

Editorial Introduction: Balancing Thrift and the Provision of Services in Today's New Brunswick

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Editor

Welcome to the second issue of the *Journal of New Brunswick Studies/Revue d'études sur le Nouveau-Brunswick (JNBS/RÉNB)*. And thank you for your continued interest in our work.

For new readers of the journal, *JNBS/RÉNB* continues to be the only peer-reviewed, bilingual, and multidisciplinary journal of ideas in the province. As a refereed publication, we offer deep analyses of issues that are important to New Brunswickers. Our aim is to publish thoughtful writing that engages a broad readership in ongoing conversations about the province.

In this issue we feature an essay by David Frank about the history of organized labour in the province. We invited Professor Frank's essay because we think it is vital in a neoliberal age to foreground the achievements of the labour movement in improving the quality of life for all New Brunswickers. (By neoliberal we mean the view that markets should dictate policy, a view that calls on governments to create efficiencies by lowering taxes and cutting social spending.) In times of austerity – times when social programs and workers' rights are often seen to be wasteful and cumbersome, even extravagant – it is important to remember the hard-won incremental advances of workers and to approach social policy formation as a balancing act between fiscal and human responsibility. To do otherwise is to break the covenant under which governments are elected.

My own interview with Donald Savoie and Thomas Bateman's sobering article about New Brunswick's fiscal realities make the challenges clear: balancing thrift and service will be difficult to achieve but vital if New Brunswick is to move forward as a viable social and economic entity. (That Ontario and the west increasingly view us as a financial liability certainly accelerates the need to recast ourselves economically.)

If finding the balance between thrift and the provision of services proves too difficult, we may have to radically alter the terms of our provincial association. Professor Savoie suggests that unprecedented forms of public outreach and education, as well as bold new measures of government transparency and citizen engagement, are necessary. If transparency and engagement are the ways forward, the Alward Government's handling of the fracking issue has not been a promising start.

As David Dussault and René Blais argue in their article, no sector of the province should be unaltered in our efforts to address our fiscal challenges, especially the forestry sector that has been a driver of the provincial economy for most of our history.

Perhaps as Barry Cahill and the discussants of Béatrice Craig's book on the early market culture of Madawaska suggest, one of the ways forward is to look in the rear-view mirror, searching for our provincial success stories and learning how those successes were cultivated and nurtured in our province. Following markets headlong into what off-site speculators deem necessary seems not only ahistorical and disconnected from our geographic, resource-based, and social realities, but also a formula for our continued economic beggary.

The editorial board of *JNBS/RÉNB* believes that intelligent and well-meaning debate can move our province forward, and it is in that spirit that we have worked hard to make the essays and articles below available to New Brunswickers. We hope you enjoy the issue, and we ask that you make your friends and colleagues aware of our journal.

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