Alliance for microgeneration," said Raphael Shay, Energy Coordinator with the Conservation Council of New Brunswick.

View parties' responses on-line at:

[http://www.nben.ca/aboutus/whatsup/nbenorg/nb\\_10/Responses\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.nben.ca/aboutus/whatsup/nbenorg/nb_10/Responses_ENG.pdf)

Questionnaire on-line at:

[http://www.nben.ca/aboutus/whatsup/nbenorg/nb\\_10/election\\_questionnaire\\_2010\\_parties.pdf](http://www.nben.ca/aboutus/whatsup/nbenorg/nb_10/election_questionnaire_2010_parties.pdf)

The research was conducted by The Project for Environmental Priorities (PEP), sponsored by the New Brunswick Environmental Network. PEP is a non-partisan education project designed to provide voters with information about where each party stands on environmental matters. The NBEN collected questions from its member groups and distributed the resulting 33-question survey to each party's headquarters. The parties were graded based on their responses. The New Brunswick Environmental Network is a communications network of 80 non-profit environmental groups from across the province.

## **Issue-by-Issue Breakdown**

### **Communities**

Faced with tight budgets, cities often look to surplus land sales as a means of generating revenue. Unfortunately, these "surplus" lands often include parkland that provides the community with valuable open space and recreational areas. In this category, all responding parties indicated that they would work to implement regulations so as to restrict the sale of parkland for commercial, residential or industrial development.

### **Health**

Because children are growing and developing, they are uniquely vulnerable to health issues caused by exposure to environmental hazards. There is a growing recognition that environmental factors may contribute to many of the leading causes of illnesses and illness-related deaths of Canadian children, including asthma, cancer, and birth defects. The PCs, the NDP, and the Greens all indicated that they would work to establish baseline monitoring of children's environmental health and adopt a Children's Environmental Health Bill of Rights for New Brunswick. The People's Alliance indicated that they would need further study before providing answers to these questions.

As of December 16, 2009, the sale and use of more than 240 over-the-counter lawn care pesticide products have been banned in the province of New Brunswick. However, there are health and environmental concerns with many cosmetic pesticides not covered by this legislation. The Greens, NDP, and PC Party would work to revise the Pesticides Control Act in order to ban the sale, supply, and use of all cosmetic pesticides. The People's Alliance again indicated that this issue required further study.

### **Food System**

Sewage biosolids from municipal wastewater treatment plants have been utilized on agricultural land in Canada, the United States, and Europe for more than 30 years. Applying sludge to farmland has been viewed as a quick fix for sewage disposal. However, more and more biologists agree that this method may not be as safe as was previously thought. Many are concerned about the accumulation of pathogens, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, heavy metals, and other contaminants in the soil where biosolids are used.

The Greens, People's Alliance, and PCs would limit the land application of wastewater products, including biosolids, on agricultural land. The NDP continues to study this issue with a view to regulation and has not yet made a policy decision.

### **Energy**

It is more profitable to homeowners and businesses to save energy than to purchase it. Similarly, it is more effective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by conserving energy than by producing new energy by other means. New Brunswick has many options for renewable energy, including wind, sun, tidal, and geothermal energy. The NDP and the Green Party would both work to implement a plan for meeting 20% of New Brunswick utility energy requirements through adoption of non-carbon alternative energy by 2015. The PC Party declined to provide a yes or no answer on this topic, while the People's Alliance indicated that the timeline is too tight.

The PC Party did not indicate whether or not they would implement a plan for promoting micro-energy generation at the household and small business level that includes the option of selling surplus micro-energy to the provincial grid. However, the other three responding parties indicated their support for this plan.

Both the NDP and the Green party will develop strong greenhouse gas emission-reduction targets for 2013-2018. The People's Alliance indicated that this issue would need further study, while the PCs will appoint a new Energy Commission to consider emission reductions.

Drilling and hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") for shale gas has recently become a hot topic with the discovery of natural gas in southeastern New Brunswick, and exploration soon to begin in other areas. There are many concerns with shale gas drilling and "fracking," such as waste-water management, water use, and local air quality.

The PCs and the Greens would work to implement a province-wide ban on fracking. The NDP would not work towards a ban and the People's Alliance indicated that the issue required further study. All responding parties would demand environmental impact assessments, including human health and ecological risk assessments, for the exploration stage of shale gas development. All responding parties also committed to holding a province-wide legislative hearing on the future of energy, mining, gas, and petroleum development in the province.

Uranium exploration companies have staked many acres of land in New Brunswick, including in and around communities of Hoyt and Cambridge Narrows, within the provincial capital's city limits, as well as in the Turtle Creek watershed, which supplies Moncton with drinking water. Uranium mining and milling produces long-lived radioactive tailings and by-products, which are linked to serious health conditions, such as certain cancers and reproductive problems. All responding parties indicated that they would implement a province-wide ban on uranium exploration and mining.

Several studies, have found that the true costs of nuclear energy are underestimated by a factor of three. Besides being capital-intensive, nuclear energy produces very little employment per amount invested. Additionally, there are environmental concerns with nuclear energy, such as the disposal of radioactive waste and the risk of meltdowns.

The Green Party is the only responding party that would work to immediately cease the Point Lepreau nuclear plant refurbishment. The other responding parties indicated that they would not cease the refurbishment, with the NDP suggesting that nuclear power needs to be phased out.

The Green Party and the People's Alliance would implement a province-wide ban on any new nuclear energy facilities. The NDP would not implement a ban, but would not allow the province to support the development of new plants, effectively preventing their construction. The Green Party is the only party that would ensure that no more nuclear waste was produced in New Brunswick. The PC Party fully supports the nuclear industry.

## **Transportation**

In New Brunswick, there is no public transportation system (rail or road) that effectively responds to the needs of both rural communities and urban centers. With a steady rise in gas prices, driving may become financially infeasible; municipalities and regions will need to implement a coherent transport strategy together. Working with local partners to provide a transit service that fulfills the needs of the community and ensures an effective use of public funding are key objectives for public transit.

The PCs, the People's Alliance, and the Green Party would all subsidize public transportation so that people in all areas of the province have access to reliable public transit service. The NDP indicated that the financial resources for such a program do not exist, no matter how desirable public transportation is.

## **Water**

The province of New Brunswick does not currently have a comprehensive strategy to manage its freshwater resources. Protection of water is the responsibility of many provincial government departments, depending on the issue and the location, and often results in a great deal of confusion and debate as to who is responsible and under which circumstances. Additionally the province has had a water classification program in place since 2002, but has failed to enact regulations to support the program.

All responding parties would develop recommendations for a comprehensive water protection policy for New Brunswick and eliminate all raw and primary municipal treated sewage discharges to water bodies. All responding parties would also work to implement the Water Classification Regulation for the Water Classification Program.

### **Public Forests**

Forested Crown Lands cover 50% of New Brunswick. They are held in trust by the Province for the benefit of this and future generations. The current arrangements for access to timber resources and forest management have upset nature's balance and prevent forest-based communities from generating jobs and economic growth from the surrounding forest.

Both the People's Alliance and the Green Party would work to reverse the government's decision to reduce conservation areas (deer wintering areas, buffer areas, old growth forest, and old forest communities) from 30% to 23-25%. These parties will also implement harvesting regulations/practices as so to reduce the use of the clear cutting technique by 50% in our province's forests.

The Green Party would increase the amount of forests on public land that will be managed to conserve old forests and wildlife habitat to a minimum of 35% of Crown Land. This party would also place an upper limit on plantation establishment to 15% of Crown Land. Additionally, the Greens would increase the protected areas on Crown Land to 10% of the province, which will allow more large protected areas to be established in the Restigouche wilderness and other areas.

Neither the NDP nor the PC Party responded to these forestry-related questions. Instead, the NDP will undertake a comprehensive review of forest management practices, while the Conservatives will host a provincial summit of forestry stakeholders to address the forestry issues.

The Green Party would ban herbicide spraying of public forests and the NDP would eliminate aerial spraying.

Community-based forestry is a growing and successful alternative in provinces such as British Columbia and in our neighbouring state of Maine. Community forestry has the following characteristics: the local community controls a clearly and legally defined area of forest; the local community is free from governmental and other outside pressure concerning the utilisation of that forest; if the forestry involves commercial sale of timber or other products, then the community is free from economic exploitation of markets or other pressure from outside forces; the community has long-term security of tenure over the forest and sees its future as being tied to the forest.

The NDP, the People's Alliance, and the Green Party all indicated their willingness to implement a community forestry pilot project to inform future community forestry policies. These three parties would also support communities in their aspirations to develop community forestry projects. On the issue of community forestry, the PC Party referred to their proposed provincial forestry summit.

Forest biomass is defined as the parts of a tree not traditionally used by the forest industry, including residual tree tops, branches, foliage, stems of trees and shrubs, and pre-existing dead woody debris. Forest biomass is an important component of a forest ecosystem, vital to nutrient cycling, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and overall forest health and at least a quarter of wildlife species in our Acadian forest depend on woody debris.

Eight allocations to mine biomass from New Brunswick's public forest have recently been granted. Currently, there is a lack of habitat protection measures for New Brunswick's forest species in the province's Crown Forest Biomass Policy.

Although the PC Party declined to comment on biomass harvesting, referring to their planned forestry summit, the Greens, the NDP, and the People's Alliance would implement guidelines that ensure the protection of biodiversity in biomass extraction.

### **Nature and Wildlife**

Biodiversity is defined as the variety of species and ecosystems on Earth and the ecological processes of which they are a part. With high levels of biodiversity, our ecosystems can better withstand and recover from a variety of disasters. Despite increased efforts at conservation, the rate of deteriorating and vanishing ecosystems remains high.

All responding parties would develop and implement an action plan under the provincial *Biodiversity Strategy* with the goals of ensuring the conservation of the genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity of New Brunswick, and to make sustainable use and development of New Brunswick's biological resources. They would also revise the endangered species list and legislate to protect native species. Additionally, all responding parties would update the provincial *Parks Act* to require that all provincial parks have a conservation plan that will protect park natural areas and habitats into the future.

The NB Environmental Trust Fund, operated by the Department of the Environment, forms the funding basis for many of our active environmental non-government groups. These groups work on a wide variety of environmental topics, from air and water pollution, watershed management and protection to energy efficiency and sustainable community planning. Since its inception, the ETF's total funding has gradually eroded and has been extensively used for political purposes.

All responding parties would overhaul the Environmental Trust Fund's project review and approvals process to increase transparency, to be less political, and to include an external committee. Additionally, they would all work to change the *Environmental Trust Fund Act* so that funding for environmental non-profits is ensured into the future.