



Speech from the Throne

Second Session of the 63rd General Assembly
of the Nova Scotia Legislature
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Lieutenant Governor



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I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

It is a privilege to speak here in the people's House. And as we begin the second session of the sixty-third assembly, let us not forget those who brought us here: Nova Scotians of all generations and backgrounds who help our province grow and succeed, some of whom are with us in this House today.

I am grateful for the opportunity to highlight their successes and speak to the strong foundation government has built and the measures it will undertake to continue that success.

We are here on the heels of hosting the country's Special Olympians in Antigonish – a national event that demonstrates the best of the human spirit, the celebration of sport and community.

Congratulations to the organizers and the volunteers for putting on a world-class event.

And to the 117 Nova Scotia athletes who competed, taking home a total of 134 medals – well done and thank you for inspiring us to work hard and be the best version of ourselves.

This past year was one of impressive records and firsts in Nova Scotia.

Our population reached an all-time high. We had a record year in tourism.

We reached gender parity on the provincial and family court benches, and the first Mi'kmaw woman was appointed to the judiciary.

In Whycocomagh, Premier McNeil sat alongside the family of Donald Marshall Junior to open Nova Scotia's first aboriginal wellness court – a historic step in supporting indigenous justice in our province.

Our Acadian and francophone community is one of several communities that make up the Nova Scotian identity, enriching our province's diversity through its unique culture and heritage. On this occasion, I would like to congratulate the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse on 50 years of dedication to our province's Acadian and francophone community.

Avec sa culture et son patrimoine uniques, la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse est l'une des diverses communautés qui donnent à la Nouvelle-Écosse sa riche identité. Je profite de l'occasion pour féliciter la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse qui se consacre depuis 50 ans au service de la communauté acadienne et francophone.

We have much to celebrate.

Our cultural industries continue to thrive.

Our wine and spirits are winning global awards.

Andy Hay, of Dartmouth, was runner-up in Masterchef Canada – a great example of how our young people are showing the rest of the country what Nova Scotia has to offer.

We may be a small province, but we have a big presence on the international stage and that is thanks to our passionate, creative, and innovative people.

As we begin this session, let us also take a moment to reflect on the lives of remarkable Nova Scotians we have lost:

Grand Chief Kji Saqamaw Ben Sylliboy, who served as the voice for his people for 25 years and led his community for decades.

Freeman Douglas Knockwood, a Mi'kmaw elder who helped countless people cope with addiction by using his own experience to educate and counsel them.

Joan Grant Dillon, an active volunteer and Order of Nova Scotia recipient, who was a founder of the X-Project, which pairs students from St. FX with children in nearby communities to help with homework and other activities.

Philip Riteman, who survived the Holocaust and made his way to Atlantic Canada to build a new life, sharing his story of survival, love, and hope with future generations.

And Dr. Robert "Arnold" Burden, who served his community of Springhill for many years, famously responding to help miners who were trapped underground during the town's mining disasters in the 1950s.

We also remember individuals whose contributions were felt in this very chamber: James (Buddy) McEachern, Russell MacNeil, David Muise, and Gerald Doucet.

And finally, we remember Kenny Greenham, who was a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces and served this legislature faithfully as Sergeant at Arms for nearly a decade.

As we remember their contributions and honour their lives, we also look to our future generations to continue to lift up this province.

Young Nova Scotians are stepping up. They are entrepreneurs; they are hard workers. They are taking a chance on our province, and they are succeeding. They are contributing to the economy and building pride in their communities.

Ils misent sur notre province et en sortent gagnants. Ils contribuent à l'économie et ils font la fierté de leurs collectivités.

You only need to look around the corner to see it, wherever you live.

Young people like Quentrel Provo, the founder and CEO of the Stop the Violence Movement. Quentrel continues to speak and sing at schools, conferences, and other events all over the country, spreading the message of love against violence.

Entrepreneurs like cousins Nick Walsh and Erika Usher, who opened a branch of Nova Scotia-founded restaurant Burrito Jax in Sydney River after graduating from Cape Breton University last year; Joey Hawkins, who started Skilled Masons and Restoration in Dartmouth; and the trio of Matt Winchester, Dougal Armour, and Mitchell Kane, who founded the startup company FoodByte out of a sandbox at Acadia University.

These and many more young people show courage and confidence in themselves and in the future of this province.

Government's focus is helping to give youth the tools to succeed and grow here at home.

Co-op education, Mitacs internships, and new and improved workforce attachment programs are providing young people and under-represented groups with more opportunities.

Right now, students are developing their innovative and entrepreneurial skill sets through 10 different sandbox programs on university and community college campuses around the province.

The Graduate to Opportunity program is helping employers fill new positions with young people within their first year of graduating from a post-secondary institution. More than 650 new graduates have been hired into full-time jobs in their chosen field of study. Since the diversity bonus was offered in 2017, the number of diverse hires under the program now tops 100.

Young people, new residents, and local and international graduates now have more opportunities to connect with leaders in their communities as the Connector Program expands across the province.

Nova Scotians like Maigoro Yunana, who moved from Nigeria in 2011, are now able to make meaningful connections that help them build successful careers here in our province. Today, Maigoro works at Green Power Labs in Dartmouth as a building energy modelling specialist.

Apprenticeship is on the rise in Nova Scotia. As a result of investments such as the Apprenticeship START program and eliminating tuition for technical training, more apprentices are being trained and more employers are hiring them.

As well, dependents of those who receive Employment Support and Income Assistance and youth in the care of the Minister of Community Services now have access to the Career Rising program. Following a successful pilot with 15 young people last year, this program aims to help end the cycle of intergenerational poverty and create career opportunities by giving youth access to training and skills development, paid work experience with local employers, and a grant to help offset the cost of post-secondary studies.

Government will continue to identify creative economic solutions, ensuring our youth are part of building a stronger Nova Scotia.

Government also relies on the knowledge and experience of our older population.

Earlier this year, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the launch of Shift: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population. Shift pushes all of us to think differently about our changing demographics and to consider the opportunities and benefits that come with an older, more experienced population.

The progress made in the first year reflects our commitment to action – from new entrepreneurship and mentorship initiatives for older adults, to new funding for community transportation and housing.

Innovation is critical to the long-term economic success of our province.

L'innovation est essentielle au succès économique à long terme de notre province.

Our startup community is thriving. There are nearly 500 startups and high-growth companies in the Atlantic provinces, most of which are based in Nova Scotia. The tech sector has become a significant employer in our region, with about 6,400 people working in this area and employment growing at an estimated seven per cent per year.

Starting this fall, Mashup Lab's "Dream" program for budding entrepreneurs will be available across Cape Breton as well as mainland Nova Scotia, in cooperation with Nova Scotia Community College and the Cape Breton Partnership. It's a six-week program supporting rural entrepreneurs working at the idea stage.

Incubators are driving growth across all regions of this province.

COVE, the Centre for Oceans Ventures and Entrepreneurship, on the Dartmouth waterfront, will soon be home to 40 ocean technology companies.

Halifax's tech superhub Volta Labs tripled in size over the summer, bringing more startups and innovation-driven enterprises under one roof. Volta has housed more than 50 startups since 2013, employing more than 300 people and raising more than \$60 million in equity financing.

Volta's newest tenants include smart travel startup Trip Ninja. Trip Ninja helps travellers book multi-city routes. Co-Founders Andres Collart and Brett Ziegler started the business while attending Dalhousie University. They have since completed their studies and are working on Trip Ninja full-time.

Ignite Labs in Yarmouth is helping more technology companies get started, too. Six companies are already working out of Ignite Labs. Scott Dauphinee is one of the first residents of the new business incubator. Scott has developed a recyclable lobster trap that is made of plastic and will last up to 10 years, far outliving the wire traps that most fishermen currently use.

Momentum Cape Breton is bringing the island's startup community closer together, through business coaching, networking, and mentorship opportunities. Sixteen new technology entrepreneurs participated in Momentum activities last year, and a new maker space for entrepreneurs, students, and other creative minds will open soon, in the New Dawn Centre for Social Innovation in downtown Sydney.

There is now more support for businesses who want to grow their exports and those who want to start exporting – companies like Angus Poulain’s Halifax-based DRIVECARE which he created following his family’s experience in a serious traffic accident. It is the world’s first device that eliminates cell phone use while driving. And now he deals with businesses from around the globe.

Government continues to promote the province to the rest of the world.

[Le gouvernement continue de faire connaître la province au reste du monde.](#)

We are all ambassadors for Nova Scotia and have a role to play in helping investors understand the many reasons why they should look at this province.

Exports to Asia continue to grow. Ten years ago, we exported \$315 million to Asia. This past year, exports have more than tripled to \$1.16 billion, with China as our largest export partner in the region.

We are making progress in attracting a direct passenger flight between Halifax and China, which will bring more people to our province and help export our world-class products.

Nova Scotia’s first culture sector mission to Asia opened the door for new partnerships, including exhibit opportunities featuring the works of treasured Nova Scotia artist Maud Lewis.

We had our best year yet for tourism in 2017, and last year was the fourth consecutive year of growth. Tourism revenue reached \$2.7 billion, and a record 2.4 million visitors came to the province.

Towns like Tatamagouche are building on our history to invigorate our communities. Led by dedicated volunteer and road train buff Dave Gunn, the town is believed to be the first of its kind in Canada to have a road train. The 28-passenger vehicle looks like a 1950s steam engine with a passenger car and ferries local residents and tourists among the town’s attractions.

Our traditional sectors are also embracing innovation.

One time-honoured tradition will soon get an innovative twist in Nova Scotia. Researchers have identified a Christmas tree that holds its needles for three months longer than the average balsam fir. Growers will be able to sell the SMART tree for a higher price in established markets, get to market sooner, and supply new markets across greater shipping distances.

Our ocean provides us with a significant opportunity for innovation and economic growth, and government will continue to seek ways to drive our ocean advantage.

For the third year in a row, Nova Scotia was Canada's top exporter of seafood last year, with export revenues reaching \$2 billion. Our world-famous lobster, crab, scallops, and shrimp were served around the world, on tables in North America, Asia, and Europe. The value of the aquaculture industry itself more than doubled over the previous year.

We are proud to be part of Canada's Ocean Supercluster, which will use innovation to improve competitiveness in our ocean-based industries.

Government's focus will continue to be on creating the conditions for more businesses to start and grow here, to reduce the regulatory burden on business, and to improve government services that support economic growth – efforts that are all being recognized nationally.

Innovative and future-minded Nova Scotians are leading the way to help prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Thermo Dynamics of Dartmouth designs, manufactures, and installs solar thermal systems for homes and large buildings.

Helping Nature Heal of Bridgewater uses natural materials to stabilize shorelines and manage coastal erosion.

And Nexus Robotics, a Nova Scotia startup company, is working on a farm in Barss Corner testing its autonomous vehicle that uses artificial intelligence to perform agricultural tasks.

These are local people, and national leaders.

Every Nova Scotian deserves timely access to primary healthcare. And it's a government priority to ensure that happens.

Healthcare needs are changing, and we must adapt. Our healthcare system needs to reflect how new doctors want to practice and what is sustainable in the long term.

Government has worked with doctors to create incentives for them to take on new patients, encourage collaborative practice, and use technology to connect with patients – and incentives for new medical graduates to stay here.

Since April 1st, 2017, 160 family doctors and specialists have started working in Nova Scotia. As a result, nearly 18,000 Nova Scotians have been matched with a primary care provider. We know there is more to be done, and government is working hard to make sure all Nova Scotians have access to the care they need, when they need it.

Earlier this year, government launched a new immigration stream to attract more doctors and specialists. The new stream makes it easier and faster for doctors to immigrate to Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority heard from more than 400 family doctors who expressed interest in working in collaborative teams.

There are now more than 50 collaborative practices in various stages of development across Nova Scotia, and the health authority is working with 100 groups to enhance existing teams and create more.

Marla MacDonald is the nurse practitioner at the Westville Medical Clinic. She cares for approximately 800 patients who were on the Need a Family Practice Registry in that area. Team members at clinics like hers support one another and are able to take on more patients, improving access to health care for Nova Scotians.

Government is funding a new incentive program and paying for additional seats at Dalhousie University that will result in more nurse practitioners graduating and working in Nova Scotia.

Up to 10 registered nurses will continue to receive their salaries while they return to school to become nurse practitioners.

Government remains committed to improving timely access to mental health and addictions services.

This year, more mental health specialists will be working in schools. CaperBase – an adolescent outreach program – will expand to the Northern and Western areas of the province, and four new youth health centres will open.

The Bloom Program is an example of a team of health providers supporting people with mental illness and addiction. The program, led by David Gardner and Andrea Murphy, sees community pharmacists offering patients education and resources about mental illness, addictions, and medications to support their recovery and connect them with local services when needed.

Government recognizes that the best quality care must be matched by the quality of the facilities.

The QEII and Cape Breton redevelopment projects are once-in-a-generation opportunities to rethink and rebuild the way we deliver healthcare in Nova Scotia.

Both projects will see significant investment to modernize services and structures. These changes are about delivering better, more accessible care to Nova Scotians in improved spaces, with newer technologies, helping us recruit and retain more doctors, nurses, and other health specialists.

Nova Scotia's first two residential hospices will open next year and will provide a home-like setting for patients and their families in Halifax and the Annapolis Valley.

People often turn to government when they feel they have no other option. They may have lost a job, be raising a child with complex needs, or fleeing an abusive relationship. They may be trying to overcome addictions, or dealing with mental health challenges, or living with physical disabilities that make staying at home next to impossible.

Whatever the situation, people in need must be supported to help build the income security they need to lead fully independent lives.

Quelle que soit leur situation, il faut aider les gens dans le besoin à obtenir la sécurité du revenu nécessaire pour qu'ils vivent une vie pleinement autonome.

That's why government is working with the Halifax Regional Municipality to pilot a program that provides transit passes to people on income assistance. All those on income assistance in the city, along with their spouses and dependents, are eligible for the pass. Many people told us that getting the transit pass is life changing, because it allows them to go the grocery store, visit with friends and family, and take part in their communities.

This year, Nova Scotians saw the biggest tax cut in our province's recent history as the basic personal exemption increased for half-a-million taxpayers. With this change, 60,000 people will no longer pay provincial income tax.

On October 1st, government will introduce part one of the Standard Household Rate – a wage exemption allowing those receiving income assistance to keep more of the money they earn.

This will stabilize their income while they transition away from assistance and into the workforce. The more they work, the more financially stable they will become.

Also, beginning next month, a new personal items allowance will provide more money each month to help those living in homeless shelters and transition houses to buy essential and personal items.

Government is committed to building a stronger province where all Nova Scotians have the dignity, self-esteem, and self-confidence they need to enjoy productive and fulfilling lives.

This week, we welcome students, teachers, and support staff all across the province back to school. As they come back to class, students across Nova Scotia will have more inclusive education supports: 190 new staff, including child and youth care practitioners, parent navigators, education assistants, psychologists, and speech-language pathologists, will join our education system to address student and complex classroom needs, with a focus on behaviour and autism supports.

Additional classroom specialists will help students like Colleen Murphy's son who needs more one-on-one support in the classroom. Ms. Murphy, who is from Halifax, says having more support and training for teachers will mean her son and others like him can receive the help they need to thrive.

Nova Scotia's pre-primary program, introduced last year, will welcome more than 2,500 children this month. This free universal program helps support social and emotional development, identifies children with special needs sooner, and supports a successful transition to school. Pre-primary is a great equalizer, and every four-year-old in Nova Scotia will have access to the program by 2020.

Government has also created more child care spaces and subsidies, and made it easier to provide regulated child care at home.

Government is creating 135 new seats in early childhood education programs over the next three years through the Nova Scotia Community College and will support people from under-represented groups to access early childhood education training.

Government is connecting and building stronger communities.

Investments in transportation and infrastructure will better connect Nova Scotians to schools, jobs, recreation, healthcare, and other services, both within their own communities and with others.

An accessible province is good for everyone. Government wants a province where everyone can live in a positive environment that is inclusive, supportive, and fulfilling.

Une province accessible est une bonne chose pour tout le monde.
Le gouvernement veut que la province soit un endroit où tout le monde peut vivre dans un environnement positif qui est favorable à l'intégration, solidaire et épanouissant.

My congratulations to Callum MacQuarrie who was the driving force behind the project that saw Inverness Beach become one of the most inclusive beaches in Atlantic Canada this summer. Visitors to the beach can now access new beach-friendly wheelchairs, mats that make it easier to move on the sand, and floating chairs that allow people to go in the water.

All across the province, people are recognizing the benefits of taking steps to make their businesses and communities more accessible.

This fall, government will fulfil its commitment to bring forward a plan to make Nova Scotia an accessible province by 2030.

Our 100-series highways are the backbone of our transportation network. They carry people, goods, and services across Nova Scotia every day and are crucial to growing our communities.

Our Premier and the Prime Minister stood beside Joe MacDonald, Chief of the Barney's River Volunteer Fire Department, this summer to announce the twinning of highway 104 from Sutherlands River to Antigonish. This project will make the road safer for generations to come, and we want to thank Chief MacDonald for his continued dedication to road safety.

This session, government will introduce a new Traffic Safety Act to replace the outdated Motor Vehicle Act. The new act will make our roads safer for all users – drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Government will introduce legislation that will support businesses to grow our economy and create jobs.

We will reduce barriers for entrepreneurs who want to start new businesses.

We will reduce inter-provincial trade barriers to help Nova Scotia products get to new markets within Canada.

And we will formalize Develop Nova Scotia's role to drive inclusive economic growth and strategic economic infrastructure.

One of Develop Nova Scotia's top priorities will be to work with communities, service providers, and other levels of government to build a strong, vibrant high-speed internet system across Nova Scotia.

In this session, government will build on the tremendous momentum that has been created in Nova Scotia, by Nova Scotians. The people you have heard about in this House today, and many others.

There is a buzz about this province, on the national stage and beyond.

From Scotiabank Economics: "The compilation of growth initiatives looks to Nova Scotia's existing strengths, including its skilled work force, multiple post-secondary institutions and growing reputation as an East Coast hub."

From BMO Capital Markets Economics: "Nova Scotia is distinguishing itself from most of its Central and Atlantic-Canada peers."

And from Michelin: "Any company that's looking to expand in North America should seriously consider Nova Scotia."

We are at a pivotal moment in our history.

There are numerous indicators that Nova Scotia is performing at a high level compared to other provinces – and while that can and should make us proud, we must not become complacent.

We must capitalize and build on this success, at this moment in time, to propel Nova Scotia toward even greater prosperity.

This will require progressive government policy, and it will also require all of our communities and citizens to work together, to support one another, and to truly believe that this is our time.

Government believes it is our time – our time to achieve a level of success that would make past generations proud, our time to ensure that future generations prosper.

Le gouvernement croit fermement que c'est notre tour; notre tour d'atteindre un niveau de succès qui rendraient fières les générations précédentes; notre tour de faire en sorte que les générations futures soient prospères.

Thank you, to all my fellow Nova Scotians. Merci.

