

Premier on a wire

Conservative leader takes the plunge and tries out the Grand Falls zip line

By Mark Rickard

Life in the public eye may be a leap of faith for many New Brunswick politicians, yet few have the intestinal fortitude to step off a platform and jump across a 125-foot (40-metre) deep gorge filled with turbulent water. But Premier David Alward took the plunge last week and tried out the Zip Zag zip line, one of the newest tourism attractions in Northwest New Brunswick.

A slightly nervous first minister, along with Danny Soucy, Grand Falls, Drummond and St. André MLA, and several aides to the premier suited up in the zip line harnesses and took the plunge across the Grand Falls gorge. After zipping across the deep ravine at a speed of about 40 km/h, the wide-eyed premier said it was a great thrill.

"I didn't know what to think once you get over the edge, but it was awe-

some," the premier said after getting his feet back on solid ground. "It's awesome being here and seeing the falls and the power of the water."

Premier Alward admitted he was nervous at the beginning, but he quickly warmed up to the thrill of zipping along a steel cable through the mist rising from the rampaging water. And he hinted that the event was good practice for a future adventure.

"We have invited Rick Mercer (star of the Rick Mercer report) to visit the Bay of Fundy as part of the Seven Wonders of Nature. One of the things we plan is to challenge him to do the zip line that is planned for Cape Enrage. I want to challenge him to do that, and for me was great to come up here and know I can get through it."

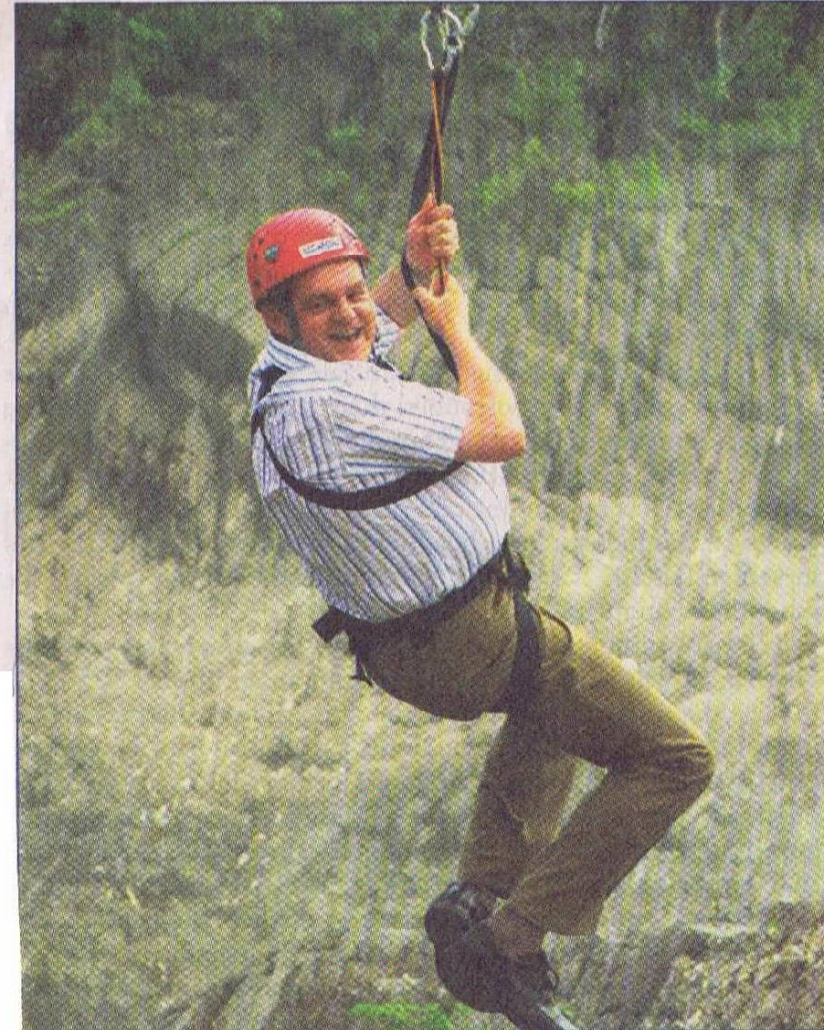
MLA Danny Soucy, who talked his boss into trying the zip line, said Premier

Alward really enjoyed his experience.

"He did an awesome job. I told him the biggest fear is that you think you are going to be afraid. It is a lot of fun," Soucy said.

Premier Alward and his cabinet held a two-day cabinet meeting in Grand Falls, and after the meeting concluded Wednesday afternoon the ministers spent some time in the area to visit different businesses, schools and attractions like the zip line.

"It's a chance to get to know what the community is about. I sat down with community leaders to learn what the community is all about, what the dreams are and some of their concerns," the premier stated. "It's been a valuable time up here and we will continue to do it because it gives cabinet ministers and MLAs a better appreciation of each region of the province."



Zippering across the Grand Falls gorge

Premier David Alward shoots across the Grand Falls gorge Wednesday afternoon on the Zip Zag zip line adventure ride during his cabinet visit to Northwestern New Brunswick. The intrepid premier quickly warmed up to the idea of sailing across the 125-foot deep (40-meter) gorge. (Photo by Mark Rickard)