

## The 2010 Provincial Election in New Brunswick<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*For the first time in New Brunswick history, a government was defeated after its first term in power. David Alward, leader of the Progressive Conservatives, defeated Shawn Graham and his Liberal government on 27 September 2010, winning 42 of 55 seats. The Liberals won the remaining 13. Despite boasting a small lead in the public opinion polls, the Liberals were in serious electoral trouble going into the election campaign. A series of misfires and policy reversals, culminating with the disastrous proposal to sell the province's publicly-owned power utility NB Power to Hydro Quebec, had destroyed the Liberal government's credibility. Indeed, its low credibility might well have been what motivated the Liberals to try to sell NB Power in the first place: running out of time in its four-year mandate, the Graham government was desperate to find a single "quick-fix" which would reverse party fortunes. However, the gamble backfired, and the 37<sup>th</sup> General Election provided the Liberals with their lowest vote percentage (34.4%) in their history.*

### Introduction

New Brunswick's 37<sup>th</sup> General Election was held 27 September 2010. David Alward's Progressive Conservatives (PCs) defeated incumbent Shawn Graham's Liberals in a landslide, winning 42 seats to the Liberals' 13.<sup>2</sup> No other party won a seat. It was an election of several firsts: Graham's defeat marked the first time in New Brunswick history that a government was defeated after just one term. The election also saw a record number of candidates (235), and, although only eight were elected, these included a record number of women (71). As a percentage of eligible voters, turnout increased slightly in 2010 to 69.5%, but the actual number of votes cast (374,902, of which 3,160 were rejected) is the lowest since 1978.<sup>3</sup>

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Five parties contested the election, tying the record set in 1995 and repeated in 1999. The PCs received 181,397 (48.4%)<sup>4</sup> votes compared to 177,582 (47.1%) in 2006. Meanwhile, the Liberals saw their support drop from 176,443 in 2006 (46.8%) to 128,078 in 2010 (34.2%), their lowest percentage level in New Brunswick's history. Of the parties which did not win seats, the NDP received the most support with a popular vote just over 10%. NDP leader Roger Duguay also had the best showing by a candidate from a party other than the Liberals or the PCs, finishing second in Tracadie-Sheila with 32% of the vote. The other two parties were the Green Party, led by Jack MacDougall, and the People's Alliance of New Brunswick (PANB), led by Kris Austin. The Greens garnered 4.5% of the popular vote, with a high of 14% obtained by Margaret Tusz-King who finished third in Tantramar. The PANB, which was only registered as a party 9 June 2010, fielded 14 candidates and won just over 5% of the popular vote in those ridings (1.2% province wide). PANB leader Austin, running in Grand-Lake Gagetown, had the best showing at 20%.

Two ridings (Saint John Harbour and Bathurst) required recounts. The recount in Saint John Harbour saw first-time PC candidate Carl Killen defeat Liberal incumbent and cabinet minister Ed Dougherty by just seven votes. The PC candidate in Bathurst, Nancy McKay, lost to Liberal incumbent Brian Kenny by 75 votes. But she withdrew her request for recount after being appointed Premier Alward's new chief of staff.

**Table 1: Party standings and election results: 1999 to 2010**

	1999	at diss.	2003	at diss.	2006	at diss.	2010
<b>PCs</b>	44	47	28	28	26	23	42
<b>Libs</b>	10	7	26	26	29	32	13
<b>NDP</b>	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>PANB</b>	*	*	*	*	*	*	0
<b>Green</b>	*	*	*	*	*	*	0
<b>IND</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0 <sup>5</sup>	0
<b>total</b>	55	55	55	55	55	55	55

\* did not run candidates

## The Players

Shawn Graham won the Liberal leadership in 2002 and surprised many by his strong showing in the 2003 election, in which the Liberals won 26 seats and came within nine votes of tying the PCs.<sup>6</sup> In 2006, he defeated the incumbent PC government led by Bernard Lord by winning 29 seats, a gain of three (Desserud, 2006). The 2010 election campaign, then, was Graham's third as Liberal leader, but he now carries the unfortunate distinction of being the first premier of the province to fail to win a second term. Although Graham's near-success in 2003 convinced the party he should stay on as leader for the 2006 campaign, his defeat in 2010 came as a huge

disappointment to Liberals. On election night Graham announced that he would resign, formally doing so 9 November 2010.

David Alward had served in Lord's cabinet as minister of agriculture, fisheries and aquiculture (2003-2006). He became leader of the PCs in 18 October 2008 following Lord's resignation 13 December 2006. Critics argued that Alward's quiet, self-effacing style undermined his leadership abilities: New Brunswickers were used to – and demanded – that their leaders be dynamic, energetic and quickly achieve a national profile. However, Alward's supporters noted that the PC leader represented calmness and stability, characteristics which voters would appreciate given the turmoil of the previous four years.<sup>7</sup> Alward's landslide victory in 2010 adds credence to this argument.

The NDP was led by a Roger Duguay, a former Roman Catholic priest who had run and lost in the 2006 election.<sup>8</sup> However, Duguay finished third in his riding in 2006 and his 26% showing was the strongest of any NDP candidate. Almost immediately after that election, Duguay openly criticised then-NDP leader Allison Brewer, complaining that her limited ability to speak French, coupled with her pro-abortion, pro-gay marriage platform hurt the NDP in northeastern New Brunswick, a region where the vast majority are both Roman Catholic and Francophone (CBC, 2006). When Brewer resigned as leader, Duguay was the first to put his name forward, and on 13 October 2007 was elected leader. Duguay managed to improve the NDP's overall popular vote in 2010, and his party's 10% was not only significantly better than the 5% it received in 2006, but was their best showing since 1991. However, on 25 October 2010 Duguay also resigned as leader. Dominic Cardy, who had been the party's campaign manager for the 2010 election, was acclaimed leader 2 March 2011.

Aside from Graham and Alward, the best known of the party leaders in the 2010 election was certainly Green Party leader Jack MacDougall. His reputation, however, comes from his former days with the Liberal Party. MacDougall had been a longtime Liberal backroom organizer, and was once the provincial party's executive director. In 2002, he ran against Shawn Graham for the party leadership. The Liberals, then still suffering from their humiliating defeat in 1999, were using a hybrid, delegate-selection process (Cross, 2002) and it became clear soon after the process began that Graham would be the victor. The other candidates dropped out, leaving only MacDougall who stayed in the race arguing that the Liberals could not afford an acclamation. MacDougall's concern that leadership contests should be contested now seems ironic, given he was acclaimed as Green Party leader on 24 September 2009. The Greens ran 50 (out of 55) candidates, although they were quick to admit that some of these were paper candidates only. This might explain why the Green candidate in Oromocto received zero votes. The candidate, it seems, was not eligible to vote in the riding and so could not even vote for himself!

People's Alliance of New Brunswick is a new party led by Kris Austin, himself a newcomer to New Brunswick politics. The PANB was one of two political organizations that grew out of the several protest movements that dominated NB politics throughout Graham's tenure. One, of which I will speak of later, was the public interest group Democracy for New Brunswick (DFNB); the second, the new political party, is the PANB. It would be simplistic, but generally accurate, to say that the first of these represents the political left, while the PANB attracted supporters from

the right. Both organizations, however, also represent protest populism, which continues to be a persistent and significant – albeit limited – element in New Brunswick politics. The PANB ran candidates in 14 ridings, many of which correspond with the ridings that in 1991 supported another party of populist protest, the Confederations of Regions (see Belkhodja, 1999, 2002; Martin, 1996, 1998; Cross, 2002).<sup>10</sup>

Third party organizations, such as the Toll Busters in 1999, have often played significant roles in New Brunswick elections. The 2010 election was no different, except for the comprehensive nature of the involvement and protest this time around. The most significant of the several third party groups was Democracy for NB, a public interest group led by Thomas Mann who is also the Executive Director of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour. Describing their group as a “Coalition of New Brunswickers: public power for the public good,” DFNB grew out of the “NB Power not for sale” protest movement, and now presents its purpose as facilitating “the participation of the citizens of New Brunswick in the development of public policy for the public good” (DFNB, 2101). The group held public engagement meetings across the province throughout the campaign (and before) and published weekly report cards rating the parties according to their record on democratic reform, the environment, and so on. The Liberals consistently scored the worst overall, failing almost everything in DFNB’s perspective.

### **Lead up**

In the 2006 campaign, Graham and his Liberal Party promised the province would become self sufficient by 2026. He also promised something his party referred to as “transformational change.” The first harkened back to Frank McKenna, the premier from 1987 to 1997 who became nationally known for his aggressive selling of New Brunswick as a province “open for business.” The second slogan – transformational change – reminded (or was meant to) voters of the brilliant years of Liberal premier Louis Robichaud (1960-1970), whose programme of Equal Opportunity transformed NB in much the same way that the Quebec Liberals under Jean Lesage forged a new Quebec identity through that province’s Quiet Revolution.<sup>11</sup>

The comparisons to McKenna and Robichaud are important because the Graham government’s desire to replicate the success of its two most famous predecessors may well explain the scale and ambitiousness (some would say recklessness) of the several policies of reform that his government undertook in the years from 2006 to 2010. Furthermore, the failure of the Liberal’s initial attempts at “transformational change” likely convinced them that, in the closing years of their mandate, they needed to try an even bolder initiative. As will be discussed below, this initiative was the ill-fated proposal to sell the province’s electrical utility, NB Power, to Hydro Quebec.

Things began to go wrong for the Liberals almost immediately after taking power in 2006. One of Premier Graham’s first moves was to strike a commission charged with recommending sweeping reforms to the province’s post-secondary education system.<sup>12</sup> This was followed by another commission whose mandate was to study the effectiveness and impact of province’s French programmes currently being conducted under the Anglophone school system.<sup>13</sup>

The commission's report on post-secondary education (Miner and L'Écuyer, 2007) was presented 14 September 2007, and was met with unprecedented protests across the province. The Report called for a comprehensive reorganization of the province's post-secondary education system, allowing for increased integration of the community colleges with the universities. As well, the satellite campuses of the University of New Brunswick and the Université de Moncton would become independent, hybrid institutions ("polytechnics") without academic senates or faculty tenure, and would be mandated to provide training programmes as directed by local community advisory boards (Hobson, 2007; Desserud, 2007c). Protests against the report continued all through the fall 2007 term and into the winter 2008. Finally, in his "State of the Province" address delivered 31 January 2008, Premier Graham announced that a working group made up of the province's university presidents and community college principals would be asked to come up with a more palatable counter proposal. Meanwhile, the polytechnic recommendation would be shelved (GNB, 2008).

No sooner had the Graham government doused the flames started by the Miner and L'Écuyer Report when the French Second Language Commission (FSLC) delivered its recommendations, 27 February 2008. The FSLC called for the replacement of New Brunswick's Early French immersion (with a Grade One entry) and core French programmes with a new integrated curriculum under which students would begin French language education in Grade Five, with the option of enrolling in late-immersion in Grade Six.<sup>14</sup> However, parent groups banded together and took the province to court, arguing that the announced changes did not come after a reasonable consultation period. Justice H. H. McLellan agreed, ruling that the parents "had a reasonable and legitimate expectation that programs would not be cut without them having a real opportunity to be heard by the minister" (McLellan, 2008).<sup>15</sup> Lamrock, then minister for education, decided that appealing the decision was not politically wise, and so the proposed changes were cancelled.

Meanwhile, the crisis enveloping the province's forestry industry continued to worsen, with several mills closing in northern New Brunswick. NB's mining industry and manufacturing sectors were faring no better. One factor identified as a major cause of the province's economic woes was its power rates, specifically those charged to commercial customers. This, coupled with the fact that NB Power's debt was growing at an alarming rate (close to \$5 billion in 2009), and that much of the utility's assets were in desperate need of refurbishment, convinced the Graham government to try to solve the NB Power "problem" with one simple move: sell the utility and most of its assets to Hydro Quebec.

The announcement that New Brunswick had reached a deal with the Province of Quebec to sell NB Power came on 29 October 2009, and it hit the province (to use an overused cliché) like a bombshell. Premier Graham and Quebec premier Jean Charest held a press conference outside the Premier's Office in Fredericton's Centennial Building, and no sooner were the microphones turned off than people took to the streets. It has often been noted in New Brunswick that the media monopoly enjoyed by the Irving-owned Brunswick News Inc. – which publishes the province's three daily newspapers and owns almost two dozen weeklies – acts to stifle public protest (Steuter, 2003; Steuter and Martin, 1999, 2000; Walker, 2010). This may be true; however, controlling print media and for that matter TV and radio matters less in the age of

Internet and social media. This was certainly apparent throughout the protests against the sale of NB Power: Facebook sites such as “Citizens Against The Sale of New Brunswick NB Power,” “NO to Sale of NB Power,” “Say No to Sale of NB Power! Stand up Speak out New Brunswick!” and “Time for Shawn Graham to resign” quickly sprung up, amassing impressive membership lists (CBC, 2009a; CBC 2010b). Meanwhile, public protests grew in intensity and scope. While all protest events did receive mainstream media coverage, it likely would not have mattered had they not as all were also videoed and broadcast on *YouTube*.

Within a few days of the announcement that the province would sell NB Power, the Graham government began conducting its own polls on the public’s reaction. The results were, to say the least, discouraging for the Liberals. The pollster’s “Report to the Minister,” dated 12 November 2009, bluntly titled its summary “Digging deeper into a hole.” The government, said the report “begins the debate with limited credibility,” with 50% disapproving the government’s overall performance, and 72% agreeing that it was time for a change (49% strongly agreeing). The pollster’s attempts to “educate” respondents by providing them with more information on the deal, and explaining why the province desperately needed it, showed little positive effect.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, a revised deal was struck in January 2010 (CBC, 2010a). Under the new deal, NB Power would keep its power-distribution assets (the wires and poles), but most of the generation assets (such as Mactaquac Dam) would be sold to Hydro Quebec. Opinion polls revealed that generally the public found this revised deal preferable to the first; however, the damage was done. As the government-pollster’s February 2010 report explained, despite “the changes to the deal, New Brunswickers have not embraced it. In fact, opposition to the deal has grown.”

It is still not clear whether it was the Graham or Charest government which eventually cancelled the deal. But the deal was scrapped, with Premier Graham announcing the cancellation to the Legislative Assembly 24 March 2010. Again, the Liberals gained little new support for (as their pollster termed it) walking away from the deal.<sup>17</sup> The majority still felt the government should never had put itself and the province in such a position in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

### **The 2010 Campaign**

New Brunswick has a “fixed-date” election system, or at least it has legislation which purports to fix the election date. With the election date known well in advance, the Liberals and the PCs began campaigning, albeit unofficially, from the moment the Legislature was adjourned in April 2010. What followed that spring and summer was a “phoney” campaign in which the premier and his ministers criss-crossed the province announcing new programmes and new spending (although quite often the same spending announcement was made several times) in full campaign mode. Often, the ministers were accompanied by local Liberal candidates, even though those candidates were not MLAs. The pre-campaign activities eventually prompted the Chief Electoral Officer to suggest that reforms to the Elections and Party Finance Acts may be warranted.

Campaigning throughout the summer, however, turned out to be an arduous affair for everyone, no less so than for the voters themselves who seemed determined to tune out all

electioneering. Some Liberal insiders interpreted this as a sign that the public was no longer angry over such issues as the proposed sale of NB Power, or the decision to convert UNBSJ to a polytechnic. However, as it turned out this was not the case at all. Instead, NB voters had indeed made up their minds not to support the Liberals; they just had not decided whom they would support, or whether they would vote at all. This might explain why, when the election was finally formally called (August 27), that the first public opinion poll registered 41% of the respondents as either undecided, not planning on voting, or refusing to answer, a high number which persisted up until the last days of the campaign.

On the other hand, this number (41%) was identical to that recorded in the first public opinion poll released at the beginning of the 2006 campaign. As well, in 2006 the incumbent PCs enjoyed an even greater lead than the Liberals had in 2010: in 2006, the PCs were seven percentage points ahead of the Liberals while in 2010 the Liberals found themselves beginning the campaign with a lead of five percentage points. Finally, in both 2006 and 2010, the incumbent's early lead in the polls soon evaporated. By the end of the first week of the 2010 campaign, the two parties were tied. By the end of the second week, the PCs had moved ahead by five percentage points. By the time the first of the three leadership debates were concluded, the PCs held a commanding 10 percentage-point lead and at one point were ahead by 15 points.

*Campaign Issues:* Opinion polls ranked the usual list of issues concerning to New Brunswickers, with health care rated as the number one concern by 25% of the respondents.<sup>19</sup> Education followed with a 12% rating. While only 9% rated the "health of the provincial economy" as their number one concern, economic questions (job creation, taxation/handling finances, electricity rates, property taxes, provincial debt and deficit) all told were ranked number one by 28%. As well, when asked how concerned they were with the province's long-term debt of \$8 billion, 81% responded that they were concerned, of which 39% were extremely concerned.

In general, respondents had more confidence in Alward and the PCs to handle such pressing concerns as debt and health care; however, when broken down issue by issue, the difference in support for the PCs compared to the Liberals was not overwhelming. This may be why some commentators argued throughout the campaign that the election would be close. But the proverbial elephant in the room was NB Power, how the Liberals had handled the deal, and the loss of credibility and trust that situation created.

*Leader's Debates:* New Brunswick voters were treated to five leaders' debates. With five parties running in the election, this posed some logistic difficulties. As well, in a bilingual province it is expected that some of the debates will be held in French, which can be a challenge for an Anglophone leader. The first two debates took place 14 September 2010 (Tuesday), one in English and the other in French. The debates, one hour apiece, were broadcast back-to-back with CBC NB showing the English and Radio Canada Atlantique broadcasting the French. The next two debates – again one in English and one in French – took place the following night. Those debates were cosponsored by the *Telegraph-Journal* and its sister-publication, *L'Étoile*, together with Rogers Cable (who broadcast both debates). All five leaders participated in the other English debates; however, PANB leader Kris Austin declined to participate in the two French language debates. The final debate was hosted by CTV on 23 September (Thursday). The

CTV debate featured anchorman Steve Murphy in a roundtable conversation with Graham, Alward and Duguay; the Green and PANB leaders were not invited.

These debates gave many New Brunswickers a chance to meet the leaders of the PANB, Greens and even the NDP for the first time. As well – and this is pure speculation on my part – many New Brunswickers (particularly Francophone New Brunswickers) must have been pleasantly surprised by Graham, Alward and MacDougall's competency in French.<sup>20</sup> In any case, the unofficial requirement that political leaders in New Brunswick be bilingual was well illustrated in all these debates.

Going into the first debate (so 14 September), opinion polls showed Alward and the PCs with a commanding lead. The CRA rolling poll pegged the Liberals at 37% but the PCs had hit the 50% mark.<sup>21</sup> However, support for the PCs began to slip a bit during the week of the debates, perhaps a case of peaking too soon. The first poll taken immediately after the first debate showed support for the PCs dropping from 50% down to 48% (Morris, 2010a).<sup>22</sup> The pollster suggested this was the result of the first debate: Graham is an accomplished debater whilst Alward seems to find such events uncomfortable. Nevertheless, Liberal hopes that the momentum had swung in their favour proved premature. Whatever impact the debates were having, they were not increasing support for the Liberals. By the time the last rolling poll was taken (19 September), the PCs found themselves down four points, and now favoured by 46% of those surveyed, but the Liberal support had not increased, and in fact dropped a point to just 36%. The Greens and the NDP improved slightly, finishing the poll run at six and 11% respectively.

The availability of opinion polls in the 2010 election was unprecedented. In addition to the CRA daily polls, the CBC partnered with the French language daily *L'Acadie Nouvelle* and commissioned a poll (also conducted by CRA) covering the three days following the debate. In that poll, in which a full 40% were still undecided, the Liberals were supported by 38% of decided voters, while 44% indicated a preference for the PCs. The NDP was supported by 11% and the Greens by 6%. Broken down by region, gender age and language, the results gave the Liberals a slight lead in Northern NB, were tied with the PCs in the Moncton region, and were ahead among Francophone voters. Young voters (18-34) showed a slight preference for Liberals, but older voters preferred the PCs. Both male and female voters preferred the PCs.

## Analysis of Results

The PC's won 48 seats on the strength of 48.8% of the popular vote. However, this represents an increase of just 4060 from their total in 2006. The NDP, at 10.4%, more than doubled the votes the party received in 2006. The Greens and PANB received 4.5% and 17,554 and 4951 votes respectively in 2010, while Independents managed to pick up 1080 votes.<sup>23</sup>

Put together, parties other than the Liberals but including Independents received 28,701 more votes than they had in 2010. Meanwhile, the Liberals were the only party to lose votes. They had received 176,443 votes in 2006,<sup>24</sup> 48,354 more votes than in 2010. Some of the lost Liberal



votes were likely distributed amongst the other parties, although without careful surveying it is impossible to say which party benefitted the most. But many voters (not necessarily all Liberals, of course) stayed home. This may be surprising, given that the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots improved in 2010. However, this figure is misleading as total votes actually declined, from 377,247 in 2006 to 371,742 in 2010. The anomaly is the result of a decline in the number of eligible voters: 538,965 in 2010 compared to 558,688 in 2006, which in turn is due to corrections of the voting list (Elections NB, 2010: ii-iii, 27; CBC 2010c).<sup>25</sup>

**Table 2: Volatility 1987 - 2010**

Election Year	Score
1987	19.6
1991	21.3
1995	15.1
1999	22
2003	8.4
2006	5
2010	12.5

**Table 3: Seat Turnovers 1987 - 2006**

Election Year	Score
1987	66%
1991	215
1995	reapportion
1999	67%
2003	33%
2006	reapportion <sup>26</sup>
2010	42%

*Volatility and seat turnovers:* From the Liberal sweep in 1987 to the PC landslide in 1999, New Brunswick provincial elections have displayed considerable volatility with voters willing to change parties election to election. Voting preference stabilized in 2003 and 2006, but the results of the 2010 election suggests that some volatility has returned. As well, 23 (out of 55) seats switched parties in 2010; 21 went from the Liberals to the PCs, while two went from the PCs to the Liberals. Forty-six of the 55 seats were contested by incumbents, with 29 winning their seats. The 17 incumbents who lost their seats were all Liberals. Three ministers resigned from cabinet prior to the election, none of whom ran in 2010. Otherwise, all 21 serving cabinet ministers, including the premier, re-offered. Eleven were defeated.

*Female Candidates:* In 1991, a record number of female candidates sought election (24%), with eleven (19%) winning their seats. Since then, there has been a steady decline in the number of woman seeking and gaining office. However, the 2010 election saw the most female candidates standing for election in NB history, with 30% of the candidates being women (71 total). Of these, eight won their seats (11%), all members of the PC Party. Forty-six ridings had at least one female candidate and the popular vote for female candidates in those 46 ridings was 28%. Madeline Dubé, running in Edmunston, received the highest number of votes of any candidate, with 5551 votes (76%).<sup>27</sup> Seventeen ridings had more than one female candidate and a few had as many as four, such as Rothesay in which all four candidates were female. The Green Party fielded the most female candidates with 22 of 51 (43%) candidates. Next were the NDP with 16 of 55 (29%) candidates, while the PCs fielded 14 (25%) and the Liberals 12 (22%). Six of the PANB's 14 candidates were female (43%). No women ran as independents.

**Table 4: Women in NB Elections 1987 - 2010**

	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2006	2010
Lib candidates	8	10	8	9	9	10	12
Lib elected	8	9	8	1	1	3	0
PC candidates	8	8	5	10	9	8	14
PC elected	0	0	0	8	5	4	8
NDP candidates	14	25	20	24	15	15	16
NDP elected	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
All others	1	9	13	3	1	0	28
All others elected	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total candidates</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>70</i>
<b>Total elected</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

*Composition:* New Brunswick's 57<sup>th</sup> Legislature is composed of eight females and 47 males. It would appear that 15 of the sitting MLAs are Francophones<sup>28</sup> of which eight are members of the Liberal caucus. No members of New Brunswick First Nations are represented, nor are there any visible minorities. The Hon. Marie-Claude Blais, Moncton North, is the only lawyer in the Assembly. It is the custom in New Brunswick that the Attorney General be a member of the New Brunswick Branch of the Canadian Bar Association, and so her appointment to Premier Alward's cabinet was considered a foregone conclusion. MLAs with backgrounds in business – either as the owners of a small business or as executive/managers with larger enterprises – comprise 14 of the 55 members, with 13 being members of the PC caucus. Other professions represented in the Assembly are education (5 PC, 4 Lib), real estate (2 PC, 1 Lib) and police/fire/armed forces (4 PC). Among the MLAs are a medical doctor, a nurse and a dentist. Six MLAs bring experience as mayors or municipal councillors. Five have backgrounds in forestry, fisheries or agriculture.

## Aftermath

*Leadership prospects:* As was expected, Liberal leader Shawn Graham announced his resignation on 9 November 2010. He was replaced by Victor Boudreau, MLA for Shediac-Cap-Pelé, who will be the party's interim leader until the leadership convention, likely in 2012 or even 2013. Boudreau, a minister of finance in the Graham government, has indicated that he will not be a candidate for the leadership. The quandary facing the Liberals at this point (December 2010) is whether to hold a leadership convention immediately, or to wait a few years. The argument for the second option is that waiting will allow the party to resolve structural and organization issues without the distraction of a leadership contest. The new leader would therefore lead a rebuilt party, and then use the momentum of the convention to maximize the party's chances in the 2014 election. The argument in favour of holding the contest early is that the structural and organizational problems the party faces will not be solved if the present leadership remains, as it is still very much a part of the "old regime." Besides, the party will have a difficult time attracting new support without a complete change at the top. Meanwhile, rumours are circulating regarding who will be standing for the office. Most involve former cabinet ministers, many of whom do not now hold seats in the Assembly.

NDP leader Roger Duguay also announced his resignation which took place 25 October 2010, and has indicated that he plans to retire from politics all together. The NDP had scheduled a leadership convention for 6 April 2011; however Dominic Cardy, the NDP's campaign director for the 2010 election, ended up the only candidate and so was acclaimed 2 March 2011. Although Green Party also failed to win a seat, most observers consider its first foray into New Brunswick provincial politics to be a qualified success. Therefore, Green Party leader Jack MacDougall is expected to stay on. PANB leader Kris Austin has yet to indicate his future plans.

*The Economy:* The predicted economic crisis now seems to be in full gear, and the province's various media organs are reporting the dire news on a daily basis. An economic summit has already been held (30 November - 3 December) at which the former Chief Economist of the TD Bank Don Drummond warned that if the appropriate steps were not taken New Brunswick would face a budget deficit of \$2 billion and a provincial debt over \$17.5 billion by 2015 (Belliveau, 2010). Premier Alward has repeated his campaign promise not to raise the HST; however, he faces mounting pressure to do so. The minister of finance, Blaine Higgs, released an economic and fiscal update on 26 November 2010 (the full provincial budget was presented 22 March 2011). In the Minister's statement to the Legislative Assembly, he drew attention to the looming debt problem:

Without corrective action, the province is facing a deficit in the order of \$1 billion in the 2011-2012 Budget, with continued pressures moving forward. Our net debt will grow to the \$15 billion range by 2015 unless decisive measures are taken. Compare that with our net debt of \$6.6 billion in 2006-2007. (Higgs, 2010)

*Ten by Ten:* One of the success stories of Bernard Lord's first term as premier (1999) was his pledge to complete 20 promises in 200 days. Although some of these pledges promised "to

review” a particular policy (which is a far cry from implementing or reforming a particular policy), the energy and focus that the 20 in 200 provided for Lord’s new cabinet allowed his ministers to ascend the learning curve quite rapidly. The PCs, after all, had not been in power since 1987.

Premier David Alward has tried something similar, only he has termed it “Ten by Ten.” His government promised to fulfill ten campaign promises by the end of 2010. These promises were listed in the party’s platform and they included having a smaller cabinet (15), appointing an Energy Commission, and finding a means by which “third parties” could play a greater role in the Legislative process (PC Party, 2010). On 4 December 2010, Alward announced that he had fulfilled his ten promises (Alward, 2010). Two of these promises, however, warrant closer examination.

*Civic engagement and “third parties”:* Previous failed attempts to reform the New Brunswick political and legislative process (CLD, 2004; Cross, 2007) have failed, or at least not produced many results. However, the 2010 election rekindled concerns that the first-past-the-post electoral system does not work well in New Brunswick (nor elsewhere, for that matter) as it skews results, exaggerating the success of the victorious party and under-representing the support of all others. The PC’s 2010 party platform promised to find a way to involve “third parties” in the legislative process, which Premier Alward has broadened to include political parties which did not elect members to the Assembly – so the Greens, NDP and the PANB.<sup>29</sup> With this in mind, Alward has asked this author to review the legislative procedures and customs to see how third parties, including other political parties, could play a role in the legislative process. In a newspaper interview, the premier indicated that this could be a step towards a more comprehensive examination (again) and reform of the electoral system: “Look, this is a beginning step, along with a number of other initiatives we have committed to as a government, to help ensure that the process of governance is real for New Brunswickers” (Morris, 2010c).

*Energy Commission:* In the wake of the NB Power debacle, the PCs also promised once elected to strike an Energy Commission tasked with providing a comprehensive review of the province’s energy future. There have been a number of these commissions, most recently the Energy Task Force the Graham government created to examine the revised NB Power/Hydro Quebec deal. But the current commission’s mandate includes holding “public consultations with New Brunswick citizens and *neighbouring provinces and states*” (emphasis added), examining “the possibilities for long-term energy purchase agreements,” and advising “the government on a long-term debt-management strategy for NB Power” (CBC, 2010d). The two commissioners are Jeannot Volpé and Bill Thompson. Volpé served as PC interim leader and held several cabinet posts under the Lord government, including finance and energy minister. Thompson is an energy consultant, but had been a deputy minister (Energy) under the Lord government, and was the coauthor of a report commissioned by the Graham government on the future of NB Power and energy in the province (Marshall and Thompson, 2008).<sup>30</sup>

The recent announcement by the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to develop Lower Churchill Falls (GNL, 2010), with a goal of eventually routing hydroelectric power from Labrador through Newfoundland and into Nova Scotia has sparked renewed interest in the creation of an Atlantic Canada energy policy. As well, the refocus of NB Power away from power

production and towards power distribution (which was the essence of the revised deal brokered in January 2010 between Hydro Quebec and NB Power) seems to be well underway.

## Conclusion

It would be difficult for the Alward government to repeat the wave of optimism enjoyed by the Graham government in its first few months in office: a jilted public now finds itself cautious if not suspicious of new governments and their promises. Nevertheless, while the Graham government's popularity peaked at 67% in the months after the 2006 election, the Alward government's popularity in December 2010 stood at 61%. On the other hand, post-election honeymoons don't last, and the PCs face what has been consistently described (with alarming hyperbole) as the worst economic crisis in the province's history. Alward's approach so far has been to focus on finding cost-efficiencies and to spread proposed spending cuts as thinly and broadly as possible. In one initiative, government bureaucrats have been asked to email the premier directly ([Dave@gnb.ca](mailto:Dave@gnb.ca)) with suggestions for savings. One of the more popular is to allow civil servants the right to take short unpaid leaves of absence during, for example, the Christmas season. Although the suggestion does sound like Ontario's infamous "Rae Days," the difference in New Brunswick is that these would be voluntary.

Meanwhile, as the other parties in the province choose new leaders and ponder their future, the new PC government has had its hands full. The debt crisis, as already mentioned, continues to worsen. Just a week before the election, engineers announced that one of the province's largest and oldest high schools (Moncton High) would have to be closed for major renovations, if they were even possible. The task of finding classroom space for 1300 students, just a few weeks into the new school term, fell squarely on the shoulders of the province's new education minister, Jody Carr. An unusual spate of December winter storms with their associated tidal surges have wreaked havoc on the province's North Shore and Northumberland Shore (eastern NB), while in Charlotte County in the southwest record rainfalls have brought devastating floods. Cleanup and damage costs are reckoned to be on the \$50-million range. Nevertheless, after the volatility of the past four years the province seems to be looking for stability and steady leadership. If Premier Alward can provide this, he will likely win the next election. On the other hand, as we have seen many times in New Brunswick, political fortunes can be reversed in a moment.

## Endnotes

- 1 The author would like to acknowledge with appreciation the work of his research assistant, Ms. Adrienne Savage.
- 2 At dissolution on 26 August 2010, the Liberals had 32 seats and the Conservatives 21. Two seats were vacant. One MLA, Stuart Jamieson, resigned from Cabinet over the NB Power deal and left the Liberal caucus. However, he continued to sit with the Liberal members and did not formally declare himself an Independent.

- 3 Calculating turnout in New Brunswick has been complicated as the province has been revising how it enumerates voters. In 2003, turnout was officially 68.7%; however, that was based on an inflated voting list that included many duplicates. Elections NB calculated that the true turnout in 2003 was 73.6% (Elections NB, 2003: 36). The problems with the inflated list were partially solved in time for the 2006 election, although this time revisions resulted in many voters being left off. Almost 50,000 voters had their names added at the polls in the 2006 election (Elections NB, 2006: 21).
- 4 As percentage of valid ballots cast.
- 5 See note 1 above.
- 6 In 2003, the riding of Kennebecasis required a judicial recount. The final result favoured the incumbent PC candidate, by an 18-vote margin. The closeness of the 2003 race, coupled with Graham's defeat in 2010, suggests that governments in New Brunswick can no longer count on long tenures in office.
- 7 One prominent member of the PCs has compared Alward with Lester Pearson (Keenan, 2010).
- 8 Duguay was defeated in Miramichi Bay-Neguac in 2006. He has also been a candidate in Caraquet (1991) and Centre-Peninsule (1999).
- 10 Most notably, the PANB platform affirms the party's support for official bilingualism in New Brunswick.
- 11 See ICRDR (2001) and Young (1987). Robichaud's EOP is not without its critics. See, for example, Tomblin (1995) and Bourgeois (2010).
- 12 The commission was announced 19 January 2007, and the report presented September 2007: Miner and L'Écuyer (2007). See as well AUNBT (2007) and Desserud (2007c).
- 13 New Brunswick's linguistic duality (French and English) is guaranteed by the Constitution Act 1982 (16.1), under which it states that: "(1) The English linguistic community and the French linguistic community in New Brunswick have equality of status and equal rights and privileges, including the *right to distinct educational institutions* and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities (emphasis added)." The consequence is that New Brunswick has two separate school systems, one English (K-12, Anglophone sector) and one French (M-12, Secteur francophone).
- 14 See Croll and Lee, 2008. The rationale for changes to the French immersion programme was that the existing programme, which only accepted academically-superior students, was ghettoising the regular public school system, which now had to deal with a disproportionate percentage of academically-inferior students. This claim, however, has been challenged. See the various reports posted on the website of the Second Language Research Institute of Canada ([www.unbf.ca/L2](http://www.unbf.ca/L2)). See as well Richard, 2008.
- 15 The implications of this ruling, in which a court nullified duly-passed legislation using precedents from administrative law, are examined in Bateman, 2008.
- 16 Data courtesy of CBC reporter and author Jacques Poitras.

- 17 In the government polls taken just after the announcement that the deal had been cancelled, respondents were asked: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: 'It makes me angry to think the government took New Brunswick through all the controversy associated with the power deal with Quebec only to walk away from the negotiations so late in the game.'"
- 18 After the election was over, Graham was forthright about why he did not explain how dire was NB Power's future: "if you're trying to dispose of an asset, you can't go out and tell everyone how bad it is. It's like, 'I want you to buy this car, but the car isn't working.' That was the conundrum we were in" (Morris, 2010b).
- 19 CBC/L'Acadie Nouvelle poll, by CRA, conducted Sept. 15 and 18 with 1,005 New Brunswick voters. CRA reported that its results were "considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points, 95 times out of 100."
- 20 In his first interview as party leader, MacDougall stated that he was "not the best person to lead the party into the future since he is unilingual and has never been elected to public office" Although NDP leader Duguay performed very well in the English debates, this was more of a struggle for him than his viewers likely knew: Duguay only learnt to speak English as an adult.
- 21 The NDP were at nine per cent and the at Greens four.
- 22 Albeit still within the poll's margin of error.
- 23 No other parties ran candidates in 2006, so there is no comparative data for the Greens or the PANB. There were a scattering of Independent candidates in 2006, who together garnered 935 votes.
- 24 Note that the Liberal vote in 2006 was less than that of the PCs; however, vote distribution helped the Liberals, who won three more seats than did the PCs.
- 25 New Brunswick relies now on a permanent voting list, and the Chief Electoral Officer reported problems with its accuracy in her 2006 Report (8-9).
- 26 In 1995, the number of constituencies in New Brunswick was reduced from 58 to 55. In 2006, the total number remained the same; however, ridings were added in southern New Brunswick and redistributed in northern New Brunswick. The latter reflects a demographic trend in the province, as citizens from the impoverished north are moving to the more prosperous south.
- 27 PC candidate Jody Carr in Oromocto, however, received the highest percentage of votes, at 81%. Only one other candidate, Liberal Victor Boudreau (Shediac-Cap-Pelé), received over 5000 votes (5244; 61%). The Liberal candidate with the largest percentage was Denis Landry in Centre-Péninsule-Saint-Sauveur (64%).
- 28 Determining whether an MLA is Anglophone or Francophone is not a simple task in New Brunswick, as last names are not a particularly accurate means of identifying mother tongue.
- 29 Under Canadian election law, a third party is defined as "an individual, or a group, that is neither a candidate nor a political party" (LGD, 2006: 11).

30 The Report was put aside by the Liberal government in favour of the decision to sell NB Power to Hydro Quebec.

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