



July 18, 2025

Re: A call for responsible stewardship and sound governance

Dear Members of the Legislative Assembly,

As the federal government rolls out plans for ambitious “nation-building projects,” New Brunswick must ensure that it does not repeat past mistakes that have polluted our communities, compromised our health, and left taxpayers footing the bill. As our elected representatives, you have an opportunity to do better, to protect our environment, safeguard public health, and steward our resources for future generations.

Given the number and scale of past failed industrial ventures in our province, plans to fast-track so-called “nation-building” developments are concerning. New Brunswick has a history of prioritizing short-term financial gain at the expense of long-term stability, environmental stewardship, and public health. When proper oversight is sidelined, we don't just risk our natural heritage, we risk the economic resilience of our communities, the health of our families, and burden taxpayers with cleaning up failed projects. Responsible development means thinking beyond the next quarter and investing in policies that create lasting value for future generations.

We have already seen what happens when environmental oversight fails. This province has a [staggering backlog of contaminated sites](#), a direct result of poor regulation, tracking, and enforcement by the provincial government. Recent audits have shown that critical steps in managing these sites have often been missed, shifting enormous clean-up costs onto taxpayers. For example, the Smurfit-Stone pulp mill site in Bathurst has saddled the public with [a projected \\$12–16 million remediation bill](#), a clear outcome of insufficient regulatory enforcement.

Even smaller-scale projects show the financial risks of poor environmental protection. Sackville's stormwater retention pond project unexpectedly [uncovered 14,000 tonnes](#) of contaminated soil, [causing big budget overruns](#). This isn't a one-off. It's part of a dangerous pattern where weak oversight leads to long-term health risks, surprise costs, and frustration for communities left dealing with the consequences.

The legacy of industrial pollution in New Brunswick is not just financial. Historical pesticide use, notably DDT sprayed to combat spruce budworm until 1968, still contaminates local ecosystems. Recent studies [show alarming levels of DDT in brook trout](#), posing ongoing health threats to wildlife and residents decades later.

Belledune is another painful example of what happens when the government ignores environmental health risks in favour of development. A 2006 [Conservation Council report](#) uncovered a decades-long pattern of government inaction surrounding heavy metal contamination from the lead smelter in Belledune. Despite receiving repeated warnings about elevated levels of lead, cadmium, and arsenic in local soil, seafood, and gardens, as well as clear evidence of elevated cancer and death rates, the government failed to act to protect New Brunswickers.

Meanwhile, residents of heavily industrialized communities, such as Saint John, continue to experience [disproportionate rates of respiratory illnesses](#) linked to air pollution. Historically marginalized communities—including Indigenous peoples and lower-income residents—[often bear the greatest burden](#), facing prolonged water quality issues and higher pollution exposure in ongoing environmental discrimination.

New Brunswickers from all walks of life share a deep connection to nature, whether hunting, fishing, hiking, or simply spending time outdoors. That's why so many people, regardless of political stripe, are worried about the direction we're heading. [Less than 1%](#) of New Brunswick's old-growth Acadian forests remain, and [91 species are listed as at risk](#). These numbers are a clear warning. When protections are weak or poorly enforced, we put not only our natural heritage at risk, but also the well-being of our communities and future generations. New Brunswickers expect responsible leadership that safeguards the places we all love.

Climate change adds urgency to these challenges. Severe weather, like Fiona, is becoming more common, showing [the real and escalating costs](#) of a changing climate. Building resilient infrastructure and protecting natural buffers like forests and wetlands are crucial strategies to minimize future costs.

A strategic shift toward renewable energy and sustainable development [offers great economic potential](#). Investing in renewable energy, home energy retrofits, and green infrastructure creates more jobs per dollar than fossil fuel industries, reducing long-term costs and risks. They are practical, proven ways to strengthen our economy and protect our future.

We respectfully urge you to:

- Strengthen environmental oversight, especially concerning contaminated site remediation and wildlife protection;
- Provide adequate resources for timely and thorough environmental impact assessments;
- Hold polluters fully accountable for their environmental and public health impacts;
- Prioritize renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure projects;
- Commit to transparent and inclusive decision-making, addressing ongoing environmental injustice.

As legislators, you are entrusted with the responsibility of building a stronger, more resilient New Brunswick. That means making wise decisions, grounded in evidence, and ensuring we don't pass today's costs onto tomorrow's families. Robust environmental regulations,

prioritizing renewable energy, and equipping government departments with adequate resources are not barriers to progress but essential tools to protect our environment, health, and economy. Let's not repeat past mistakes and instead set New Brunswick on a responsible, prosperous, and resilient path forward.

Sincerely,

Beverly Gingras,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beverly Gingras".

Beverly (Bev) Gingras
Executive Director
Conservation Council of New Brunswick