

CCNB Recommendations for the Government of New Brunswick's Budget 2024

Throughout its 54-year history, the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) has strived to increase awareness of environmental issues and advocate for solutions by conducting research, educating the public, and implementing interventions. We at the CCNB are committed to promoting solutions that are socially, environmentally, and economically responsible.

Atlantic Canada has experienced an unprecedented number of climate-related disasters such as wildfires, floods, and warming oceans. Taking urgent action to mitigate these risks, protect communities, and improve public health is crucial. Investing in environmental initiatives and energy efficiency programs not only helps to mitigate climate change but also enhances affordability, improves public health, and promotes social equity. Furthermore, natural spaces and species in New Brunswick are in a dangerous decline, and it is necessary to act now to halt and reverse this crisis. Below, we provide recommendations for the Government of New Brunswick to consider while developing Budget 2024.

1. **Develop a plan to revitalize the Environmental Trust Fund (ETF):** The repeal of the New Brunswick Beverage Containers Act eliminated the dedicated revenue source for the Environmental Trust Fund (ETF). The ETF has been instrumental in providing critical financial support for various projects related to waste management, recycling, water quality, environmental education, food and food security, and many other conservation and environmental non-profit organizations' projects. Using ETF funds, non-profit organizations in New Brunswick have worked to support various programs under the purview of the government, including improving water quality across the province, stopping biodiversity loss and improving species at risk populations, strengthening climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, and reducing waste and other forms of pollution. Additionally, the funds received through the ETF are often leveraged at a 3:1 ratio to attract other funding partners to support the valuable work we have

been doing on behalf of all New Brunswickers. Using these combined funds, organizations employ many local, often young, New Brunswickers, providing people with rewarding work in their communities. For example, a report commissioned by the New Brunswick Environmental Network (NBEN) found that in 2016, 56 environmental non-profits employed at least 385 people, of which at least 166 were individuals 30 years old and under. Without ETF funding, our organizations and many others will be unable to contribute to the fulfillment of government-mandated programs or provide quality jobs, impacting local economies. In light of the repeal of the Beverage Containers Act and the Auditor General of New Brunswick's recent [review](#) of the ETF, we urge the New Brunswick government to invest in working with CCNB and other non-profit organizations to develop a long-term plan for rejuvenating the ETF. This plan should address the issues raised by the auditor general and establish a dedicated revenue stream for the ETF.

2. **Nature Protection and Recovery:** Allocate funds to protect and restore natural places in New Brunswick. In 2022, the government designated 277,900ha as new protected areas to fulfill its commitment to protect 10% of its lands and waters in the province. We encourage the government to budget for the work needed to set more ambitious protection targets that align with the federal target of 30% protection by 2030. We also encourage the government to invest in developing and implementing a biodiversity strategy that will maintain biodiversity and aid in recovering New Brunswick's threatened and at-risk species and their habitats. Moreover, we urge the government to uphold the rights of Indigenous communities and invest in co-creating new approaches to managing and stewarding protected areas that align with Indigenous values, relationships, and communities.
3. **Freshwater Resources:** Allocate funds to support the full implementation of the [Water Strategy for New Brunswick 2018 – 2028](#). CCNB recently [reviewed](#) the government's progress on the implementation of the Water Strategy and found that there is still much more work to do to ensure New Brunswick's communities and water resources are being protected. We urge the government to allocate funds to re-engage with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to work collaboratively on the implementation of the Water Strategy.
4. **Marine Resources:** Allocate funds to protect and restore marine and freshwater areas, especially salt marshes and other critical coastal features, to ensure the preservation of their biodiversity and ecological integrity. We recommend provincial support for marine spatial planning, MPA network planning, and inland watershed management planning, particularly for those coastal and freshwater

systems most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to activities that damage their resiliency.

5. **Forest Resources:** Allocate funds to protect and restore our degraded forest ecosystems, particularly the Wabanaki (Acadian) forest. In 2023, the government launched “[Our Forests Are For Everyone A Long-Term Management Strategy for Healthy & Sustainable Forests](#)”. We urge the government to budget sufficient funds to fully implement the goals and objectives committed to by the government in the strategy, particularly those related to conservation, water protection, and working collaboratively with Indigenous communities. We also request the government consider funding projects that examine silviculture treatments that provide an alternative to herbicide use.
6. **Remediation of Contaminated Sites:** In 2022, the [auditor general](#) found that the government “has a backlog of over 1,000 contaminated site files spanning 35 years, and 75 per cent of open files have remained so for 10 years or longer”. We continue to urge the government to adequately fund its contaminated sites management process relating to its legislative authority, execution, performance monitoring and reporting.
7. **Electrify Public Transit and School Buses:** The Government of New Brunswick has set ambitious climate and electrification targets for 2030, including reducing GHG emissions to 46% below 2003 levels and requiring 50% of new light-duty vehicles sold in New Brunswick to be zero-emission vehicles. While electric school buses would contribute to these goals, only a few are currently on the road in New Brunswick. We ask the government to allocate funds towards electrifying public transportation and school buses as it is essential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality, especially for our youth.
8. **Dedicated Funding for Climate Change Secretariat:** The Climate Change Secretariat is responsible for tracking all government departments in reaching the goals outlined in the provincial [Climate Action Plan](#). Adequate funding to support the work of the secretariat is necessary to not only ensure the implementation of the Climate Action Plan, but to maintain government accountability and transparency through the [Progress Reports](#).
9. **Climate-Resilient Homes:** Invest in affordable home energy solutions to mitigate climate impacts and reduce household expenses. According to the [Climate Action Plan](#), the province committed to adopting the new National Energy Code of Canada, and progressively adopting more stringent tiers within the new energy code. Investing in training and adopting these codes is essential, as they are expected to benefit both renters and homeowners.

10. **Home Energy Affordability Assistance Program:** Allocate more funding to energy affordability assistance programs, especially for low-to-moderate-income home renters and owners. Since 2015, [SaveEnergyNB](#) has eliminated \$773 million in lifetime energy costs for ratepayers and removed 746,802 tonnes of GHG emissions from the atmosphere. Energy efficiency programs, such as the [Enhanced Energy Savings Program \(EESP\)](#), have proven to be successful in reducing GHG emissions and monetary savings for ratepayers. However, \$150 million is required to eliminate the waitlist for the EESP, which currently consists of [16,000 households](#).
11. **Renewable Electricity Grid:** Allocate resources for transitioning to a zero-emissions electricity grid based on renewables (wind, solar, and storage). The province has made commitments to reach a net-zero economy by 2050 in their [Climate Action Plan](#), in which a major step is reaching a net-zero grid by 2035 as outlined in the province's [Powering our Economy and the World with Clean Energy](#) report. Provincial investments in clean energy solutions will help the province reach its goals.
12. **Revitalize the Climate Change Fund:** Now that the Federal government has implemented the carbon tax, the source for the **Climate Change Fund** has stopped. The Provincial Government should either work with the Federal Government to find strategies to replenish this fund, or the province must fund this initiative themselves. One option is to impose stricter regulations within the Output-Based Pricing System (OBPS) to replenish these critical funds.
13. **Municipal Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plans:** Allocate funds to empower local municipalities in implementing tailored adaptation and mitigation strategies to address climate change impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions within their communities.
14. **Just Transition:** Support workers and communities affected by the shift to low-carbon solutions. Invest in training and green job creation.
15. **Environmental Literacy, Education, and Training:** Invest in New Brunswick youth, the green economy, and our environment by funding programs that increase Canadian's understanding of and appreciation for the natural world, issues impacting our environment and health, and solutions for our climate and biodiversity crises.
16. **Do not invest in fossil fuel projects.** We also urge the government to not invest or subsidize any fossil fuel infrastructure and to identify and eliminate or redirect subsidies that harm nature or New Brunswick's growing green economy.