



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Gordon Gosse

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Fourth Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
ARRIVAL OF LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR	1
SPEECH FROM THE THRONE	2
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
An Act Respecting Oaths of Office,	
Hon. R. Landry	19
SPEECH FROM THE THRONE:	
Moved - Mr. B. Skabar	20
Seconded - Mr. G. Burrill	25
ADDRESS IN REPLY:	
Hon. S. McNeil	27
Adjourned Debate	30
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Mar. 30 th at 9 a.m.	30



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012

Sixty-first General Assembly

Fourth Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Gordon Gosse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

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

[The Fourth 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 that the ladies and gentlemen be seated.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen, Nova Scotians:

Welcome to the Fourth Session of this, the 61st General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature. As this is my final opportunity to speak as Her Majesty's representative in this historic Chamber, I want to wish all Nova Scotians well and thank them for their kindness to me over the past five-and-a-half years.

This year is an auspicious one for Nova Scotians, as it is for our fellow citizens in every part of our great worldwide Commonwealth. In 2012, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II celebrates her Diamond Jubilee. Throughout the year, Nova Scotians will join others all over the Commonwealth in celebrating Her Majesty's 60-year reign. Long may she reign over us.

In July, as the Council of the Federation's incoming chair, the Premier will proudly host his colleagues from across Canada and lead the provinces in discussions about sustaining and strengthening the growth of our national economy. And Canada's Premiers and the national Aboriginal leaders will hold their annual meetings in Nova Scotia this year.

In the year that has passed since I last spoke in this Chamber, Nova Scotians have lost fellow citizens who gave much and freely of themselves. We take time now to remember these Nova Scotians whose contributions have fundamentally shaped this province across a wide variety of sectors:

- Graham W. Dennis, perhaps the greatest champion of Nova Scotia of his generation and publisher of Nova Scotia's fiercely independent daily newspaper, who ensured that the power of his press was used in the service of that which is best in this province;
- Senator Fred Dickson who, as loyal as he was to his political Party, never put the interests of anything ahead of the legitimate and honourable interests of his fellow Nova Scotians;
- Joyce Carman Barkhouse of Bridgewater, who wrote beautiful children's literature, including the Nova Scotian classic *Pit Pony*;
- Dr. Peter Aucoin and Dr. James Murray Beck, two of Nova Scotia's most distinguished and quoted political scientists, who were academic and teaching giants at Dalhousie University;

- Allan Blakeney, the first Nova Scotia-born NDP Premier in Canada, who provided leadership to the province of Saskatchewan for many, many years;
- Dr. Willard Sterling Boyle of Wallace, who was the co-inventor of an imaging semiconductor circuit known as the charge-coupled device (CCD sensor) and shared the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physics for the invention;
- The Most Reverend Colin Campbell, Bishop and Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Antigonish, a leader in his church and in his community;
- Cape Breton Regional Police Service Chief Myles Burke, a community leader who worked his way up through the ranks and served the people of Cape Breton with distinction;
- John J. Jodrey, an entrepreneur and community leader who served, among other capacities, as president of Scotia Investments;
- Paul O'Regan, who built one of the province's most successful automobile companies, and never lost his loyalty for or pride in his hometown of Parrsboro;
- Ken Spinney, who grew, donated, and was justifiably proud of the Nova Scotia Christmas tree in Boston in 2011;
- Dr. Marie B. Elwood, who served as the Chief Curator of History for the Nova Scotia Museum and made an extraordinary contribution to this province, drawing Nova Scotians into a better understanding and appreciation of our cultural history;
- Two former members of this House, Richie Hubbard and Harold Huskilson, both of whom served their constituents and Nova Scotia proudly; and
- Peter Underwood, a dedicated and long-serving deputy minister with the provincial government.

Our province can move forward in confidence because of the contributions of people such as these.

In 2009, Nova Scotians voted for a new approach to government, rejecting an approach that had become stale, short-sighted and unable to learn from mistakes. Nova

Scotians, seeking to make life better for families, provided a strong mandate for change. The priorities of Nova Scotians are as clear today as they were three years ago: good jobs and a strong economy, health care, education, and affordability.

Nova Scotia needs a strong, vibrant economy to pay for important services like health care and education. A strong, vibrant economy will enable our children and grandchildren to find meaningful employment and raise their families - here, at home.

My government has been relentless in pursuit of economic opportunities that will propel the province forward. At the same time, it recognizes that the fiscal capacity of the government is driven by the way public resources are managed.

With the help of thousands of Nova Scotians, business and labour leaders, public servants, and organizations, my government has taken on the difficult task of ensuring once and for all that the province's spending is kept in line with its ability to pay.

Getting back to balance - and staying there - is critical for making sure the public services that families rely on will be there when they need them, now and for generations to come.

My government is one year away from bringing Nova Scotia back to balance.

To ensure that the province continues to live within its means every year, my government will make even more improvements to the way it operates and delivers public services.

My government is finding ways to deliver services much more cost-effectively, while maintaining or improving quality. In the coming year, it will focus further on procurement. The province spends \$1 billion a year on goods and services, and Nova Scotians rightly expect their government to make wise spending decisions. My government will seek savings while ensuring quality and value for taxpayers.

Previous governments have failed to find lasting savings in the administration of government, school boards and health authorities, municipalities and universities. My government is committed to providing services Nova Scotians want and need, while at the same time making the improvements necessary to deliver those programs and services more effectively.

Just this month the province, the nine district health authorities, and the IWK announced the merger of several administrative services, including the elimination of up to 20 vice-president and senior executive positions. Once fully implemented, my government forecasts to save up to \$55 million annually.

Any service or program that is funded, either wholly or in part, by the taxpayers of Nova Scotia must be delivered in the most efficient way possible. Savings through shared services must be part of the solution. Continued duplication of services at public expense is something Nova Scotia cannot afford.

My government is focused on the future. Its effort to secure a better life for families is supported by careful preparation and a strong, focused plan. My government is sticking to its plan. The plan is on track. The plan is working.

Even as it has had to build a sustainable, balanced financial foundation for the province from the structural deficit it inherited, my government is also implementing significant change that is making life better for families now and into the future.

Change to bring Nova Scotians better health care sooner.

Change to put kids and learning first.

Change to make life more affordable for Nova Scotian families.

Change to create good jobs and grow the economy.

Nova Scotia is positioned to succeed. Our time is now.

Creating Good Jobs and Growing the Economy

In the past, poor economic performance was the norm. For 20 years, Nova Scotia's economic growth was the worst in Canada. Previous governments were, at best, overwhelmed by the challenge, and failed to spur a more prosperous trend.

Without change, Nova Scotia will not have a better future. My government is working with businesses, universities, and other partners to ensure that the province is strategically positioned to innovate, learn, and compete.

Nova Scotia is heading into an era of what promises to be great prosperity - a time when good jobs are the norm, a time when young people who left the province looking for work can come home and build a life here in Nova Scotia.

A strong, vibrant economy provides the foundation for the important programs and services Nova Scotians want and need.

But opportunity rarely just drops into our laps. It must be pursued, planned for, and seized.

Opportunities like the shipbuilding contract, the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project, and Shell Oil's commitment to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in exploration off our coast are going to significantly boost our economy. Much careful work and planning went into promoting and landing such opportunities.

From Yarmouth to Cape Breton you can see and feel the optimism for the future, even before any direct impact has hit. This is truly a case of opportunity meeting preparedness.

In Nova Scotia, right now, there are more people working than at any other time in our history. In the past few months, this province has turned an important corner: employment is higher now than before the recession hit in 2008. This is great news, but my government recognizes there is much more to be done. That's where jobsHere comes in.

A year after launching the jobsHere plan, the province has already supported the start-up and growth of hundreds of companies in all parts of Nova Scotia.

My government lowered the small business tax two years in a row, creating the most competitive tax environment for businesses in decades, and expanded the Credit Union Small Business Loan Program, ensuring that small businesses in every part of the province have access to larger loans with more time to pay them back.

jobsHere investments in workplace training help Nova Scotia employers grow their business. With funding through the Productivity Investment Program and the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive, more businesses can adapt to new technology and new ways of operating.

To date, the province has made 149 productivity training investments, totalling \$2.5 million, with 6,325 Nova Scotian employees receiving workplace productivity training. An additional 48 applications are now being processed. Workplace Education Initiatives will continue to help workers increase essential skills. By the end of this year 3,600 Nova Scotians will have moved into workplace education programs.

This year, my government will improve the apprenticeship programs that teach young people the skills and trades they'll need to make the most of their work lives in Nova Scotia's bright future.

Across Nova Scotia, demand for training in the workplace is massive. My government is expanding programs to meet that demand, and has brought all of its resources together under one virtual roof at careers.novascotia.ca.

In recent years, generations of Nova Scotians have looked West for opportunity. Soon all of Canada - and eyes around the world - will turn toward Nova Scotia as this province steps up to take its rightful place leading the country in growth and productivity.

In case anyone missed the announcement, Irving Shipyards was the successful bidder for the 30-year, \$25-billion naval ships contract. This will have a profound and positive effect on Nova Scotia's economy and on the lives of thousands of Nova Scotians and their families in all parts of the province.

It is one of the "game changers" that are becoming economic reality in Nova Scotia.

The shipbuilding contract will generate millions of dollars in economic spinoffs for the region, and create more than 11,000 good jobs during peak production. The province, through the Ships Start Here partnership, has already taken significant steps to help prepare businesses for participation. Last September, Shelburne Ship Repair reopened with the help of an \$8.8-million provincial investment.

Electricians, metal fabricators, sheet metal workers, welders, carpenters, steamfitters and pipefitters, and millwrights will be needed for the Irving contract. For those positions that cannot be staffed here at home, the best and the brightest from around the world will be attracted to share in our good fortune.

Two generations of Nova Scotians will have chances that their parents and grandparents lacked. They will have choices. My government is putting tools in place to help them make choices that work for them, and is fully focused on ensuring that young Nova Scotians are trained and ready to benefit so that this opportunity means as much to Nova Scotia as it should.

Through Kids and Learning First, the number of schools offering skilled trades will double over the next four years to 18 and a new manufacturing course connected to shipbuilding will be introduced in September 2013. These courses link learning to real-life jobs and help get young people thinking early about the opportunities out there and how they can seize them.

In addition to the "factory floor" opportunities the ships contract offers, our universities will develop the engineers, the business leaders, the innovators needed to turn contracts and concepts into Canada's next-generation naval fleet and build lasting economic legacies.

A new \$190,000 provincial investment will help high school graduates interested in shipbuilding enrol in a new metal fabrication program at the Nova Scotia Community College. And my government will make a significant new investment in expanding trades training in our high schools. This investment in state-of-the-art trades training will ensure that young people from across the province are ready to take the leap into a fulfilling and rewarding career when they graduate.

The province's workforce strategy is helping Nova Scotians acquire the right skills for good jobs.

While everyone can benefit, the strategy specifically and appropriately targets groups that are under-represented in the workforce, including women, African and Aboriginal Nova Scotians, people with disabilities, older workers, and income assistance recipients.

Recently, the Premier announced \$640,000 for workforce training programs offered through the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office in Membertou. Mi'kmaq workers are a brilliant, untapped resource, and the investment will increase the number of Mi'kmaq ready to go to work in industries that need workers. That will help strengthen the economy and better prepare them and the province for a brighter future.

Communities that have suffered discrimination and limited access to good jobs, particularly African Nova Scotians, have a new opportunity for training that is directly linked to worthwhile jobs. Skills Up! offers financial assistance for participants to obtain new skills in areas such as carpentry, electronics, technology, and operating heavy equipment, thereby enhancing their ability to obtain good jobs.

New immigrant Nova Scotians are another resource the province hopes will help meet the growing workforce demands. Welcome Home to Nova Scotia, the province's new immigration strategy, is among the most comprehensive in Canada, internationally targeting workers who have the technical skills and global contacts the province needs to become more innovative, productive, and competitive. Nova Scotia will continue its efforts to persuade Ottawa to increase the overall cap on immigration to Canada, and continue to work with private industry to recruit new skilled workers to this province.

In May, Nova Scotia hosts the federal/provincial/territorial Status of Women meeting, and also the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology Policy Forum, which will highlight the need for the inclusion of women and Aboriginal people in non-traditional trades and technology for the shipbuilding industry.

In this International Year of Co-operatives, Nova Scotians are proud of the Antigonish Movement that created the province's first housing co-operatives and first credit unions, and countless good jobs. The Antigonish Movement, perhaps the world's greatest adult education project, is an inspiration as Nova Scotians again take charge of their own destiny and use adult education, apprenticeship, and other skills training to ensure that as the future starts here, each family and community is ready to be part of that future.

Through jobsHere, the province is supporting businesses to become more productive and globally competitive; jobsHere is enabling Nova Scotia businesses to win in an increasingly competitive global market.

We have no better example of a long-standing, globally competitive business in this province than Michelin Tire. The Waterville plant, which makes truck tires, is marking 30 years of production this year. My government celebrates the commitment of Michelin and its employees to growing the economy of our province, and we look forward to continued growth in the years ahead.

My government also recognizes the great economic opportunities that exist in regions across the province. We look forward to the launch of the Cape Breton Strategic Framework Advancement project, which will tap into the amazing potential the Island holds. The province also welcomes the new economic council in southwestern Nova Scotia, and looks forward to working with the council to establish a regional development agency.

The jobsHere program also recognizes the important role played by the creative sector in Nova Scotia. My government is working with the members of the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council to explore opportunities to enhance our creative economy and strengthen our support for arts and culture. Just this week my government appointed the first board of Arts Nova Scotia, underscoring the importance of independence and artistic merit in decisions about funding for individual artists and the organizations that support them.

In this spring session, my government will introduce Status of the Artist legislation to reflect the importance of arts and culture to Nova Scotia. The province will also undertake research to measure the profound impact of the creative economy across Nova Scotia.

My government takes a great interest in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the largest one of its kind in Atlantic Canada. Just over a year ago, my government and the federal government announced support for a feasibility study to help the Art Gallery determine whether it will move into a bigger location. We look forward to the results of the study later this year.

My government recognizes that this province's tourism sector is an important economic driver and has taken important steps to ensure the sector is reaching its potential through the establishment of a special operating agency, which will involve tourism operators and experts in developing and implementing a long-term tourism strategy. The agency will hit the ground running at the start of what promises to be an exciting tourism season.

Nova Scotia is the place to be this year. International media have named our province one of the top global destinations for 2012. With the eyes of the world upon us this year for the 100th anniversary of the Titanic disaster, we will be commemorating and proudly reflecting on Nova Scotia's important role in this tragic story.

We're also getting ready to host amazing festivals and events across the province this year, including the return of the majestic Tall Ships to Nova Scotian ports, the TELUS World Skins Game, the Celtic Colours International Festival, and the much-anticipated relaunch of a Canadian icon, Bluenose II. The Bluenose II restoration is the result of world-class innovation and collaboration among three former rival companies to rebuild an important piece of our shared history. In the coming months, Bluenose II will return to the sea to carry on the proud legacy that connects our seafaring past with an exciting future.

During the coming year, Nova Scotia's diverse culture and heritage will attract global attention. The province anxiously awaits the outcome of the nomination of Grand Pré as our third UNESCO World Heritage Site. This designation will entrench the important role the Acadians played in our history, for the entire world to know and see. And, through an investment of \$750,000, Nova Scotia leveraged federal and private donors' support to develop the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown, Shelburne County. The centre, opening in 2013 as the newest addition to the Nova Scotia Museum family, will ensure that the story of the courage and survival of Nova Scotia's Black Loyalists will be known by generations to come.

More Nova Scotian businesses than ever before are succeeding in international markets. My government is committed to helping businesses build capacity to succeed globally and increase their international activity. This spring, the International Commerce Strategy will be released. The strategy will better align programs and services directly with the needs of businesses engaged in the global economy.

The new Jobs Fund pursues investment opportunities that support and retain industry, assist small businesses, invest in infrastructure, fund regional economic initiatives, and provide community economic stability where needed. As Nova Scotia stands on the verge of some of the largest economic projects this province has ever seen, my government is determined to maximize the opportunities and support innovation across all sectors, including our traditional mainstay industries.

Strong rural communities will be protected and enhanced through a partnership between the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and Dalhousie University, in Truro-Bible Hill. The merger will position the NSAC as a centre of excellence for applied research and a national leader in agriculture education, which will benefit students, improve the local economy, and maintain a focus on agricultural research and innovation.

The fishery continues as a source of employment for many Nova Scotians, and is one of the most innovative sectors of the economy. My government will soon announce a new commercial fisheries strategy that will address emerging challenges in the marketplace and will help strengthen the industry. The new Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Act will allow for the establishment of an industry-run board that will register and certify fish harvesters based on their knowledge and experience. It will also support skills and safety training opportunities.

Early this summer, the province will release a coastal strategy to guide efforts to improve coastal management in Nova Scotia. My government has taken a leadership role to protect the future of this invaluable resource. My government will soon announce a comprehensive aquaculture strategy that balances significant economic development potential with the need for regulation within this industry.

While some of our long-standing industries are sharpening their focus to grab larger shares of growing markets, others are forced to retrench, refocus, and retrain in order to maintain a competitive position in static or shrinking world markets.

Nova Scotia's forestry sector has supported tens of thousands of families since the founding of our province. As world markets change, my government has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the communities, businesses, and workers and their families who are focused on retaining Nova Scotia's position in the world market. In year two of the Natural Resources Strategy, the province will continue to focus on innovation in this key sector. Growing quality trees, and gaining the maximum value from each tree, will generate wealth in the years to come.

My government is committed to sustaining the ability of Nova Scotia's forests to produce wealth, water, wildlife and timber for the benefit of future generations. Through the Natural Resources Strategy, we will continue to focus on innovation in this key sector, so that our children and grandchildren can look forward to enjoying, in a sustainable manner, the same kind of good jobs this important natural resource has provided over the years.

Mining is an important job creator in Nova Scotia. New gold and coal projects are moving towards production, and the interest in exploration for rare-earth metals is increasing. My government will move forward with a new mineral incentive program, fulfilling a commitment in the new Natural Resources Strategy to provide financial assistance to prospectors to attract exploration and development. Nova Scotia will be more competitive thanks to the creation of an on-line mineral and petroleum rights registry system for Nova Scotia that will allow businesses anywhere in the world to register their interest and claims. This will modernize the management of our mineral and petroleum resources and be of benefit to business.

My government is taking decisive steps to secure clean energy and lower, more stable power rates for Nova Scotians. Former governments chose a high-cost, high-emission energy path that killed jobs. They felt it was safer and more comfortable to cling to past mistakes, despite rapid rises in fuel costs. Like some current opponents, they preferred to curse the darkness rather than light a candle. There is no change and no future for Nova Scotia in that high-cost path to which some still cling.

Securing a 35-year price for clean Atlantic Canadian hydroelectricity, becoming a centre for world-leading clean energy developments, such as wind and tidal, and enabling

Nova Scotian communities to be part of the clean energy future, with a globally admired community feed-in tariff, are all steps in the right direction. Escaping the fossil-fuel trap by setting and achieving renewable energy targets that will moderate the effects of decades of cost pressure on ratepayers, and continuing plans for the opening of the Donkin mine while creating more Cape Breton jobs will move Nova Scotia closer to the secure energy future we need and deserve.

Fostering renewed interest and unprecedented investment in offshore resources, promoting energy efficiency and reducing harmful emissions in a well-planned manner with minimized cost are steps in the right direction. My government is achieving the opportunities for Nova Scotia to be an energy leader and to leave this province a better place for the next generation, with a cleaner environment, secure energy supplies, and a better economic foundation. Each step in this remarkable turnaround is subject to careful planning and public review whenever ratepayers' interests or the environment are at stake; each step taken has passed those tests and reviews.

In the next year my government will continue to develop the regulatory framework for cleaner and more affordable energy. There will be fully independent public reviews of the next steps in the electricity plans. My government will release the Cleaner Energy Framework to guide a prudent and timely transition. It will release the Marine Renewable Energy strategy to guide the development of this emerging industry.

You, the representatives of the people of Nova Scotia, will be asked to approve further energy legislation to ensure that a modern legal framework is in place for the future. My government will also continue to work with the federal government to make offshore regulation more efficient and effective, and to ensure that regulatory best practices for safety and environmental protection are in place.

Members of the legislature, Nova Scotia has shown that it can set and meet renewable energy targets, that it can meet and exceed federal greenhouse gas emission targets, and that it can be a partner with neighbouring provinces and the federal government in regional co-operation. These partnerships are critical for building enduring economic strength in Atlantic Canada, with the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project as the linchpin in a new era for our region of Canada. Plans and commitments already made mean more than \$3 billion of new energy investments. Wind, tidal, wave, hydro, biomass, solar, and geothermal opportunities will all help Nova Scotia continue its energy breakthrough.

Although provincial government offices are located in every corner of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotians think of their government as being located mainly in Halifax. To show clearly that provincial departments and agencies serve all of the people, regardless of location, my government will seek locations outside this immediate area for new and consolidated agencies and offices of government. Communities throughout Nova Scotia are good places to live, work, and raise a family, for civil servants as well as for hundreds

of thousands of their fellow citizens. The first details of this new approach will be released in the Spring to the employees affected, then to all Nova Scotians.

Modern, safe, and reliable infrastructure is vital to sustainable economic growth. In Nova Scotia, that means highways. In 2011-12, the province invested some \$265 million to improve Nova Scotian highways. Even with these improvements, road safety remains a priority. To that end, legislation governing the maximum speed limits in school zones will come into force in September 2012.

My government continues to work on the Towns Task Force in collaboration with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities to address the challenges being faced by Nova Scotia's towns. For the first time in more than a decade, work is also underway on a collaborative review of the financial arrangement between the province and municipalities, which will result in recommendations for improvements.

Nova Scotia's community museums and the Nova Scotia Museum are unique and valuable contributors to the strength of every region of the province. This year, once again, government is maintaining funding for the innovative Community Museum Assistance Program, an example of support for museum programming unlike any in Canada.

In the coming year, my government will focus its attention on investing in communities throughout the province. The quality of life enjoyed by Nova Scotian families in every region will improve through strategic, smart investment that recognizes the unique strengths and advantages of this province - from Cape Breton to Yarmouth.

Better Health Care for You and Your Family

My government is keeping emergency rooms open and delivering better care sooner. It has taken decisive steps to fundamentally improve the way emergency health care is delivered in Nova Scotia.

Emergency care was hit-or-miss in communities across the province just three years ago. But today, Collaborative Emergency Centres are delivering 24/7 emergency care while ensuring that patients get appointments the same day or the next to see the care provider they need. These centres have opened in two communities. And there are more on the way.

Nova Scotia is working on a physician resource plan that will help ensure an adequate supply of family physicians across the province.

My government has consulted extensively with Nova Scotians living with mental health and addictions issues, their family members, health care workers, and community

leaders. Later this year, the province will release the first strategy to improve mental health and addictions care.

For years, thoughtful Nova Scotians have expressed concerns about the cost of health care overwhelming all other public services. Previous governments failed to manage health care costs, allowing administrative costs, inefficiencies, and other expenses to drive up health care spending by 8.4 per cent on average prior to 2009. That unsustainable rate of growth has been stopped.

My government is leading the country in the effective management of health care spending, ensuring that precious dollars are spent where they are most needed.

Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada to do so.

The province is accomplishing this, not through arbitrary budget reductions, but by working in partnership with district health authorities, the IWK, doctors, nurses, and other front-line providers to find better, more efficient ways to provide the care Nova Scotians need.

Helping Nova Scotians stay healthy is a vital part of the health care solution for today and tomorrow. Nova Scotia was the first province to mandate the use of helmets for skiers and snowboarders. Medical associations across the country are encouraging others to follow our lead.

After consulting more than 1,100 individuals, groups, and organizations, my government will bring in a plan that will help make Nova Scotia a place where children are supported to eat well, move more, and grow up healthy.

Nova Scotia seniors will be able to access more home care services and there will be new options to assist people with managing their mobility issues and medications in the home.

This year, my government will consult with Nova Scotian families to develop an approach to early childhood development that ensures our children get the best possible start in life. This innovative and integrated approach will bring together resources from health, community services and education to best align programs and supports for Nova Scotia's families and children.

The early years are among the most important in a child's development. Research suggests that early childhood services and programs return society's investment seven times over. In the past several years, an investment of some \$50 million has increased capacity in Nova Scotia's licensed child-care facilities. But more can and will be done.

Members of the Legislature, I wonder how many of you are aware that right now there are more than 1,000 Nova Scotian children without a permanent home, and therefore in the care of the province. Surely, every child needs and deserves a loving and secure environment in which to grow and thrive with a forever family. This year my government, working with partners across the province, will develop and begin to implement a new Adoption Strategy to significantly increase adoption rates in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotian families in distress frequently find themselves in Family Court. Our body of Family Law has, over the years, been allowed to fall behind that of other Canadian jurisdictions. My government will correct that through legislation this spring. Protection of children will be the priority. Always.

Domestic violence reduction will be the focus of concerted efforts this year, as implementation of the Domestic Violence Action Plan begins in earnest. The plan involves 16 departments and agencies of government working together to raise awareness, increase support for victims, and ultimately prevent incidents of violence in the home.

My government continues to support and applaud the work of Project Lifesaver - a search-and-rescue tracking system that makes it easier to find people with conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, autism, and other cognitive challenges when they stray from their homes.

Since government launched the program in 2011, approximately fifty 911 dispatchers and fifteen Ground Search and Rescue teams have been trained in this technique. Another nine Ground Search and Rescue teams will be trained this year.

Kids and Learning First

No government in Nova Scotia's history has shown a deeper commitment to children and education than has my government. This year, my government will invest more dollars in public education, per student, than ever before.

Kids and Learning First was developed after listening to hundreds of parents, teachers, students, school boards, employers, and community members. The plan reflects their priorities. It builds on what is working well, while identifying the challenges that must be addressed.

Student enrolment keeps going down, while education costs go up. Student test results are not improving, and they are declining in some key subjects. My government, along with parents and teachers, wants better results for every student.

The plan will help children get off to a better start by strengthening links among day care, other early childhood development programs, and Grade Primary. It gives students at all levels more support in critical subjects and through transition years.

The establishment of the Africentric Learning Institute was a key recommendation of the Black Learners Advisory Committee on Education. In the coming months, a board will be fully operational and steps will be taken to secure a location for the institute.

Kids and Learning First protects the quality of education in rural communities, where enrolment declines are sharpest. More students will soon have access to more high school courses through Nova Scotia's virtual school.

Teachers need support too. Everyone remembers a great teacher, and what a difference he or she made in their lives. Teachers should be able to spend less time on paperwork and more time with students. My government's plan will make that happen. Average class sizes are smaller than ever. Kids and Learning First will keep them that way.

Junior high school can be difficult for many, making the transition to high school that much more challenging. A new Discovering Opportunities program will help struggling Grade 9 students get excited about school again, make up lost learning, and prepare them for high school. Protecting arts education and helping students develop French-language and information and communications technology skills will continue to be priorities.

SchoolsPlus - the program that brings needed services for children and their families into schools - will soon be available in every county. SchoolsPlus works. Where it is available, discipline problems have declined, teachers and parents feel more supported, and student test results have improved.

The province has introduced a grants program to encourage community use of schools. This program will enable more people to use school facilities for physical activity and educational and cultural programs.

By putting kids and learning first, my government will ensure children have the best opportunities to learn and develop into caring, responsible adults ready to live happy and productive lives here in Nova Scotia.

Making Life More Affordable for Nova Scotian Families

Making life more affordable for Nova Scotian families is a priority of my government.

My government has taken steps to put more money back into the hands of families, low-income Nova Scotians, students, and seniors.

Keeping post-secondary education affordable for Nova Scotians is a commitment of my government.

Universities are essential to the success of our province. University graduates are ready to innovate, create, and improve their world. They can enter the job market confident that they have the tools they need to adapt to the demands of today and tomorrow.

Through a new memorandum of understanding my government has formed a partnership with Nova Scotia's 11 universities to promote academic excellence, expand research and development, and invest \$25 million to help them become more sustainable.

My government has also taken steps to ensure tuition remains at, or below, the national average.

Last year, the province made its single largest investment ever in accessibility to higher education, \$42.5 million. The province kept tuition fees below the national average, reduced student debt, and improved student aid with more and better needs-based grants. For the first time, there is an absolute cap on Nova Scotia students' debt, lowering maximum debt by more than \$16,000.

In addition my government introduced the Graduate Retention Rebate so that eligible graduates can reduce their provincial income taxes by up to \$15,000 over six years. Community college students, who pay lower tuition, can reduce their taxes by up to \$7,500.

Low-income seniors can get assistance to adapt their homes so they can live there longer. And now, thanks to an initiative by the Premier himself, 18,000 seniors who are in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement pay no provincial income tax.

Social enterprises ensure that society thinks more broadly about good jobs, sustainable livelihoods, and economic stability, especially for rural communities and for minority groups throughout the province.

Access to capital for social enterprises has been improved, and jobsHere offers support for more non-profits to engage in social enterprise. Barriers to social enterprise will be removed from provincial legislation and policies.

The Poverty Reduction Tax Credit and the Affordable Living Tax Credit will continue. These are excellent examples of how my government is reducing the burden for those most in need.

Members of the Legislature, in this session legislation will be introduced to enact a new regulatory regime governing mortgage brokers and lenders, and a code of conduct and updated legislation and regulations for the funeral sector will be introduced in the Fall.

Nova Scotians in need of prescription medicine can now get the generic form at the same price or less than that paid by most other Canadians.

My government's fair drug-pricing plan ensures that savings on generic medicine is available to every Nova Scotian family, whether their prescriptions are covered by an insurance plan or not. Generic prescriptions in Nova Scotia now cost just 40 per cent of the name brand; this summer that will be reduced further, to 35 per cent.

Members of the Legislature, it is a sad reality that the most disadvantaged in our society too often suffer poor health, and inferior housing can be a large part of the problem. Healthy families live in healthy, sustainable homes. Historically, government housing programs, while well intentioned, have had the unintended consequence of stigmatizing the very people they intended to help.

This year, my government will bring forward new ways to manage and diversify public and affordable housing that will support seniors, people living with disabilities, and low-income Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotians care deeply about their communities and each other, and it shows: our volunteers devoted 207 hours on average to volunteer work in 2010, the highest average in Canada. My government recognizes the valuable work these dedicated individuals provide and is investing in the sector.

Through the establishment of an \$800,000 trust, 43 human resource management-related projects within non-profit and voluntary sector organizations across the province have been funded.

As a part of jobsHere, \$200,000 will be allocated each year to further strengthen the capacity of the non-profit and voluntary sector.

There are few professions where men and women are asked to put their lives on the line every day for the good of their fellow citizens. But for those who do, government needs to be there to support them during - and after - their service.

Nova Scotia has been a leader in extending benefits to those from our fire services who find themselves beset by cancers resulting from their work. In recent years, however, we have not kept pace with other jurisdictions as they extended further protections to these valued community members. In the year ahead, my government will bring Nova Scotia's benefits for firefighters back in line with our neighbours across Canada. These 2012

changes will be part of a multi-year package of regulatory improvements developed by the Workers' Compensation Board and its stakeholders.

And, my government will take additional steps to safeguard and protect pensions and benefits for Nova Scotians in the year ahead.

Nova Scotia is changing in a positive and significant way.

My government has worked hard with our partners to secure solid, long-lasting opportunities that will keep families together and bring Nova Scotians home.

My government is creating good jobs and growing the economy.

My government is delivering better care to Nova Scotians.

My government is making life more affordable for Nova Scotian families.

And, my government is living within its means.

God bless Nova Scotia.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

[The Speaker and 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 the 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 General Assembly of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy which the Chief Clerk will now read. (Interruptions)

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

THE CLERK: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen, Nova Scotians . . .

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

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 Cumberland North.

MR. BRIAN SKABAR: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be here today to rise in this Fourth Session of the Sixty-first General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature, to move the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne as read by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor Mayann Francis.

I would like to begin my response by thanking Her Honour for her words and for the excellent job she has done representing Her Majesty the Queen across Nova Scotia. The Lieutenant Governor has worked with great dedication throughout our province and touched the lives of many with her presence at important events. I know that this will be the last Throne Speech for Her Honour and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank her for her work over the last several years. Her poise and dignity are a credit to all Nova Scotians and I thank her for that. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a number of remarks but before I would begin, I'd like to acknowledge a couple of people in the gallery and some people who I know are watching at home. Mr. Earl Dow and Mr. Andrew Melanson, two friends and colleagues, supporters of mine from very early on, I'd like to acknowledge and thank for being who you are, guys.

Past that, I'd like to acknowledge my four children - five children (Laughter): my son Thomas, a university student pursuing his Education Degree at Crandall University; my daughter Margaret, first year in university at St. Francis Xavier; my daughter Lauren, in Grade 9 at Amherst Regional High School; my daughter Lindsay, in Winnipeg at this moment; and my daughter Jennifer, in Calgary. (Applause) I can explain that later. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne builds on the theme that we've presented to Nova Scotians since we formed the government in 2009. Our priorities have been clear and focused. We are committed to getting the financial affairs back to balance and building a future in which Nova Scotia will live within its means. We are working to create better health care now and care that is available when it is needed. We have dedicated ourselves to creating good jobs and growing the economy.

Our government has spent the last two and a half years working to establish a stable financial foundation on which to build our future and our children's future. One of our key building blocks has been getting our province's finances in order. For example, this government reduced the provincial debt during our first full year in office. As we learned from the Finance Minister last week, this will be the third year in a row that department spending will come in below estimates. (Applause)

This government is doing the heavy lifting now to get our province back to balance. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of a sound financial plan is to create a strong, stable foundation that will help provide improved programming and services that make life better for all Nova Scotians, services like health care, education and infrastructure. We know that Nova Scotians value their health care and recognize the importance of accessible and reliable health care, so we have been taking action to make sure the system in place works better. Families want to know that health care will be available to them when and where they need it.

Our government has a plan for health care. Better Care Sooner ensures that when people need care, it is available to them. Nova Scotia's and Canada's first ever Collaborative Emergency Centre was opened in Cumberland County, in Parrsboro. This CEC has been running since the summer and has treated many, many patients since. In my own constituency, Cumberland North, a CEC is in the works in Pugwash. This centre, which will be housed in the brand new North Cumberland Memorial Hospital building, will ensure that emergency care is there for the residents of Pugwash and area when and where they need it. Across the province, five CECs have been announced and more will be announced this year in communities that have faced chronic ER closures.

Better Care Sooner is about providing a multi-disciplinary approach to health care. As part of that approach, our government has extended the role of paramedics and increased the number of nurse practitioners around the province, including Cumberland North, where a new position has been established recently in Pugwash. This approach to health care is ensuring that more and more Nova Scotians can be assured that the resources they need are there when and where they need them.

The Speech from the Throne today highlighted some of the major goals and accomplishments of our government. These include the province's jobsHere plan to create good jobs and grow the economy; our education plan, Kids and Learning First; and the

consistent and dedicated effort to make life better for all Nova Scotians. For the people in Cumberland North, these initiatives have played out in many different ways.

Our jobsHere plan has seen innovative and exciting companies in Cumberland North get the support they need to flourish. Our government's investments in LED Roadway Lighting have not only helped this company expand but have helped our province become greener while utilizing local resources and workers. (Applause) I miss few opportunities, public or private, to reinforce that the Province of Nova Scotia was stated as one of the five best initiatives by the David Suzuki Foundation for its efforts in reducing greenhouse gases and effect.

Investments in IMP Aerospace Components and PolyCello are helping these companies expand, train their workers, buy equipment, and continue to play a positive role in the community. More productive, new equipment at PolyCello will improve productivity by 50 per cent and will make them second to nobody on the continent for producing their product.

In education infrastructure, the Premier announced last year a replacement for the school of West Highlands Elementary. Investing in new schools is the right decision for families in the Amherst area because it will provide students with a modern learning centre. Our government committed to building this school in the 2009 election, and last year's announcement is a great example of the follow-through in this government and our commitment to students and families.

Response to stakeholders in the area is another issue. There was an issue with the proposed school location in Amherst, and after concerns from parents in the West Highlands area - and particularly of Councillor Terry Rhindress - we were able to revisit, or perhaps restart, the whole selection process for the West Highlands school. This is something that, frankly, I'm very proud that we were able to have done. A decision had been made, and it turned out to be the wrong decision for many of the stakeholders who had less input than they would have liked, and we got a chance to revisit it.

Just on the theme of education for a moment, I'd like to take an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Grade 3 class at Spring Street Academy and their teacher, Ms. Cheryl Davis, for sharing their day with me at Take Your MLA to School Day. Thank you, guys. I hope you invite me back, and "Bark, bark, bark." (Interruptions) Those kids will know what I mean.

Last year, I had the pleasure to announce a \$500,000 government investment in a study to assess the design and replacement for the LaPlanche River Aboiteau. Anyone from Cumberland County knows that marshlands and the aboiteaus and dykes that support them are an important part of the infrastructure and landscape in Nova Scotia. This investment is an important step in protecting Nova Scotia's valuable shoreline and

agricultural resources. The engineering study will help ensure that any future aboiteau is built to last.

As encapsulated in the Speech from the Throne, a key goal for this government is to help make life easier for Nova Scotians. Across the province, Nova Scotians are benefiting from 1,500 new child care subsidies, from the cap on student debt, and from the Affordable Living Tax Credit. Our government removed the requirement for seniors to pay income tax on the Guaranteed Income Supplement. This meant that approximately \$9 million was returned to seniors, putting more money back in the hands of Nova Scotians who need it most.

We took the provincial portion of the HST off essentials such as home heating and energy, children's clothing and footwear, feminine hygiene products - and each of these initiatives on the part of our government helped to make life better for families, seniors, and individuals across our province.

Inherent strengths like the volunteers and the generous spirit of Nova Scotians is clear to all of us in 2012. The Amherst Relay for Life raised \$183,000 in 2011, \$154,000 in 2010, and \$163,000 in 2009 - that's \$500,000 in three years raised by the generosity of people in Amherst and area in the battle against cancer. (Applause) My most sincere congratulations and thanks to all who took part.

For my own part, I'll try to contribute to this in 2012. I'm going to take a walk from Pugwash to Amherst, approximately 51 kilometres, on Relay for Life day, on Friday, June 1st, and I do this to raise awareness for the cause - there are few of us in this room who have not been touched by cancer. I invite all of you to join me on this, maybe not for the whole thing but for a portion. Everyone in Amherst has an open invitation and perhaps will try to raise a couple of dollars for this as well. We'll be leaving at 7:00 a.m. from the Pugwash Village Commission Office and hope to get to Amherst by 7:00 p.m. for the opening statements for the Relay for Life on June 1st. Everyone please mark that on your calendar.

Speaking of Pugwash, Pugwash is famous for peace - I might also add famous for volunteerism. It's constantly able to draw on immense support for any event that comes through and it draws attention to the North Shore of Nova Scotia. This year the tall ships will be visiting Pugwash - they will be in Pugwash Harbour from July 27th to July 29th. The event this year is chaired by Claude Hudson, with at least two able associates that come to mind immediately, Dennis Brown and Bill Kempt.

The last time the tall ships came to Pugwash 10,000 people passed through the gates of the Pugwash Marina to see the tall ships. It's amazing. The Gathering of the Clans is always a big day in Pugwash as well, July 2nd. The Gathering of the Clans features Highland Games, dragon boat races - all volunteer driven - and this event was initially started as a fundraiser for the Pugwash Hospital. That was in 1961, and I believe it's time

for a new one. Of all my announcements to date, none was more rewarding than the announcement of a new primary health care facility in Pugwash. (Applause) So this is an example of strengthening the health infrastructure in rural Nova Scotia.

The community college presence in Amherst wasn't far behind.

Sticking with the theme of infrastructure, roads and bridges are being built - we'll soon be able to drive to Malagash and visit the Jost Winery and actually enjoy the ride, not just the scenery. By initiating our own chip seal operation, this government can reduce the cost of chip seal from \$91,000 per kilometre to \$40,000 per kilometre. This will help us get to more rural roads faster. (Applause) The five-year road plan is our map to get there, and available to all.

Sticking with the theme of transportation and infrastructure, there was an issue with the Northport Bridge, but now it's built - and I would like to mention that I will be presenting a petition to this Legislature, with over 400 names on it, requesting that it be named the Larry Brander Bridge. A joint letter of support by myself and Cumberland County Warden Keith Hunter will be accompanying this petition. This letter will be forwarded to the Minister of TIR to this end. Keith, I'm sorry to say this in front of your friends across the hall but there are a couple of things we actually do agree on.

Pugwash - famous for peace and home of the first-ever peace conference, a peace conference dealing with nuclear armaments; underwritten by Cyrus Eaton, a son of Pugwash. I'm aware of at least one other person who attended that event. My friend, Paolo Brenciaglia, was 15 years old at the time and he was actually a gofer for the scientists who took part in that first event. So we do have the history of world peace right there in Pugwash.

Pugwash is also home to the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Dr. Joseph Rotblat for his efforts in world peace and another Nobel Prize is right there, 22 kilometres away, in Wallace, Nova Scotia, where Dr. Boyle, a son of Wallace, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. The Wallace men's service club has been diligently pursuing formal recognition by way of a monument to Dr. Boyle in Wallace. They will succeed. The Wallace Museum, another jewel of the North Shore, will house exhibits of Dr. Boyle's accomplishments.

In the arts and culture, transportation and infrastructure, in immigration, in so many avenues, our NDP Government has come to Nova Scotia with a plan, a plan to make life better. We've approached each new endeavour with fresh eyes and come up with strategies to help propel Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians forward while building on the inherent strength of our people and our communities.

I strongly believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is this commitment to methodical, logical, planned progress that will ensure Nova Scotia embraces new opportunities, like the Irving Shipbuilding contract, and continue to build on a province that our children and our

grandchildren can call home. With confidence in the future, I move the Speech from the Throne as presented by Her Honour, the Honourable Mayann Francis, be accepted as read. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

MR. GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the place of the people of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley to second the Speech from the Throne. As members will be aware, there are two different approaches to this matter of seconding a motion. There is the approach, first, we would call the pro forma approach. That's when you're at a meeting and perhaps the chair is trying to get a motion onto the floor; things might not be going too excitedly and he'll say, will somebody please second that motion? You kind of raise your hand as though to say, well yes, but it's not with any great excitement or conviction - second. But there's a second way of seconding. The second way of seconding is when you hear something that you have a definite sense of deep agreement with and you want, right off the bat, to express your personal alignment with that view, so you say, I second that. (Applause)

So it is this second kind of seconding, if I can call it that, that I wanted to bring to the Speech from the Throne this afternoon and I would like to do that, briefly, by drawing attention, just for a couple of moments, to a matter or two raised in the Speech from the Throne which has particular resonance for the communities I serve, beginning with the subject of forestry.

The paragraphs in the Speech from the Throne on this important subject speak of several different facets of forestry. They speak about the maximizing of value, they speak about innovation, and they speak about markets. All of these, of course, our government recognizes as important, but as we look now toward year two of the Natural Resources Strategy, one dimension of forestry which is brought forward in the speech, which speaks with particular resonance to us in this moment, is the matter of sustainability.

The community I live in, Upper Musquodoboit, is a community that probably is as defined by the woods economy as any community in the province. I came there 22 years ago to serve as the community's minister, knowing nothing whatsoever about this subject which was so pivotal to the community I had come to serve - a fact which was brought helpfully home to me one evening by one of my children, who said, you know, Dad, you're the only man in Upper who can't run a chainsaw. (Laughter)

So in an effort to improve my usefulness to the people there, over a lot of years I asked a lot of forestry-related questions and listened to the answers. I asked questions of people at the old MacAulay sawmill in the upper end of the Musquodoboit Valley, and people who work on what is called "the wheel" in the Taylor Lumber mill in Middle Musquodoboit. I also asked questions of those people who now operate that incredibly

technically-sophisticated computerized equipment that is required in order to operate a contemporary sawmill. I asked questions of people who years ago had yarded in the woods with horses, and also of contractors and operators now with this equipment that costs pretty near \$0.5 million a unit, the harvesters and the processors and the feller bunchers.

Listening to the answers to these questions over a great many years, there is one unequivocal conclusion I came to, which is that everybody knowledgeable about the woods is of one mind about one thing: that the rate at which the forests were being harvested could not be kept up for very long. This is true for everybody, with the sole exception of those who were, in fact, being paid to say otherwise.

I hear the Lieutenant Governor speak about the government being committed to sustaining Nova Scotia's forests for the benefit of future generations and, in the second way of seconding, I want to say I second that. I would also like to do the second kind of seconding to the speech's words on the subject of, as the Lieutenant Governor has read it, reducing the burden for those most in need.

Economist after economist after economist in these years since the great recession began in 2008 have pointed out for us the connection between the rise of serious income inadequacy amongst literally the 99 per cent and the fact that the wealthiest 1 per cent of income-earners in Canada have seen their incomes more or less double over the last two and a half decades. By means of such provisions as increasing provincial income taxation for those who earn more than \$150,000 a year and eliminating altogether provincial income taxation for seniors receiving the supplement, the government is addressing what the Speech from the Throne calls putting more money back into the hands of low-income Nova Scotians, and I second that.

Lastly, I second the concluding policy reference in the speech, what the Lieutenant Governor refers to as anticipated regulatory improvements for firefighters throughout Nova Scotia. Nothing expresses the ethics of community which define the best of Nova Scotia any more clearly than the volunteer fire brigades at the heart of communities across the province. One author about firefighting, named Norman Maclean, says that if you want to understand firefighting the main thing you need to understand is pride - pride of service, pride of purpose, pride of community. This kind of pride calls out for a response, as is recognized in the words of the speech, that the government will bring Nova Scotia's benefits for firefighters back in line with our neighbours across Canada, and with the second kind of seconding, I second that.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby second the motion that the Speech from the Throne be accepted as read, thank you. (Standing Ovation)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition. (Applause)

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I'll try to somehow top that enthusiasm coming from the member from Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

I'm pleased to rise to say a few remarks today. I'll finish my formal remarks tomorrow but I do want to recognize and highlight the Lieutenant Governor, not only for her work here in this legislature but for the way she has made us all proud as she has represented the Queen across this province. Each Lieutenant Governor has made their own mark in that role.

One of the things that I'm reminded of when I think of our Lieutenant Governor today was when she was in my riding of Annapolis Royal. She had an opportunity to come and help celebrate some of the traditions and as she was there she had some time and she was walking around our community. As she was walking around, she noticed some families with young children were working and developing a park. They were developing a roller skate park just outside of the Town of Annapolis Royal. Her Honour stopped by and chatted with those young people and the young people asked her to return for the official opening. In the way she has done in so many places across Nova Scotians in support of young people, she responded in the affirmative, and to their surprise, upon the competition they called and she arrived back in our community and helped those young people officially open that skate park.

The pride that they had in that project that they presented with their family was only heightened by the fact that Her Honour had taken the time to come and join them. That speaks to Her Honour and the commitments she has made to the people of Nova Scotia. (Applause) Not to mention, Mr. Speaker, she comes from Whitney Pier and I'm sure that really has a special place.

I want to recognize members of our community who have come here today to participate in the opening of this session of the House. I want to thank them for their commitment to our province, to our country, to the work that you do unselfishly on behalf of all of us. We in this House are grateful to you and all Nova Scotians are grateful to the effort that you - you are the people who build our communities, the very reason why we try to get elected to come into this House so that we can help you improve our communities. (Applause)

I want to thank the member for Cumberland North for his remarks. I also want to acknowledge his children who are here today. (Interruption) I want to congratulate and thank all of them. But I want to recognize them because many of us who run for this office have children and make a great sacrifice, and our families make a great sacrifice, so that we have the privilege to be here and sit in this House and work on behalf of our collective communities. So I want to acknowledge them, on behalf of all of our families and all of our children, for their commitment that they've made to their father and to their community. (Applause)

What can I say about the seconder of the Speech from the Throne? I'm a Catholic boy who goes to church in St. Alphonsus in Bridgetown but I think I might end up going to your service from now on. I was expecting the collection plate to be coming around here at anytime. (Laughter)

AN HON. MEMBER: Perhaps we can do that next week. (Applause)

MR. MCNEIL: That's it for sure, Mr. Speaker, don't recognize him again if he decides to get up. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, like many Speeches from the Throne there are things in this that we can agree with. There are things in this Speech from the Throne that we can agree with. I think all Nova Scotians are proud and willing to support Irving and their commitment to make sure that they deliver on that contract for our national government, making sure that the Navy ships that are built here will be built on time and that we as a community will benefit from that contract in a large way.

We can agree - maybe not all of us, but most of us - that the Lower Churchill Falls is an important project that I believe will allow us to move towards a more renewable, sustainable energy market in Atlantic Canada. For those who are confused about the fact that it potentially may cost Nova Scotians too much, the inaction on energy will cost Nova Scotians much more. (Applause) I believe the best part of that contract, of that project will be the transmission lines that will connect Nova Scotia not only to Newfoundland and Labrador, but will enhance our transmission capacity with the rest of Canada. It will give us an opportunity to buy cheap energy in Quebec and other places; it will give us an opportunity to open up the energy market in Nova Scotia to allow us to grow a renewable energy sector; and it's my hope it will allow us to finally break the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power and allow competition to happen inside the province. (Applause)

We also can agree with and will work with government to support our firefighters across Nova Scotia. All of us know the sacrifices they make, that their families make, coming to us, coming to the members of our communities at our most vulnerable time and helping us try to save our property or even save the lives of our loved ones. Anything we can do to support the men and women who are volunteering in our firefighting departments across this province is a good thing and our caucus will fully support it.

But it probably won't come as a surprise to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are things in this document that we don't agree with, and no matter how many times you repeat something it doesn't make it true. A year ago I stood and said I wanted to speak to the piece of fiction created by the Premier. No matter how many times you read a piece of fiction, it's still a piece of fiction.

I want to talk about a couple of things that the government has highlighted that made life better for families in Nova Scotia. They talked about changes, to bringing Nova

Scotia Better Care Sooner - closing emergency rooms across this province is not providing better health care sooner. Many wait times across this province are well above the national average - that is not providing better health care sooner. (Applause)

Not too long ago we laid off 22 mental health youth support workers in Nova Scotia who were working with the most vulnerable youth in our province. We laid them off; we left those families adrift. We are not providing them with the support that they need, the lifeline, the bit of hope that they had when they needed support with an adolescent with mental health issues - that is not providing better health care sooner.

Changes to put kids and learning first - cuts to education is not putting education first, it's not putting our children first. (Applause) This is the first time in our history that a government is asking our children to pay for their mistakes. What's interesting through this whole document - not one mention of special needs. The very children in our public education system who are going to be hit the hardest are the cuts that have happened under this NDP Government. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, they talk about making life more affordable for Nova Scotians. Since June 9th energy prices have gone up 20 per cent, power rates. Gasoline prices have increased 37 cents a litre. How is that making life more affordable for Nova Scotians? Since they've taken power they increased the HST by 2 per cent - that's \$1 million a day out of the pockets of Nova Scotians and out of the economy of Nova Scotia. A million dollars a day - how is that making life more affordable for Nova Scotians?

They talk about creating good jobs. There are fewer full-time jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia now. The Premier's right, employment is up - in part-time work. But I'm not sure that many Nova Scotians feel secure with a part-time job. I'm not sure many Nova Scotians feel the same optimism that the Premier does when they know their job could be gone tomorrow.

I was surprised - I almost said I was shocked and appalled but I didn't want to say that in the House today- but I was surprised with the reference of Michelin. It was about six months ago when the largest private sector employers in this province came here with a moderate request from government, it was Bill No. 102, first contract arbitration. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you remember the debate and Michelin was one of them. We, in this House, said to the Premier, Michelin sent you a warning that first contract arbitration would affect future investment in Nova Scotia.

The Premier said it wasn't the case. Well the President, Dana LeBlanc, said something very different outside of this House - he said it would affect future investment. No, it wouldn't mean they would close tomorrow but it would make it extremely difficult to attract investment into the Province of Nova Scotia under the labour legislation that was being proposed. Every one of those private sector employers said the same thing - it will

affect our ability to grow. It will affect our ability to create good jobs in the Province of Nova Scotia.

This Premier and the NDP Government ignored their plight. So to somehow suggest and put their name in this document as a positive that they are going to bring and grow future investment, when they warned this government about the public policy positions they had, would have a negative impact on them.

Mr. Speaker, these are but a few examples. I know you are going to give me the privilege to stand again tomorrow as I further go through this document to highlight the real story that Nova Scotians hear.

I heard someone outside - there's a lot of sleight of hand inside of this document. Well, we'll expose it tomorrow morning. With those few remarks I adjourn debate. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. DARRELL DEXTER (The Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of the session this afternoon, on your behalf and on mine, sir, I would like to invite all members of the House and all guests in the gallery to the Red Chamber for a reception. I would like to point out that this is a very special occasion as we will be paying our respects to Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, as she finishes her vice-regal term.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes the government's business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on the morrow at the hour of 9:00 a.m. The House will sit until 12:00 noon or until the conclusion of business. I move the House do now rise.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

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 House rose at 4:03 p.m.]