



The Honourable Minister Legacy
Minister of Finance
Government of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Re: Recommendations for Budget 2026–2027 – Advancing a Just, Climate-Resilient, Nature-Positive Future for New Brunswick

Dear Minister Legacy,

For more than 55 years, the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB) has worked to protect the province’s air, water, forests, and communities through evidence-based policy and collaborative action. As highlighted by the [Climate Change Risk Assessment](#), New Brunswick is experiencing cascading and compounding pressures: accelerating climate impacts, biodiversity loss, coastal erosion and flooding, rising infrastructure repair costs, water security concerns, rising health care costs, and affordability challenges affecting households and municipalities alike. These challenges are deeply interconnected. Clean air and safe drinking water, healthy forests and wetlands, resilient coastlines, and a stable climate are not separate from economic security — they are foundational to it.

At the same time, New Brunswickers are facing significant cost-of-living pressures, including rising energy, food, and housing costs. Climate change is intensifying these challenges by increasing insurance premiums, straining household energy budgets during extreme weather, and driving infrastructure repair costs that ultimately fall on taxpayers. These impacts are not felt equally. Low-income households, seniors, rural residents, and Indigenous communities are often the least able to absorb rising costs while also being more exposed to climate-related disruptions. Strategic environmental investments should therefore be understood not only as climate policy but also as cost-of-living protection measures that can reduce long-term household expenses, stabilize energy costs, and strengthen resilience for those most vulnerable.

The fiscal implications are already evident. Extreme weather events damage infrastructure, contaminated sites create long-term liabilities, and pollution undermines public health and workforce productivity. Framing environmental protection as in tension with economic growth presents a false trade-off; a strong, competitive economy depends on healthy ecosystems and healthy people.

Budget 2026–2027 offers an opportunity to align fiscal planning with this reality by strengthening environmental protections, modernizing infrastructure and energy systems, expanding conservation, and reducing long-term public risk. Proactive investment today will help avoid higher costs tomorrow while positioning New Brunswick to compete in a rapidly transitioning global economy.

CCNB respectfully offers the following recommendations to support ecological sustainability, responsible governance, and long-term fiscal resilience for current and future generations.

1. Strengthen Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for Clean Air and Water

The government has committed to modernizing environmental legislation and strengthening protections for clean air and safe drinking water. Delivering on those commitments requires adequate enforcement capacity, monitoring systems, and transparency tools. These priorities align with ministerial mandates to update environmental statutes and strengthen environmental protection and oversight.

1.1 Modernize and Enforce Clean Air and Clean Water Legislation

- Expand compliance and inspection staff.
- Upgrade provincial air and water monitoring networks.
- Improve public reporting and transparency tools.
- Strengthen enforcement mechanisms and penalties.

Estimated Investment: \$10 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Reinvestment of provincial environmental fines and penalties
- Federal environmental monitoring partnerships

2. Accelerate Biodiversity Protection and Water Strategy Implementation

Expanding conservation and advancing biodiversity protection reflect ministerial commitments to increase protected lands and waters and strengthen long-term ecological stewardship. Biodiversity loss increases climate vulnerability, reduces carbon sequestration capacity, and undermines economic sectors such as forestry, fisheries, agriculture, and tourism.

2.1 Expand Protected Areas and Advance Conservation Targets

- Secure priority conservation lands and waters
- Support Indigenous co-governance and stewardship agreements
- Strengthen ecological monitoring systems

Estimated Investment: \$25 million over three years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Canada Nature Fund (federal cost-sharing agreements)
- Natural Heritage Conservation Program (federal program)
- Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund (federal program)
- Partnerships with Indigenous governments and land trusts

2.2 Implement and Operationalize a Provincial Biodiversity Strategy

Operationalizing a Biodiversity Strategy supports commitments to measurable conservation progress and improved environmental governance.

- Strategy implementation and performance measurement
- Cumulative effects assessment
- Species-at-risk recovery
- Habitat restoration
- Indigenous-led stewardship

Estimated Investment: \$8–12 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Canada Nature Fund – Species at Risk streams
- Indigenous Guardians Program (federal)
- Reinvestment of natural resource royalties

- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund (for biodiversity projects with adaptation or carbon sequestration co-benefits)

2.3 Fully Implement the Provincial Water Strategy

While not explicitly mandate-driven, water stewardship complements commitments to strengthen environmental protection, public health safeguards, and natural resource sustainability.

- Watershed planning and source water protection
- Expanded groundwater monitoring
- Strengthened cumulative impact assessment
- Stable funding for watershed organizations

Estimated Investment: \$15 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal freshwater and infrastructure programs
- Industrial water-use cost recovery mechanisms (e.g., proposed data centres)

3. Invest in Climate Mitigation and Energy Efficiency

The government has committed to advancing climate resilience, modernizing infrastructure, and accelerating the energy transition. Climate change is already increasing disaster recovery costs, straining municipal infrastructure, and creating fiscal pressures. Strategic mitigation investments reduce long-term liabilities and improve affordability. These actions align with ministerial commitments to infrastructure modernization, energy transition, and climate resilience planning.

3.1 Expand Deep Retrofit and Efficiency Programs

Energy efficiency is the most cost-effective emissions reduction strategy available and also alleviates energy poverty. Deep retrofits reduce household energy bills, lower peak demand pressures on the grid, improve indoor air quality, and stimulate local employment.

Estimated Investment: \$50 million over two years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Low Carbon Economy Fund

- Federal Greener Homes programs
- Reinvestment of provincial carbon pricing revenues
- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund

3.2 Support Municipal Climate Adaptation and Coastal Resilience

Support for adaptation and coastal resilience reflects commitments to address erosion, infrastructure vulnerability, and climate risk management.

- Flood mitigation and stormwater upgrades
- Coastal erosion planning and implementation
- Nature-based solutions such as wetland and shoreline restoration

Estimated Investment: \$20 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund
- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund
- Infrastructure capital reallocation toward resilience upgrades

4. Accelerate Grid Electrification and Transportation Transition

Electrification strengthens energy independence, reduces exposure to fossil fuel price volatility, and supports emissions reduction commitments. It also improves air quality and public health outcomes. These initiatives align with ministerial mandates to electrify government fleets, modernize energy systems, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

4.1 Modernize and Decarbonize the Electricity Grid

- Renewable energy procurement
- Battery storage
- Transmission and distribution upgrades

- Smart grid technologies

Estimated Investment: \$75–100 million over three years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Smart Renewables and Electrification Pathways Program
- Canada Infrastructure Bank
- Utility capital investments recovered through regulated rates

4.2 Expand Electric Vehicle Infrastructure and Incentives

Estimated Investment: \$25 million over three years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program
- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund
- Transportation capital reallocation
- Levy infrastructure users for cost recovery

4.3 Accelerate Electric School Bus Procurement

Estimated Investment: \$40–60 million over three years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Zero Emission Transit Fund
- Energy savings reinvestment
- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund

4.4 Invest in Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) Technology and Grid Resilience

- Reduce peak electricity demand and associated systems cost
- Avoid or defer expensive generation and transmission infrastructure upgrades

- Improve grid stability during outages and extreme weather events
- Provide backup power to schools and communities during emergencies

Estimated investment \$15-20 million dollars over 3 years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Federal Smart Renewables and Electrification Pathways program
- Canada Infrastructure Bank Clean Power and Storage Financing
- Reinvestment of peak demand cost savings

5. Revitalize and Modernize the Environmental Trust Fund (ETF)

Strengthening the ETF supports delivery of environmental protection, climate adaptation, and conservation commitments identified across ministerial portfolios.

5.1 Restore Stable Revenue

Target Funding Level: \$20–25 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Dedicated environmental levy
- Portion of provincial carbon pricing revenues
- Provincial Environmental penalties and enforcement recoveries

5.2 Modernize Governance and Accountability

- Align ETF priorities with biodiversity, climate, and water protection goals
- Introduce multi-year funding streams
- Strengthen outcome reporting

6. Address Contaminated Sites and Legacy Liabilities

Contaminated sites represent long-term fiscal risk. Proactive remediation reduces public health impacts and prevents escalating cleanup liabilities. Strengthening oversight and

financial assurance reflects commitments to responsible environmental governance and accountability.

6.1 Establish a Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund

- Assess and remediate high-risk sites
- Protect drinking water sources
- Improve public transparency around environmental liabilities

Estimated Investment: \$20–30 million over three years

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Strengthened industrial bonding requirements
- Cost recovery from responsible parties
- Federal contaminated sites remediation programs

6.2 Strengthen Financial Assurance Requirements

Update bonding and financial security requirements to prevent cleanup costs from being transferred to taxpayers.

7. Strengthen Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Public Participation

Robust EIAs support transparent, science-based decision-making and responsible development. Strengthening assessment capacity aligns with commitments to transparency and public accountability.

7.1 Increase Technical Review Capacity

Estimated Investment: \$5–7 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Proponent-paid review fees
- Cost recovery through project application charges

7.2 Establish a Public Participation Funding Program

Estimated Investment: \$3–5 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Proponent-paid participation levies
- Project review cost-recovery mechanisms

8. Invest in Environmental Literacy and Public Education

Environmental literacy supports workforce development, climate adaptation, biodiversity stewardship, and informed public participation. Strengthening environmental education complements commitments to sustainable development, community resilience, and long-term economic competitiveness.

- Support environmental and climate education programming in schools and communities
- Provide stable funding for non-profit environmental literacy initiatives
- Integrate climate and biodiversity education into workforce development strategies
- Support youth engagement and leadership initiatives

Estimated Investment: \$5–8 million annually

Suggested Funding Sources:

- Environmental Trust Fund allocations
- New Brunswick Climate Change Fund
- Integration within education and workforce development budgets

Closing

New Brunswick's long-term economic strength depends on the health of its ecosystems and the well-being of its people. A stable climate, clean air and water, resilient coastlines, productive forests, and healthy communities are not barriers to economic development — they are the foundation of it.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are already imposing real costs on households, municipalities, businesses, and the provincial treasury. Infrastructure damage from extreme weather, contaminated site liabilities, health impacts from pollution, and the erosion of natural

capital all carry fiscal consequences. Choosing to delay action or weaken environmental protections does not create savings; it shifts higher costs into the future.

Budget 2026–2027 provides an opportunity to reject the false trade-off between jobs and environmental protection. Sustainable economic growth requires strong environmental standards, transparent decision-making, responsible resource management, and investment in clean energy and conservation. Protecting environmental and human health strengthens workforce productivity, reduces long-term public expenditures, and positions New Brunswick competitively in a rapidly transitioning global economy.

At the same time, CCNB recognizes the Province's constrained fiscal environment and the need for innovative approaches to financing environmental priorities. Leveraging federal funding streams, advancing polluter-pays mechanisms, exploring targeted levies and cost-recovery tools, strengthening public-private and community partnerships, and aligning investments with emerging national and international programs can help mobilize resources without placing undue pressure on provincial budgets. Strategic use of these mechanisms can ensure that those who benefit from or contribute to environmental impacts share responsibility for solutions, while maximizing opportunities to attract external investment.

By investing in climate resilience, biodiversity recovery, electrification, clean air and water protections, environmental literacy, and responsible governance, the Province can safeguard both present livelihoods and future prosperity.

CCNB appreciates the opportunity to provide these recommendations and looks forward to continued dialogue on building a resilient and sustainable New Brunswick.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beverly Gingras". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beverly Gingras,
Executive Director
Conservation Council of New Brunswick