



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Third Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

Sixty-first General Assembly

Third Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Ms. Becky Kent, Mr. Leo Glavine, Mr. Alfie MacLeod

[The Third Session of the Sixty-first General Assembly was opened with historic ceremony on a clear, crisp day.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor.

[The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Mayann E. Francis, preceded by members of the Official Escort, her Private Secretary, her ADC and by Mr. Ken Greenham, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took her seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber followed by the Speaker, the Honourable Gordon Gosse; the Chief Clerk of the House, Neil Ferguson; and the Assistant Clerk, Annette Boucher.

The Speaker, with the Sergeant-at-Arms on his right and the Clerks on either side, took up his position at the foot of the Table of the House.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, that the ladies and gentlemen be seated.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, the people of Nova Scotia:

I am pleased to welcome you to the Third Session of the 61st General Assembly.

I note with pleasure the participation in today's ceremonies of the Cape Breton Highlanders and the Halifax Rifles. (Applause) These historic military units have been reactivated, with the support of the province. At home and abroad, Nova Scotians have been putting their best foot forward.

We salute the athletes and volunteers responsible for the tremendous success of the Canada Winter Games. The Games set new attendance records and Nova Scotia was honoured with the Centennial Cup for the most improved team.

Digby recently hosted the Canadian Senior Curling national championships, another success for the warm hospitality and volunteer spirit of Nova Scotians.

In the past year, our province welcomed Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh as the International Fleet Review highlighted the Navy Centennial. Memories of these events will last a lifetime.

This year, Nova Scotia will host leaders, legislators, and community builders from North America and around the world.

At the Eastern Canadian Premiers and New England Governors meeting, premiers and governors will discuss ways to manage fiscal challenges, enhance trade, maximize the regions' energy resources, and protect the environment.

The 51st Annual Meeting of the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference will be held for the first time in Atlantic Canada this coming year.

In June, Nova Scotia will host the Energy Council, which will bring together legislators from jurisdictions throughout North America.

We look forward to hosting the International African Diaspora conference in September, which will bring delegates from many countries.

My government is pleased to join with other partners in honouring the past and charting the future.

Last August 31st, representatives of our First People, our province, and our nation made history by signing the Terms of Reference for a Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia–Canada Consultation Process.

To honour the Acadian heritage and the Acadian presence in Nova Scotia, the province is enthusiastically supporting the designation of Grand-Pré as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our magnificent Bay of Fundy, a breathtaking part of this province, is now Canada's lone finalist in a longstanding bid to become one of the "New7Wonders of Nature." We encourage all Nova Scotians to vote for Fundy.

My government is pleased to join with the federal government in recognizing 2011 as the Year of the Entrepreneur, because of the essential role that small- and medium-sized businesses play in Nova Scotia.

My government is also pleased to take part in Yarmouth's 250th Anniversary this year. And government will support efforts to aggressively market southwestern Nova Scotia as a premium tourism destination.

We take time now to remember several Nova Scotians who have represented the best this province can be, and who are no longer with us:

- Dr. Sharon Oliver, the first African-Canadian nurse educator, public health nurse, and health executive in Nova Scotia;
- Arnie Patterson, prominent local journalist and a proud Nova Scotian;
- Irving Schwartz, a remarkable businessman, community leader, and philanthropist;
- Former Members of the Legislative Assembly - Scott MacNutt and George Mitchell both of whom served their constituents and Nova Scotia proudly;
- Sergeant James "Jimmy" McNeil and Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake both sadly killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan;
- Gerald Yetman, a driving force in Nova Scotia's labour movement;

And we pause in grief and concern as we watch other parts of the world struggle with devastating natural disasters and civil unrest.

These events and those closer to home remind us how small our world truly is and how important it is to cherish the qualities that define Nova Scotia - including our people, our programs, and our services.

Our services and our people were of vital importance when storms ravaged Meat Cove, southwest Nova Scotia, and the Annapolis Valley in the past year. Nova Scotians in these communities helped their neighbours and others through a time of great need. They demonstrated the values that make this province strong.

Although we have much to be thankful for, we know, too, that our province has hard work ahead. When Nova Scotians went to the polls in June 2009, they gave my government a mandate for change.

Change that ends chronic emergency room closures; change from the worst economic development record in Canada for the last 20 years; change to keep our deficit from ballooning to \$1.4 billion; change that helps people make ends meet.

These changes are well underway.

My government's plan to make life better for families is focused on the priorities of Nova Scotians.

The Better Care Sooner plan will keep emergency rooms open and deliver faster, better health care to Nova Scotians. The jobsHere plan will create good jobs and grow a strong economy. And my government will live within its means by building on this province's unique strengths and opportunities.

The plan is on track. The plan is working.

Better health care for you and your family

When my government came to office, it was clear that a very different approach to health care was needed. Nova Scotians were concerned about the care available to them in their communities. There were chronic emergency room closures and long waits.

Decisive steps have been taken to fundamentally change the way emergency health care is delivered from one end of the province to the other.

Better Care Sooner is my government's plan to:

- improve access to health care professionals
- make emergency care more streamlined and patient-centred

- improve care for seniors, people with mental illness, and those with other complex needs, and
- increase the use of the 811 nurse line and 911 for emergencies.

The recommendations from Dr. John Ross formed the basis of Better Care Sooner - Nova Scotia's plan to provide consistent, safe, quality care to every Nova Scotian.

Better Care Sooner ensures that Nova Scotians get the right care when they need it by keeping emergency rooms open, reducing wait times, and making the best use of the skills and expertise of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, and other health professionals.

Collaborative Emergency Centres in communities around the province are key to shorter wait times. The province's first Collaborative Emergency Centre will be announced in the coming days.

In the next year, the province will extend the hours of operation for the Cobequid Emergency Room.

To further improve emergency care, the province will work with the Pictou District Health Authority to build a modern, cost effective, and efficient Emergency Department at the Aberdeen Regional Hospital, taking advantage of the recommendations made by Dr. Ross.

Better Care Sooner means other groundbreaking improvements, as well.

Our Emergency Health System is an integral part of Better Care Sooner, providing timely and skilled ambulance and paramedic care. Paramedics begin assessing and stabilizing patients the minute they receive a call. They are trained and equipped to offer a wide range of pre-hospital care.

Nova Scotia is one of only a few jurisdictions in North America to allow advanced-care paramedics to save lives by administering clot-busting drugs for heart attack victims.

Other health care advice is just a phone call away. The 811 nurse line has seen a 30 per cent increase since December.

Thanks to a fulfilled commitment, "pre-hab" clinics in four district health authorities give patients the tools and information to prepare for a more successful surgery and recovery. The pre-hab teams will reduce wait times for consultations with orthopedic surgeons.

There are shorter waits for admission, and improved patient flow, because additional hospital beds and a rapid assessment unit have opened at the Halifax Infirmiry.

Dr. Pat Croskerry - an international leader in his field - has agreed to be the first chair of the Quality and Patient Safety Advisory Committee. The committee will work to improve patient safety and health service quality across the province.

Nova Scotia is the first province in Canada to develop emergency room standards. And, as promised, accountability for emergency departments rests with the Minister of Health and Wellness. The second Accountability Report on Emergency Departments will be tabled next month.

Using our resources more effectively and ensuring that the right care is available when it's needed are important pieces of our plan for Better Care Sooner.

Controlling costs while protecting patient care is another critically important piece. In the past 10 years, health care costs have doubled. Without change, that trend was destined to continue. My government would not allow that to happen. That's why we have worked with our partners throughout the health care system to help the province live within its means.

We have worked with doctors, who agreed to amend their master agreement, saving the province about \$45 million over the next two years.

Initiatives with district health authorities - such as group purchasing for products and services, and more appropriate use of diagnostic testing - will save millions of dollars while protecting patient care.

Nova Scotians pay too much for drugs. My government has a plan to change that. Legislation will be introduced this spring to ensure better drug prices for Nova Scotians who rely on Pharmacare, and a better deal for taxpayers.

My government is fulfilling its commitment to establish a drug management policy unit. It will focus on the better use of prescription drugs.

My government has already been successful in bringing drug costs down. So far this year, savings of \$4 million have been achieved for Nova Scotians needing medication for high cholesterol. Annual savings of \$6 million are projected.

Seniors are receiving care when and where they need it. Last month, my government announced that extended-care paramedics had begun treating seniors in nursing homes - right at their bedsides, avoiding the stress and trauma of unnecessary trips to the hospital.

Seniors and their families will also benefit from the new Supportive Care Program and the Caregiver Benefit Program, which help seniors stay in their own homes and communities, and maintain their independence. Good health must also include a focus on prevention and promotion. This year my government will seek your approval of legislation required to implement the new Gaming Strategy. This strategy will focus on research into problem gambling and improve the range of options to address risk and problem gambling.

To ensure our children are given a healthy start, a new childhood obesity strategy will promote healthy, active lifestyles and the consumption of healthy foods. A new food policy for daycares will also ensure young children eat nutritious foods that will help them grow strong and healthy.

Later this spring, a renewed Tobacco Strategy will be launched. And we will respond in the near future to the recommendations of the Autism Advisory Team.

Better Care Sooner is good news for patients. It is making life better for Nova Scotia families.

Creating good jobs and growing the economy

As a result of the recent recession, the economy remains fragile. Nova Scotia must continue to focus on creating good jobs and growing the economy. Past economic development strategies have produced dismal results, despite the many millions invested. For the past 20 years, Nova Scotia has consistently had the lowest economic growth in the country.

My government has taken a different approach, recognizing that significant change is essential. jobsHere equips Nova Scotia to compete and succeed in the global marketplace. In this age of innovation, Nova Scotia must be prepared to take on the world. jobsHere gives businesses the tools and learning opportunities to succeed.

My government has committed \$200 million to this strategy. The range of new initiatives is extensive.

By refocusing our efforts, and reallocating precious tax dollars, my government has modified dozens of programs and brought in more than 20 new initiatives. The Productivity Investment Program is one example. This \$25 million program provides support for investments in employee skills, as well as critical investments in equipment and processing.

The program doubles the capacity of the current Workplace Education Initiative so more employees have the chance to improve their education and essential skills, and better contribute to our economy. It also triples the number of co-operative education positions so that more Nova Scotians have relevant work experience as they learn.

In short, the Productivity Investment Program helps companies in every region of the province to prepare their workforce for improved productivity, adapt to new business processes, and encourage innovation.

My government intends to improve employer investment and employee participation through a new Workforce Strategy.

My government is investing \$500,000 to improve the apprenticeship system, which will increase flexibility for employers and apprentices.

My government will soon launch Nova Scotia's new Immigration Strategy, a plan to double the number of immigrants who land in Nova Scotia within the next 10 years, and to keep more of those immigrants in the province.

My government also respects experience. A \$1 million annual investment will identify, assess, and recognize the skills, knowledge, and competencies people acquire through formal and informal learning. This commitment to prior-learning assessment will help fuel the learning agenda and our knowledge economy.

My government will also recognize the workforce needs of the non-profit and voluntary sectors, and will provide labour market support for training initiatives and regional capacity development.

My government is investing \$3.5 million over three years to ensure more African Nova Scotians have the skills they need to enter the labour market. Skills Up will offer opportunities for African Nova Scotians to upgrade their skills and training.

A skilled workforce is a magnet for increased investment. But promising investments often require strong partnerships.

In the past, emerging companies have suffered from limited access to venture capital, stifling their growth and innovation. A new Regional Venture Capital Fund changes that. My government has stepped up to the plate and made the first contribution to this fund. Other partners will sign on later this year.

Exports also matter to Nova Scotia. Last year, exports generated about \$3.4 billion in sales revenues.

Manufacturers matter. In 2009, they led Nova Scotia's economic recovery and sold \$8.9 billion worth of goods to customers in Canada and more than 130 countries around the world. That's why my government will launch a new International Commerce Strategy. The strategy will help our companies build international capacity, increase international economic activity, strengthen our access to global markets and networks, and build an

integrated approach to international commerce.

The changes we are making have a common objective - to create good jobs and grow the economy. That's why, for the first time since 1992, my government cut the small business corporate tax rate by 10 per cent, leaving more money in the hands of the entrepreneurs who help drive our economy.

The rate is being cut again this year for a small business tax reduction of 20 per cent.

jobsHere recognizes that smaller businesses need easier, more streamlined access to the programs and services that can help them grow their businesses. A Web portal will provide entrepreneurs and employers with the information they need, all with the click of a mouse.

As part of jobsHere, more than \$30 million in loans have been approved under the Credit Union Loan Program to support ownership and succession planning for small businesses.

Better resources are being provided for employers and entrepreneurs, and the next phase of the Better Regulations program will build on the government's significant progress in reducing red tape.

My government will be relentless in the pursuit of economic opportunities. That's why we welcome the National Shipbuilding Procurement strategy. Irving Shipbuilding is competing to be one of two centres of excellence for construction of combat and non-combat vessels for the federal fleet. This project will provide high-value jobs for up to 4,000 people for 30 years, with benefits extending from Sydney to Yarmouth.

My government believes that no region of Canada, no shipyard, is better positioned to do this work than Nova Scotia's Irving Shipbuilding. We will enthusiastically promote and champion this bid, ensuring it's as competitive as it can be.

We will pursue prosperity in every region of the province.

The planned Sydney Harbour dredging project has the potential to change the economic direction of industrial Cape Breton, while creating hundreds of jobs for all Nova Scotians.

In these times of shared challenges, my government is building the connections that will help build a stronger, greener Canada.

The Lower Churchill hydroelectricity agreement - signed by Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nalcor Energy, and Emera - will transform the economic

landscape of Atlantic Canada and build a more prosperous nation. It will make a major contribution to Nova Scotia's leadership in renewable energy and Canada's reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It will create \$3.5 billion in labour and business income.

By providing stable, reliable hydro power, Lower Churchill will unlock vast renewable energy resources in all of Atlantic Canada, for our domestic markets and for northeastern North America.

This project demonstrates that the Atlantic Provinces do best when we co-operate to seize the great opportunities of our time. There is no net gain when four smaller provinces compete with each other.

Nova Scotia's proximity to North American markets, excellent communication networks, and our unique position in Atlantic Canada's gateway provide all the essentials for success. Recent investments in the Halifax Stanfield International Airport will build on that success. The \$28 million runway extension will attract more passengers and cargo. And that will open up new markets for our fisheries and other primary industries.

Meanwhile, the province's first-ever five-year highway plan is providing a blueprint to build and maintain a highway system that connects communities and boosts our economy.

My government was proud to join with governments across Canada to deliver much-needed stimulus spending to reduce the impact of the worldwide recession. In this province, that included delivering the two largest highway improvement budgets in the province's history. The investment is worth it. But it's vital that every dollar is spent wisely.

In the past, a lack of competition in some areas of the province resulted in high prices for asphalt and chip seal paving. A new in-house chip seal paving operation and asphalt plant will mean that the province can pave more and pay less. The result will be better roads in areas like Shelburne and Inverness Counties.

From our fields, to the forests, to the sea, our primary industries remain a foundation of the economy.

As part of jobsHere, my government has developed a 10-year action plan to make our agriculture industry more competitive, innovative, and profitable. Homegrown Success is focused on helping farmers adapt to a changing marketplace and to seize every available market opportunity.

My government also fulfilled its commitment to keep soils healthy and productive, with the Soil Amendment Program.

A strong fishery means a strong economy. My government is committed to building a strong fishery and supporting our coastal communities.

A new Commercial Fisheries Strategy will be developed in consultation with industry. It will include measures to diversify markets, to update the Fishermen's Organizational Support Act, and to expand access to relevant training.

The intergenerational licence transfer program will provide the Fisheries Loan Board support to allow young people joining the industry to buy the licences of retiring fish harvesters at fair market prices.

Mining also matters to Nova Scotia. The Donkin coal project in Cape Breton has the potential to double the value of mineral production in the province and provide much-needed jobs for the area.

This province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources.

My government is in the final stages of developing a new approach to natural resource management that will focus on the shared values identified during an extensive consultation process: sustainability, diversity, collaboration, transparency, and informed decision making.

Informed by input from every corner of the province, the upcoming Natural Resources Strategy offers an integrated approach to managing our forests, biodiversity, provincial parks, and geological resources.

Nova Scotia's export-oriented forest industry employs 11,000 people. But changes in the marketplace and strains on our forests put the future of those jobs at risk. New policy direction announced recently, including a 50 per cent reduction in clear-cutting, will help to ensure good jobs in a successful and sustainable industry.

The province will work with partners to ensure a wood supply that sustains this viable industry, while meeting public expectations for biodiversity and high environmental standards. Based on consultation with the Mi'kmaq and advice from other forest stakeholders, a plan to achieve the policy direction will be launched in the coming year.

The province's purchase of 140,000 acres of land - much of it with high conservation value - protects jobs in the forestry industry while supporting wilderness protection, heritage conservation, and recreation.

Clean energy is the fuel of the future. Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to institute hard caps on greenhouse gas emissions, and has set the most aggressive renewable-energy standards in the world.

We also have the first community-focused feed-in tariffs in the world, giving communities and First Nations across Nova Scotia the opportunity to participate in building a future powered by more renewable electricity. You will be asked to enact the new target that, by 2020, at least 40 per cent of all electricity used in Nova Scotia will come from renewable energy sources.

Our Cleaner Energy Strategy will look at new technologies to support cleaner energy sources - sources like tidal power. Nova Scotia is a world leader in the development of tidal energy. An underwater cable will arrive this summer and is the next step in connecting our tidal pilot projects to the grid. We have attracted world-class companies and strong local companies like Minas Basin, Nova Scotia Power, and the Irving Shipyard to work on this exciting tidal project.

Tourism is another important economic driver for this province. Work will continue to build Nova Scotia as a premier travel destination and attract more visitors to the province.

Nova Scotia is steeped in rich, diverse culture. This year my government will work with members of the Arts and Culture sector to implement its recently announced five-point Arts and Culture Plan. By year's end, Arts Nova Scotia, an independent body for artist funding, will be in place. And in the next few weeks, conversations will begin with the Arts and Culture sector about creating "Status of the Artist" legislation.

We must also maintain our focus on excellence in public education. Despite the challenges of declining enrolment, the province is increasing its per-pupil funding of public education, and focusing on excellence in the classroom. Shortly, Dr. Ben Levin, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership, will file his report focused on improving the quality of learning and outcomes for students.

My government has already begun to make positive changes focused on helping children succeed in school. A new literacy intervention framework is one example. This flexible early-literacy program will continue to help those students in greatest need, while expanding support to more children who need help.

My government's commitment to after-school programs and to broadening the community's use of schools will also be fulfilled this year.

In and out of the classroom, parents, educators, and students are becoming increasingly concerned about cyber-bullying. Working with these partners, my government will help to ensure that students have the support they need to speak out and stand up to bullies.

All students in Nova Scotia should have access to a broad range of learning opportunities, no matter where they live. That's why distance education continues to grow and evolve in Nova Scotia.

This Fall, the Nova Scotia Virtual School will expand - opening the door to new opportunities for students in small and rural schools by ensuring access to courses in a rigorous, supportive online learning environment.

Access to higher learning is another important commitment. Last Fall, Dr. Tim O'Neill said our Student Assistance Program was the weakest in the country. Nova Scotia must do better than that. Soon, students will learn about a new program that will cap the debt load they face upon graduation.

Tuition is now below the national average for Nova Scotian students studying at home. By capping tuition increases, we will keep the average tuition below the national average, making this province a more affordable choice for students and their families.

Nova Scotia universities are economic drivers in this province, producing some of the best and brightest minds in a variety of disciplines and fields. But over the past ten years, the cost of publicly supporting universities has increased by 73 per cent. That trend can no longer continue. My government will work with universities to strengthen these institutions strategically and affordably.

The value of working together to develop the best path forward is an approach also taken in considering how best to modernize the electoral system. A modern and efficient electoral system will ensure Nova Scotians continue to exercise their democratic rights.

To that end, my government will introduce a new Elections Act to modernize the conduct of elections. It is based on advice from the recognized parties, the Election Commission, and others who were consulted by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Helping people make ends meet

Making life better for families means making life more affordable. That's why my government eliminated the provincial tax on essentials like home heating, books, children's shoes, clothes, feminine hygiene products, and diapers.

The Poverty Reduction Tax Credit and Affordable Living Tax Credit are two more examples of how my government is reducing the burden for those most in need. And now, seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement no longer pay provincial tax.

Having a safe place to call home is important for us all. For seniors, for families, and for persons with disabilities, more than \$128 million has gone to constructing or renovating more than 1,700 homes. For those buying a heritage property, provincial tax

rebates are available. A provincial tax rebate is also available for those buying a vehicle for physically challenged people. But we know this is not enough.

New steps will be taken to help Nova Scotians make ends meet. Making life better for families means treating people fairly and with respect. This year my government will improve support for Nova Scotian families, provide new incentives for people to break out of the poverty cycle, and address gaps in support for persons with disabilities.

My government is making significant changes to improve the Employment, Support and Income Assistance program. For example, people who want to come out of Income Assistance, and who find jobs, will now be able to keep more of the money they make. And parents whose children are attending post-secondary institutions will now continue to receive housing support.

Through the creation of a new 211 system, Nova Scotians will be able to access a full range of social services within their local communities, just by picking up the phone. The loving families who care for foster children will also receive more support. Services for Nova Scotians living with disabilities will improve, and we will shorten waiting lists for day programs, a critical consideration for families who wish their loved ones to live at home.

My government will continue to bring attention to the importance of safe workplaces, and engage with employers, unions, and others to eliminate workplace accidents and deaths. Approval for stronger penalties for Occupational Health and Safety offences, and further sanctions for impaired driving, will be sought during this session. These bills will propose serious consequences for actions that endanger the lives of others.

Domestic violence is another area of great concern for many Nova Scotians. We all saw courage and leadership when the family and friends of Paula Gallant made sure that she was remembered, and that justice was done in her memory. The scourge of domestic violence is persistent, but my government is implementing the Domestic Violence Action Plan to increase support for victims and further support the many who work to stop domestic violence. The province's first Domestic Violence Court will be established in Sydney as a key part of the plan.

Positive, meaningful change is well underway in Nova Scotia. My government is committed to keeping emergency rooms open and delivering better care to Nova Scotians. My government is creating good jobs and growing the economy. My government is helping Nova Scotians make ends meet. And my government is living within its means.

The plan is on track. The plan is working. My government is making life better for families.

God bless Nova Scotia.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.

The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber preceded by her escorts and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr. Speaker took the Chair.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. ROSS LANDRY: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act Respecting Oaths of Office.

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a Speech to the members met in the General Assembly of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy which the Chief Clerk will now read.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear! Hear! (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I move that the Throne Speech be taken as read.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the Throne Speech be taken as read. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Kings North.

MR. JIM MORTON: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today in this, the Third Session of our 61st General Assembly, to move the Speech from the Throne as read by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Mayann E. Francis.

I want to start by taking a moment to thank Her Honour for her contributions to Nova Scotia and for the impressive way in which she carries out her many responsibilities as the Queen's representative in our province. The Lieutenant Governor is central to our parliamentary system and Her Honour fulfills her duties with poise, dignity, and a personal warmth that honours the role and earns friends, respect, and a multitude of invitations from across the length and breadth of Nova Scotia.

I know that one of those invitations, Mr. Speaker, has come from the citizens of Woodville, Kings County, and I'm very pleased to tell this House that Woodville is one of the winners of the Lieutenant Governor's 2011 Community Spirit Awards. (Applause) Everyone in Woodville is excited that Her Honour will be visiting their community to present the award in July.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a number of remarks, but before I do that I want to acknowledge the presence of several people who are in the gallery this afternoon. Don Fraser and Susan Fraser are here, and so is Marie Sanford, and Don and Becky Lewellyn. They are my friends and colleagues, and each is making a significant contribution to the life of our Kings North community. I'd like to welcome each of them, and everyone in the gallery this afternoon to this House of Assembly. (Applause)

Someone who could not be in the House this afternoon is my wife, Donna McGrath. Donna's love and support and so many contributions make it possible for me to manage the challenges of my role and work and I am ever-grateful to her. (Applause)

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate our Speaker - not the one who is in the Chair at the moment (Applause) - certainly you as well, on your appointment.

MR. [DEPUTY] SPEAKER: I'll pass it on.

MR. MORTON: I know that the Speaker will guide the proceedings of this Assembly with clarity and confidence, and I look forward to participating in the debate as the work of this House unfolds over the next days and weeks.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne builds on the program that we have presented to Nova Scotians since we formed government in 2009. Our priorities have been clear and focused - we are committed to getting our financial affairs back to balance and to building a future in which Nova Scotia will live within its means; we are working to create better health care, and care that is available when it is needed; and we have dedicated

ourselves to creating good jobs and growing the economy.

It is clear to us and clear to Nova Scotians that our government inherited a financial mess and an unsustainable fiscal path, a path that would have led us to a deficit of \$1.4 billion and a ballooning debt of \$16 billion within four years. Those ends were not, and they are not, now, acceptable. We need, instead, a stable financial foundation on which to build our future and our children's future.

We have been putting the building blocks in place. For the first time in 23 years, for example fiscal 2010-11, the year just ending, will be the second year in a row that the province's spending will come in below estimates. (Applause) I want to remind the House of the significance of this accomplishment. During the previous 10 years the annual overspending was \$277 million. That is more than \$2.5 billion in unbudgeted, unplanned spending. We are on the right track with our four-year plan to get Nova Scotia back to balance. We are committed to planning a future that will help us live within our means.

Of course the purpose of a sound financial plan, Mr. Speaker, is to create a strong and stable foundation that will help us sustain and build programs and services that make life better for all Nova Scotians, services like roads and education and health care. We know that Nova Scotians value their health and recognize the importance of health care, so we've been taking action to make our health care system work better. Families want to know that care will be available when it is needed.

We are working to establish collaborative emergency care centres across the province, an investment that will reduce wait times and better match levels of services to the needs of the community. We understand the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to health care and, as a consequence, have expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists and increased the number of nurse practitioners working in Nova Scotia. We are taking advantage of our world-class emergency health service and are rolling out a clot-buster program to better respond to heart attacks across the province, and we're taking steps to ensure that taxpayers who rely on Pharmacare get a better deal on the prescription drugs that they need.

Mr. Speaker, more than 50 years ago Tommy Douglas fought hard against all odds to create a health care model that transformed Canada and set a precedent for the world. Nova Scotians are proud of that achievement and we're absolutely committed to improving the way that health services are delivered in our province. While we understand that it is essential to manage our finances carefully, and critically important to make improvements in health care and other services, we also know that everything we need and want has to be paid for.

More than 100 years ago, an American visitor, Roscoe Bigelow Paine, noted in his wonderful little book, *The Tent Dwellers*, that what Nova Scotia needs most is money. Mr. Paine may have been right a century ago - and certainly our government knows today - that

our future welfare depends on good jobs and growing our economy. The record of previous governments speaks for itself. Averaged over the past 20 years, economic growth in Nova Scotia has been lower than that of any other province in Canada. That's an average we have to change.

As Premier Dexter has noted, "where there's no change, there is no future." Mr. Speaker, that's why we've introduced an economic plan we've called jobsHere. It is based on three key priorities:

- Learning the right skills for the emerging economy;
- Being open and prepared for innovation; and
- Being able to compete in local and global markets

Over the next three years our government will invest \$200 million to support the jobsHere plan.

We will use the \$25 million Productivity Investment Program, for example, to encourage businesses to become more competitive and productive by investing in innovation and employee skills. The Productivity Investment Program and an array of other tools in the jobsHere plan - including a further reduction in the small business tax rate from 4.5 to 4 per cent - are designed to contribute to a strong economy, one that will ensure that Nova Scotians have access to good jobs and a prosperous future.

I have been talking about our finances, about our health care system and our plan to grow the economy, but I would be remiss to stand in the House today without drawing attention to those in our province who are most in need. Nova Scotia, along with the rest of Canada, has experienced an increase in the depth of poverty and inequality over the past decade. It is that reality, more than any other, which lead me to this House.

I believe that we have an obligation to invest in the welfare of those who have the least in our society and we have been making a number of those investments. We introduced an Affordability Tax Credit for households with low incomes and a Poverty Tax Credit for individuals who have the least resources. We removed the HST from home heating fuels and took the HST off children's clothing, footwear and feminine hygiene products, making life more affordable for families. We've made changes that mean 18,000 seniors who are recipients of the Guaranteed Income Supplement will no longer pay provincial income taxes. More recently we improved income assistance regulations by removing the co-habitation barrier, doubling the savings that applicants can keep and by providing enhanced coverage for eye examinations.

Each of these initiatives makes life better for those Nova Scotians who have low incomes and - as poverty researcher Dr. Christine Saulnier has suggested - makes Nova Scotia a better place for us all.

I am proud of our progress and I recognize that much more needs to be done. As I see it, getting back to balance and growing our economy is, as I noted earlier, a foundation from which to do the work that will give every Nova Scotian access to the resources that are at the heart of a successful life.

Jack Layton, several years ago, put it like this, “The way . . . to reduce fear and despair and poverty in the world, all of which are related, is to invest in the welfare of human beings around the world.”

I referred to Tommy Douglas a few minutes ago. In a recent assessment of the Douglas Government of Saskatchewan - the government that effectively gave us Medicare - A.W. Johnson who was close to that scene had this to say, “The starting point for Douglas and his colleagues . . . was the belief that the ultimate goal of the state was to enable every person ‘to stand tall,’ to live a life of dignity and confidence and decency . . . And it was accompanied happily - some would say paradoxically - by another deeply held sentiment, respect for fiscal prudence and public integrity.”

That’s how our government sees it too. We want and need every Nova Scotian to live a life of dignity and confidence and decency, and we know that fiscal prudence and public integrity provide a pathway to that end.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, prudence does not imply that Nova Scotians should stay in the shadows. Our jobsHere strategy suggests that it is change that will lead us to a better future. It suggests that our success will come from our ability to innovate, to learn the skills that it takes to succeed, to find new ways to be productive and competitive both here at home and on the world stage.

The future we want involves stepping up to new opportunities and using each success to build confidence, to believe in ourselves and in our capacity to make Nova Scotia a better place for everyone. That is one of the lessons we can take from the experience and courage of Viola Desmond. The moving ceremony in the Red Room almost a year ago stands out for me as a symbol of how one person can make a difference, an indicator that change is possible.

I’ve taken the opportunity to read the recently published and beautifully illustrated *Viola Desmond Won’t Be Budged* to school children in Kentville, Aldershot, Canning and Port Williams both to celebrate a Nova Scotia hero and also to underline that our success as a province needs us all - every living Nova Scotian - to pitch in, to be partners in a better future.

Mr. Speaker, the speech Her Honour read today shows that our government has stepped up. We have a plan for Nova Scotia and the programs to make that plan succeed. We know that Nova Scotians are ready to step up too. Consider, for example, our spectacular success with the Canada Winter Games. Young athletes, their coaches, managers, artists, volunteers, administrators - people from every corner of our province - joined together to compete, to organize, to create, to celebrate and to welcome folks from across the country to take part in what may have been the biggest sports event in our history. We made it happen.

We're still in welcome mode. As Minister Percy Paris has said, "In 2011, we will step up and lead the way in celebrating the International Year for People of African Descent. Not just in Canada, but in the world."

We have what it takes to build the future we want. Parts of that future lie in our biggest goals, like exploring the potential of tidal power in the Bay of Fundy, moving forward on the Lower Churchill hydroelectricity project, achieving 40 per cent of our electricity needs through renewable means by 2020. Everywhere I go I hear from Nova Scotians who are excited by these bold initiatives. We are ready to move forward.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the readiness to move forward is played out in the lives of families and organizations and communities throughout our province. I see that energy every day in Kings North as citizens work with each other and with government to achieve better results. Our government plays a central role in that process.

I think, for example, of PeopleWorx, a not-for-profit organization that helps individuals build work-readiness skills throughout the Annapolis Valley, these days from a wonderful, new building in Coldbrook. Earlier this week, PeopleWorx received \$300,000 from Labour and Advanced Education to provide coaching and training to individuals who need assistance in connecting to the workplace.

The Valley African Nova Scotia Development Association - better known as VANSDA - will use \$230,000 from Labour and Advanced Education to fund work placements in organized workshops. VANSDA's leadership in community and economic development has been critical to the African Nova Scotian community for many years.

Assistance from the Department of Community Services means the Evangeline Child Care Centre is poised to build a new facility on River Street in Kentville, adding new child care spaces while improving the quality of care for everyone who uses the service.

The Canning Village Commission is using \$24,000 from the Department of Health and Wellness to develop a walking trail in the community to promote active transportation and better health. Our government contributed \$10,000 toward the development of a wonderful Port Williams Community Park, a major project that demonstrates the

leadership, capacity and skill of local citizens.

“Leading edge” may be the way to describe the amazing creative work of the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, and Two Planks and a Passion Theatre. During the past year, we have invested more than \$65,000 to help the organization further position itself as a leader in the Canadian arts world. These are just a few examples of how our government is working collaboratively with communities to build a better future.

In Kings North I can also see the future in several important school projects. The fabulous new Kings County Academy is nearing completion; Glooscap Elementary in Canning has been transformed by a recently completed renovation; and in Aldershot, students and parents, and I might add grandparents, are finally watching the construction of a new gymnasium - a goal that had its origins at least 30 years ago. In Nova Scotia, we are ready to step up. We want a better future and we’re ready to do what it takes to achieve it.

Mr. Speaker, I see signs of our willingness to learn, to innovate, to change, everywhere I turn in my home constituency of Kings North. It shows up in the passion for democracy that’s part of our intense debate over development and the protection of agricultural land. It plays out in the collaboration between producers, academics, business experts, and research scientists in the development and marketing of new varieties of apples like Honey Crisp, and a host of other crops and value-added products. Our potential for growth and innovation in the digital economy is as close as the 72-strand fibre-optic network owned and operated locally by the Valley Community Fibre Network. Creativity is showing up everywhere in community associations throughout Kings North, groups that may have formed initially to put a new roof on a community hall but have grown to become the driving force for local development.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hard and our government is working hard to make life better for families. We are making tough decisions and putting our province on a different path to a different future. We are on the right track with our four-year financial plan to get Nova Scotia back to balance and to make sure that we live within our means. We are making progress toward providing better health care for families when it’s needed. We’re following a plan to create good jobs and grow the economy. Our government is doing this work to enable every Nova Scotian to stand tall, to live a life of dignity and confidence and prosperity. Each of us in this House will play a part in the work. I would say that each of those in the gallery, and each citizen throughout our province, has a role to play in making Nova Scotia better.

Robert Kennedy, whose life was cut too short, talked about the importance of the role each of us might take on. He said in a speech at one point, “Each time a man [or a woman] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” There is a place for everyone in our

efforts to make life better. We need everyone.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, it is a very great honour for me to be the representative for the people of Kings North. I value those many opportunities I have been given to enter into the life of the communities that make up the constituency. I will continue to do my best to listen to the ideas and concerns of the citizens of Kings North and I will ensure that their voices are heard by our government. I have been doing that work with the expert help of our Kings North constituency assistant, Anne Harris. Anne always steps up to work on behalf of constituents and I am grateful for her expertise, energy, and for her focus on results. She deserves many thanks.

It is also an honour, Mr. Speaker, for me to stand in this House as a member of our government. So with clarity about our plans, knowledge of the strength and energy of our people, and confidence in a better future, I move that the Speech from the Throne, as read by Her Honour Mayann Francis, be accepted as read. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, M. le Président. It's a pleasure for me to be given the opportunity to rise today to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, our gracious Mayann Francis, for the words that she has so eloquently spoken today. I am honoured to second the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I, too, beg leave to make a small introduction from the floor as I have a few guests in the gallery who have not been here before to visit. These are constituents of mine and I am also proud to be able to call them friends. We have Wayne Burley, Donnie Guthro, and Greg Hodge. Thank you so much, gentlemen, for coming here today. (Applause)

I would like to add that my mother and father, Jan and Paul, could not be here today but they send their very best regards to each and every one of you here in the House. They are in Spain; they are going to be there for another month, but you'll be seeing them at some point. So they send their best love.

Mr. Speaker, on May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela gave an inaugural speech upon his election as the 11th President of South Africa. He had just served 27 years in prison prior to his release. I think it is fitting that we here in Nova Scotia reflect upon the words and thoughts of this great man as we, the representatives of the people from all regions of this beautiful province, begin our deliberations for a new session of this House of Assembly. In the words of President Mandela, "Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a

glorious life for all.”

Mr. Speaker, when President Mandela addressed the nation before a huge rally in Capetown, South Africa, in a speech that was broadcast live around the world, he also stressed the importance of consultations when making governmental decisions, “The people need to be consulted on who will negotiate and on the content of such negotiations. Negotiations cannot take place above the heads or behind the backs of our people.”

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to point out that in the 22 months just passed, as Nova Scotia’s first NDP Government, we have firmly entrenched the practice of doing just what the esteemed Nelson Mandela suggested as a method of fair and just governance. We have consulted the people on important issues that pertain to them, to their land, to their lives, and to the future of their children and their children’s children. Good examples of this, I feel, are the consultation tours taken by many of our ministers, including Minister Paris here, our esteemed Finance Minister, Graham Steele, and the Honourable Maureen MacDonald as Minister of Health.

Meanwhile, many of my colleagues, myself included, continue to hold discourse and consult publicly and privately with our constituents on many pertinent issues. I am pleased and I am proud of many of the initiatives that my colleagues and I have undertaken in the short time that we have been in office as government. It is very hard to turn a huge ocean liner around overnight, or a province around in just under two years, especially with the huge debt and deficit that we inherited. However, I beg leave to address a number of these successful initiatives today.

First of all, government investment in community projects, infrastructure and innovative initiatives. In my own constituency of Truro-Bible Hill, for instance, there have been many initiatives, upgrades to existing organizations, and partnerships between the municipality and the provincial government worth noting. First of all, these initiatives would include financial support for the Downtown Truro Partnership, for greening of public spaces, support for women’s centres, daycares, seniors’ centres, volunteer fire brigades, parks and recreation, the Truro Curling Club, the Truro Stadium, our new hospital, our new civic centre, and our new Agri-Innovation Centre in Bible Hill. This also helps and includes the town greening its energy with retrofits for the civil heritage buildings in our Cool Truro campaign.

All of this is much appreciated by me and by my constituents. At this point to date - I’ve tried to figure it out very quickly but apparently it looks like the government here has contributed close to \$40 million already to Truro-Bible Hill, which I appreciate very much.

Along with these government fundraising efforts, I have to say that our town and our environment is very active in fundraising for our community projects. These include people in the community like the Meeches; Ron and Janet Meech, Gar Moffatt, they’ve invested in the old Willow Street School, turning it into a beautiful, upscale condo called

Willow Lofts. They were also recently awarded a heritage award by the province for their efforts. They're also turning the St. Mary's School into affordable-living apartments. Then there is the Douglas Street School - the community is turning it into a recreation centre, which is now being used for many community initiatives, including active living for seniors with a walking track, tai chi, yoga, all kinds of things to keep our seniors active.

I also would like to mention here the efforts of John Stanfield. Now we all know John and his family, here in this House, and I have to say that his and his team's fundraising efforts for the civic centre are really quite amazing. Just the other day they announced that they've raised \$3 million already for that project, along with the \$10 million that we have put into it. I just think it's very applaudable and I want to thank John for doing that for the community. (Applause)

Also, I have to say there has been a lot of talk about our hospital and how it has gone over budget and it has overruns, and I want to thank the Minister of Health and Wellness for putting the extra \$25 million into the hospital when we first got into government. I also have to say that the community has been extremely active in raising money. To this point right now, actually, the community has raised close to \$28 million, which is a lot of money for a small town like Truro.

This past year - I also want to mention - I've been doing a lot of work with Millbrook, and I'm extremely pleased and proud of the efforts that they are doing there. I decided that I wanted to open a second office as an MLA in Millbrook and I am the first MLA or MP ever to do so on a First Nations reserve. (Applause) I just figured that I wanted to send the message that they don't need to come to me, I'm going to go to them and anything that they have to say or want to talk about, I am all ears and I'm there to listen. I have to say right now, my office stays there are packed full from beginning to end and it's fantastic; really exciting stuff is happening.

There are the new treaties that have been signed with Millbrook, there is money for the cultural centre and they're doing an amazing thing right now. They're building a new theatre, they have a new project to start a theatre company there. They're calling it the Glooscap Players. It's going to be a professional, full-time, year-round theatre company. They're going to be writing and directing and producing plays based on the Glooscap legends.

I would also like to add that I'm talking with them about the idea of going into their community, getting young people to go and speak to their elders and getting their elders to tell them their stories - and there are a lot of stories to be told - and bringing them back and then a lot of us in the community who are artistic minded would like to work with them to form a play or some kind of production where they can actually express those words to the public and maybe even take it on tour across the province. So that's something they're doing in Millbrook that I'm very pleased about.

They're also building a year-round water park, a hotel, and a convention centre and this is going to be fantastic for our tourism. That, along with the Glooscap Centre, there are just so many initiatives going on that are going to bring people to Truro that it is extremely exciting. (Interruption) Arctic char is another thing that we produce in Truro, it's true, and it's delicious.

Now, while I'm speaking about the arts, I want to also talk about - I'm going to be bringing a professional ballet company to Truro. It's the first time that has ever been done as well. It's called Ballet Jörgen and their mandate is to perform for children, elementary school kids who have never seen the ballet before, have never experienced seeing a live ballet company. I happened to meet Bengt Jörgen who is the artistic director and I mentioned to him two years ago that I would love it if he could come to Truro with his company and perform for some of my schools. In fact, this year I've now arranged that six different elementary schools - all of them in my riding and one from Karen's constituency and one from Gary Burrill's constituency, we managed to fit them in, too - 2,000 elementary school kids. (Interruptions) Colchester North and Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. Anyway, their kids are also going to get to see the ballet.

So, 2,000 elementary school children from my constituency and two others will get to see *The Emperor's New Clothes* on April 14th. (Applause) It's going to be one of many other productions that will be coming to Truro.

We're also working at turning the old Normal College in Truro into an arts centre. Right now we're calling it ACT, the Arts Consortium of Truro and that proposal you will be hearing a lot more about in the months and the year to come. I want to commend government right now on the improvement and the investment in the arts in general in Nova Scotia and our interest and commitment to the creative economy.

Now, some people may not think that's so important because it's just a small part of the overall budget of the government, but I have to tell you right now, people are abuzz with these announcements, especially coming after - actually our announcement came before, but lately New Brunswick has announced they're cutting their money to their film and television tax credits and they in fact cut their Arts and Film New Brunswick. Unfortunately for them, that will be to our benefit because there are going to be many productions from New Brunswick that are now going to be coming to Nova Scotia. I'm so glad that our government had the foresight to invest in this very, very important industry. (Applause)

I would just like to list some of those things that we did with that arts announcement: again, you can't say it enough, the reinstatement of an arm's-length arts council and thank you so much to all those who helped make that decision and listened to the people; Status of the Artist legislation, it's so important; improvements to our Heritage Property Act and protecting our valuable built and natural heritage; changes and improvements to the film, TV, animation tax credit which I believe were imperative to

make us one of the most competitive provinces in Canada.

Without that, I really think a lot of our young people would be leaving the province and now because of these changes, we're going to be able to retain and attract more youth. As we know, this is an aging population here in Nova Scotia. I think it's so important for us to keep creating jobs that are going to attract young people and keep them here. This is a very, very good way of doing so.

I also want to commend government on including the creative economy in our economic strategy going forward and in fact, mentioning it in our jobsHere strategy. I think that is an extremely large step forward and I intend to keep lobbying for more of the same.

I'm proud of what we're doing with our aquaculture and environmental improvements. First of all, I want to say thank you so much for banning the use of cosmetic pesticides. This is something that we had by-laws on in Truro that helped to protect us somewhat, but now we don't need those by-laws anymore. We're going to release those and go with the province-wide ban and many, many people are so thankful for that.

Also, for giving farm loans to hog farmers and the others who have been struggling. Working with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, who, I have to say, has its first female president - yay. (Applause) She likes to say the farmer and the farmer's husband - I love that.

I think that we're going in great strides with our agriculture and the Federation of Agriculture is extremely excited about a lot of our initiatives. Making a decision to keep farmland in the Valley intact and not allowing re-zoning to plow it under and allow more construction on good farmland, I think is fantastic. Good minister, thank you so much. I received many letters about that and I definitely approve, so thank you so much.

Also, investing in programs to help discover and create value-added products for our agricultural goods which will sell at a high value as opposed to simply selling the raw product for low value as Nova Scotia has done historically. I think this makes our farmers more competitive in a global marketplace.

I have to say that a lot of this research is being done in my constituency, in Bible Hill, at the Agricultural College. In fact, I discovered on a tour there with Minister MacDonell, that sunflowers make insect-resistant products and that the college is actually in partnership with a company in Scotland to make these products which you can then hang up in your kitchen and keep those fruit flies at bay, and the farmers get a percentage of every product that is sold. I think this is amazing - what a step forward for the province.

Also, blueberries make a slew of health and beauty products, and one of our agricultural college researchers has invented Christmas trees with needles that don't fall

off - seriously - so there you go.

AN HON. MEMBER: Needles that light up?

MS. ZANN: No, they don't light up.

I would also like to now commend our energy improvements. I have to say I am extremely proud to be part of a government that has been brave enough to set tough standards on greenhouse gas emissions; in fact, we have the hardest cap in North America. We also have the highest goals in North America for the percentage of alternate green, sustainable energy - 25 per cent by the year 2015 and 40 per cent by the year 2025 is amazing. Why aren't more people following suit? If everybody did that, then hopefully we would have some ice left on the icecaps in 10 years time.

Also, the historic Churchill Falls agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador is an amazing achievement. (Applause) Muskrat Falls - when I first actually met Darrell, one of my first questions to him when I was trying to decide - the Premier - when I first met the Premier, before he was the Premier, I asked him what his stance was on the Lower Churchill Falls, and his answer actually made me decide that I was going to join his Party and run for government. So congratulations to him for that.

Now I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that my personal career may have evolved into a new kind of role outside the traditional perception of what an artist does, but friends of mine right across North America are paying attention, even in Hollywood. They are applauding Nova Scotia for the leadership role that we are assuming, the decisions we are making, and the progressive direction that we are taking this province.

I moved home to Nova Scotia a few years ago because I believed that, without a doubt, this province is full of potential and that we are stocked with an unlimited natural resource that is green, sustainable, valuable, and constantly renewable - the natural talent and creativity of its people. (Applause) I really believe that. Thank you.

This NDP Government and I have a vision - we believe the future of Nova Scotia is a bright one. I'm excited and if you are not yet, you soon will be because excitement is contagious.

It is my honour today to second the motion that the Speech from the Throne pass as read. J'apprecie monsieur. Thank you and good afternoon. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and give just a few remarks on the Premier's piece of fiction that we've all gotten today, but before I do that I want to congratulate the member for Kings North and the member for Truro-Bible Hill on

their moving and seconding the speech. As new members – I guess you're not new any more, but since we go through so many Throne Speeches here, at the beginning I want to congratulate you on your remarks, how heartfelt they were and sincere. I want to also congratulate both of you for the work that you've been doing in your constituencies.

I know the member for Kings North and I had the opportunity more recently to open a nursing home in the riding of Annapolis, which was committed to by the member for Clare, when he was the Minister of Health – sorry, not Clare, Argyle, when he was Minister of Health, but I wanted to express to the member for Kings North on his being there and the kind remarks that he said.

I also want to recognize, Mr. Speaker, your appointment to the Chair. You were our choice 18 months ago and we're glad to see you there now. (Applause) I also wish to acknowledge the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, the member for Sackville-Cobequid, on his appointment to Cabinet. We came into this House together in 2003. We are very pleased to see that the Premier had given you an opportunity to serve on Executive Council and wish you well as you go about doing your business.

I also want to recognize the former Speaker, the member for Pictou West, who has now taken on a new role in the Department of Natural Resources. We want to extend to you our best wishes on your new start as you go forward and we want to remind this House that when your Leader was going around campaigning in the last election campaign, we said 12 were too few. So he listened once again to the Liberal caucus and both of you are the beneficiaries of that. (Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, today, as we get an opportunity in this House, I want to recognize there are members in this gallery, some of whom serve other levels of government, some who serve our communities in other ways whether it's in the police forces, military or, quite frankly, in the public sector, I want to acknowledge them for their commitment to this province and the hard work that they do. I also want to recognize the family members and friends of members of this House who are here today because without them, quite frankly, us being able to do the jobs we do is impossible, not only from making sure that what's happening in our own constituency and our own families at home is being looked after by our spouses, and the work that the people who support us do to making sure that we get elected is an important piece of what we do. So I want to say thank you on behalf of our caucus and on behalf of the members of this House, so thank you to all of you. (Applause)

I will give a more formal address tomorrow, but I do want to assure this House and the members who are here who probably won't show up tomorrow to listen to this, I wouldn't come back tomorrow probably, but you can tune in though, but I do want to acknowledge and I want to offer our support as a caucus, to the government, to the people of this province, in making sure that the Province of Nova Scotia takes a lead role and becomes the destination for the national shipbuilding project that was mentioned in the

Address today. We, as a caucus, and I believe all members of this House and all Nova Scotians, recognize the hard work that goes on in the Dockyard and Irving shipyards and we recognize the important contribution that they have made to this province and recognize the opportunity that will be there for a generation for us if we work together as a House, as a province, and send a very clear message to our national friends that not only is Nova Scotia alive and well, but Nova Scotia should be a leader when it comes to the national shipbuilding project here in Halifax. (Applause)

I'm also going to mention the Lower Churchill project. Mr. Speaker, as you know, I've spoken about that project a number of times in this House when the previous government was here and when this government was here. I want to assure the Premier and all members of this House that our Party will continue to push and support to ensure that that energy from Lower Churchill goes through our province to allow us to build the infrastructure that is required, to really allow our renewable energy sector in this province to take off. It is an important piece, it is an important mechanism.

All too often, those of us who sit in this House as politicians line up around a turbine or a windmill to get a picture because it looks good, when in actual fact it's the transmission piece that will allow the energy to go through our province, but really will allow our province to take advantage of the natural resources that it has, allow our renewable energy sector to grow, and allow us to bring back much-needed capital that will be required to allow the economy of this province to thrive. So we as a caucus want to assure the Premier and all members of this House, the members in the gallery and the province, that we as a caucus are fully behind ensuring that that project comes off the blueprint and becomes a reality in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss, and I don't want everyone to think that I'm going to say everything good about the government, so I better just say a few (Interruptions) There were a couple of phrases in here that I must confess I kind of chuckled at when I read and one of them is this: "This year my government will seek your approval of legislation required to implement the new Gaming Strategy." I asked myself, why are they going to seek our approval for that? They didn't ask for our approval for an increase in HST. They didn't ask for our approval for increasing fees across the province. They didn't ask for our approval for the downloading of \$50 million onto the municipalities. They have a majority government. You need to lead

The other interesting phrase was, we are going to re-focus our efforts in "reallocating precious tax dollars". What tax dollars have they reallocated? What they have done - and each and every time they have gone into the pockets of Nova Scotians a little deeper - is they've taken more tax dollars out of the pockets of Nova Scotians. They've increased HST by 2 per cent, 1,400 user fees, every Nova Scotian is going to experience that pain. Every Nova Scotian's property taxes are going to increase over the next number of years with a \$50 million download by this government.

At the beginning of this speech today, they talked about in 2009 Nova Scotians voted for change; they did. Unfortunately, what they got is a lot of the same, previous to what was here before. There is nothing new coming out of this government, no one is leading and they're disappointed, quite frankly. Nova Scotians really were looking for change, they wanted to be part of it, they were hungry for it. Instead, what they got was a government that is unwilling to make some of those decisions. This government is spending at the same rate the previous government was spending. We added \$1.7 billion to the debt in 21 months. While I agree with the Premier and this message when they talked about that we have trailed as a province for the last 20 years in economic growth, we've also trailed in the last 21 months. Nova Scotians were looking for change and they haven't received it as of yet.

With those few remarks, I look forward to continuing my view of this little piece of fiction that the Premier has delivered. Tomorrow I'll get an opportunity to talk about their solutions for emergency rooms. When Nova Scotians voted in 2009, when the Premier said he had a solution to deal with the challenges around emergency rooms, they didn't think that he was going to change the names and reduce the hours and eliminate emergency rooms and say that was the solution. They thought they were going to have a solution to keep them open.

When we talk about making sure that Nova Scotians have opportunities to move forward, one of the fundamental things that we should be providing our children is a quality education. One of the first things they cut is Reading Recovery, one of the few things that actually had measurables, that was proven across not only this country but North America and what do we do? We cut it for a program that we don't even know exists, nor does the Premier. He's hoping by September 1st there will be one available and regardless of what they say, there will be no measurements to that and we will not be able to judge the outcomes of that. The people who lose to that are the Grade 1 students across this province who will not be given the kind of support that they need to ensure that their future is bright.

With those few remarks, I was encouraged by the government to keep going but now I see they want me to sit down because you have an event you want to go to, but I will look forward to the opportunity tomorrow to come back and continue that. With that, I will adjourn debate today.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn the debate.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of the session this afternoon on your behalf, I would like to invite all the members of the House and all the guests in the gallery to the Red Chamber for a reception.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable Government House Leader today, I would like to recognize in the Speaker's Gallery, as mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, today we have the reinstated members of the Cape Breton Highlanders. I'd like for them to stand and receive a warm welcome to the House. (Standing Ovation)

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now rise to meet between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and noon tomorrow when, after the daily routine, we will do Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. I wish we do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We are adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:04 p.m.]