



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS**

**Speaker: Honourable Gordie Gosse**

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**Fifth Session**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2013**

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**House of Assembly**  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2013**

**Sixty-first General Assembly**

**Fifth Session**

**2:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Gordie Gosse

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

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

[The Fifth Session of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly was opened with historic ceremony on a cool, sunny day.]

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:** His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor.

[The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable J.J. Grant, preceded by his escorts and aides and by Mr. Ken Greenham, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took his seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber followed by the Speaker, the Honourable Gordie 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 His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, 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 Fifth Session of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature. It is a great honour and privilege as Lieutenant Governor to participate, for the first time, in this vital and historic expression of our democracy.

#### **Starting to Turn the Corner to a Better Future**

In the year ahead, my government will complete the program that Nova Scotians supported in 2009. For the first time in at least 25 years, a government is keeping virtually every platform promise.

After the first-ever wide-ranging budget consultation, Back to Balance, many thousands of Nova Scotians have undertaken the sacrifice and commitment necessary to pull Nova Scotia from the brink of financial ruin and start living within our means. For the first time in memory, this has been done without severe and punishing disruption of Nova Scotians' vital public services. In fact, legislation has been enacted to reduce the HST to 14 per cent in 2014 and 13 per cent in 2015.

Despite the worst worldwide economic downturn since the Depression, my government has kept faith with workers and their families by seizing extraordinary opportunities for sustained economic growth that extend to all parts of the province. Securing these unmatched opportunities means that Nova Scotia is turning the corner toward a better future for families.

Businesses, workers, and families are better able to take advantage of the great new opportunities because jobsHere, Nova Scotia's economic plan, is focused on training, innovation, and the competitive spirit.

Economic prosperity propels social prosperity, and a society is best measured by its treatment of the most vulnerable. One of the most significant ways that Nova Scotia is turning the corner is the reduction of poverty among families who struggle to make ends meet, seniors, people with disabilities, and others who were often further marginalized in challenging times.

**With honour and respect**

Communities like Woods Harbour know that the ocean provides bountiful abundance but can exact a terrible toll. Just 40 days have passed since five young fishers - Katlin Nickerson, Billy Jack Hatfield, Joel Hopkins, Steven Cole Nickerson, and Tyson Townsend - were lost when the Miss Ally capsized in the stormy sea. Those young men sought only to make a living and support their families. My government will propose legislation to declare a day dedicated to remembrance of all Nova Scotian fishermen and women lost at sea.

The past year has also taken from Nova Scotia many who gave much to the life of the province.

John James Kinley served as Nova Scotia's 29<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor after success in business in his native Lunenburg.

Nova Scotia is a better place because of Raylene Rankin's musical achievements, Ruth Goldbloom's exceptional leadership and volunteerism, Daurene Lewis' steady and wise contributions, Paul Comeau's proud advocacy for Acadians, and John H. Boudreau's community economic accomplishments. And also, Pat Connolly and Dick James were legendary and public-spirited journalists.

Since this Legislature last met, Nova Scotia also lost former Dalhousie president Andrew MacKay; human rights activist Patricia Skinner; Dr. Bernie MacDonald, former president of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College; Joseph Eugene (Jeep) Deveau, a long-time Halifax County councillor; Major Walter Peters, the first African-Canadian jet fighter pilot and a member of Canada's famed Snowbirds; John Neil Ferguson, renowned Celtic musician; and George William Sim, one of the last survivors of the Halifax Explosion and a renowned vocalist.

Nova Scotia has been improved by the time and contributions given by each of those who went before us.

**Turning the corner from decline to progress**

In 2009, Nova Scotians voted for an historic change with a pragmatic, common-sense platform. An independent financial review, and the panel of economic advisers, showed Nova Scotians that change was necessary and long overdue. Twenty years of lagging behind the rest of Canada in economic growth and new challenges to key industries showed that a new direction was needed, but would not be easy. Nova Scotia is now turning the corner and taking that better direction. The changes my government is making mean a better life for families, students, seniors, and disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens.

My government's continued leadership and commitment on Aboriginal consultation was evident when Nova Scotia became the first province to sign a memorandum of understanding with the federal government that formalizes and strengthens the co-operative working relationship between Nova Scotia and Canada regarding consultation with the Mi'kmaq.

My government adopted Canada's first Emergency Department standards. Nova Scotia's Collaborative Emergency Centres - CECs - a national first, greatly minimized emergency room closures while providing same-day or next-day appointments for medical care. Nova Scotia's leadership has drawn wide interest: Prince Edward Island will open its first CEC this year. Regional co-operation will advance better care sooner when P.E.I. partners with Nova Scotia's 811 Nurse Line.

For the first time ever, Nova Scotia's highly skilled paramedics are delivering clot-busting drugs that save lives before a patient reaches the hospital.

Canada's first-ever mobile emergency department will open this year as part of the New Waterford CEC.

Nurse practitioners now work in nursing homes, bringing better care to people where they live. Highly trained nurses are also key to the success of CECs and the collaborative model that is increasing Nova Scotians' access to needed medical care. My government will continue to expand the role and number of nurse practitioners.

Nova Scotia's program of paramedics providing urgent care in nursing homes is another Canadian first, providing better care sooner without a stressful trip to Emergency. Other provinces are being urged to follow Nova Scotia's lead.

These steps have been achieved while people in the health care system have successfully redirected funds to front-line and innovative steps that achieve better care.

For the first time, there is a strategy with funded action to provide real care and understanding to Nova Scotians with mental health issues and addictions.

Nova Scotia is the first province to adopt a physician resource plan. For the next 10 years it will influence decision making to make sure Nova Scotians have the doctors they need in the right place. The plan's first step is the new ER coverage program, which matches doctors with ERs that would otherwise close.

That physician resource plan and the focus on better care sooner means new primary care clinics in Bridgewater, Shelburne, Pugwash, Richmond County, Guysborough, and Digby. These clinics provide care close to home in modern facilities that attract needed doctors.

Nova Scotia is turning the corner from the time when health care problems were deemed to be unsolvable and health care costs uncontrollable.

Nova Scotia's Affordable Living Tax Credit and Poverty Reduction Tax Credit are the first significant new investments in living memory that reduce poverty and help lower income Nova Scotians make ends meet, and for the first time ever, Nova Scotia law protects power-rate payers from the cost of high corporate salaries and bonuses.

To show clearly that provincial departments and agencies serve all of the people, my government now locates new and consolidated departments and agencies outside the Halifax area. This is the first time ever for this fairer policy. Shelburne, Cornwallis, Bible Hill, New Waterford, and Windsor are the first communities where departments and agencies are now being located.

For the first time Careers Nova Scotia centres are able to provide increased access to career training and job-search opportunities across the province, ensuring that more Nova Scotians have the right skills for good jobs.

Nova Scotia and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are undertaking the single greatest step in Atlantic Canada's regional co-operation: the Muskrat Falls development and the associated Maritime Link. All four Atlantic Provinces and the federal government have supported this environmentally progressive project, which will transform basic elements of our regional economy while ensuring the lowest, fairest power rates.

This is the first time ever that two Atlantic Provinces have co-operated in this way to stand proud and improve the destiny of this region for generations to come, by making Atlantic Canada much more of a contributor to Canada's prosperity and progress.

For the first time ever, Nova Scotia has a five-year roads plan, updated annually so citizens can see for themselves the immediate, mid-term, and long-term plans. This is a milestone step to ensure good and accountable government.

For the first time, local and community-owned renewable power projects are financially feasible and viable as a result of Nova Scotia's Community Feed-In Tariff Program, COMFIT. COMFIT has been hailed as a global first and a model for other nations. Nova Scotia's most ancient traditions are a basis for this global leadership, through the Mi'kmaq renewable energy initiative.

Delivering local, green, tax-free, and reliable power is a hallmark of Nova Scotia's energy plan. Nova Scotia is turning away from reliance on unsustainable, expensive fossil fuels, and turning the corner to a future based on a competitive market with green, local power at stable prices.

My government was the first in North America to place a firm cap on greenhouse gas emissions from power generation, making Nova Scotia a global leader in environmental responsibility.

Nova Scotia will soon have its first-ever housing strategy. My government's housing strategy will literally open new doors for our most vulnerable fellow citizens. It will make home ownership more than a dream for families of modest income, and increase the supply of affordable housing with a focus on mixed-use development.

Nova Scotia's first-ever flood mitigation plan is in development. Truro and its surrounding communities will serve as the pilot project, and will kick-start a collaborative effort with municipalities. Recognizing the effects of climate change, my government is ensuring that there will be improved preparation for extreme weather events.

My government will soon announce Nova Scotia's first-ever sustainable transportation strategy. It will be a comprehensive strategy to encourage people to drive less and to travel actively and more efficiently. The strategy is starting with Nova Scotia Moves, a pilot program of support for community-based initiatives.

For the first time ever in Nova Scotia, my government will provide a steady and reliable source of funding to support the wealth of talent in our cultural sectors.

Nova Scotia will become the first Canadian jurisdiction to offer Social Impact Bonds, encouraging investors to support innovative, socially responsible projects by charitable and non-governmental organizations.

In partnership with universities and the private sector, my government will launch Nova Scotia's first Innovation Summit to spur commercialization of research and move Nova Scotia into a leadership position as a competitive and innovative force in the global economy.

For the first time in Nova Scotia, my government has taken action to ensure the protection of temporary foreign workers from exploitation.

My government developed Nova Scotia's first comprehensive immigration strategy. Last year, for the first time, Nova Scotia exceeded expectations and surpassed its immigration targets. As a result of this success, the federal government has increased Nova Scotia's allocation under the immigrant nominee program by 20 per cent.

Nova Scotia was the first government in North America to mandate LED street lighting. Other cities, provinces, and states are following Nova Scotia's lead in this era of energy efficiency, and LED Roadway Lighting of Amherst is selling its products around the world.

My government, in partnership with the farm community, is undertaking the first ten-year strategy for agriculture, called Homegrown Success. This strategy means more exceptional-quality food products. Nova Scotia is now the only province in Canada where both the numbers of farms and farm gate receipts are growing.

Nova Scotia's first Domestic Violence Action Plan, developed in partnership with dozens of community-based groups, is now being implemented. Nova Scotia's first domestic violence court, located in Sydney, is part of the action plan.

For the first time, Nova Scotian students can get academic credit for real-world, community-based experience.

In partnership with school boards, Nova Scotia's virtual school has been established to make high school courses available no matter where a student lives and goes to school. My government is tripling the capacity of the virtual school as part of the Kids and Learning First plan, which focuses on better learning.

Nova Scotia's first ever action plan to address bullying and cyberbullying is now underway across the province, backed up with new laws to deal with behaviour that can have tragic results whether it occurs in person or on-line.

These are some examples of the change for the better that has begun in Nova Scotia. Changes that make life better for families, bring better health care sooner, and result in more jobs here at home - jobs built on innovation, training, and global competitiveness. Much has been done, but much remains to do. Nova Scotia is turning the corner, to become national and global leaders rather than followers.

### **Toward a better future**

Nova Scotians themselves are making the decisions that mean our province is turning the corner to a better future. The Productivity Investment Program - part of the jobsHere economic plan - has already benefited almost 400 Nova Scotian businesses and resulted in private investment of more than \$105 million to improve productivity. Some 10,000 Nova Scotian workers have upgraded their skills and are claiming the better jobs of the future.

The Workplace Education Initiative has tripled its reach, so that this year alone more than 4,600 working Nova Scotians upgraded their education. The initiative now reaches all of Nova Scotia through business-based classrooms and 13 mobile computer labs.

These programs, and more, are preparing Nova Scotians to succeed in a range of emerging sectors like ocean technology, biotechnology, information and communications,



energy innovation, and aeronautics. Nova Scotia is turning the corner to highly skilled jobs that mean a better future for families.

My government is determined that people who have been under-represented in the workplace are given new and equal opportunities. For example, an agreement with the Unama'ki Economic Benefits Office will offer 400 Mi'kmaq participants vital training for good jobs. A leading example is the partnership between the Irving shipyard and the Nova Scotia Community College to create a Shipbuilding Centre of Excellence, focused on Nova Scotians who are under-represented in the workforce.

Like many employers and trade unions, my government is determined to improve the apprenticeship system to improve completion rates and increase employer participation.

Facing a skilled-labour shortage and nearly \$70 billion in new projects, Nova Scotia and our Atlantic neighbours formed the Atlantic Workforce Partnership. The partnership is working on permitting free movement of apprentices across the region and on other initiatives that will give Atlantic Canadians the information and access to training they need to win the jobs of the future.

Through increased investment in on-line tools and technology, my government is extending access to training programs to small and medium-sized businesses, particularly in rural areas. For example, my government recently signed an agreement with the Construction Association of Nova Scotia to allow Gold Seal training of their members through video conferencing and on-line courses.

The Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy is led by five eminent Nova Scotians who know that local economies can do much more than survive, they will thrive. The commission is asking Nova Scotians how to actively shape our future. My government encourages all Nova Scotians to become involved in that discussion.

### **In every corner of Nova Scotia**

My government brings a new commitment to environmentally sustainable, innovative, profit-making, and job-sustaining opportunities in forestry, fishery, farming, tourism, and culture.

This year, my government will support the commercial fishery by promoting training, skills development, and safe practices and by assisting fishers in their efforts to create the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board.

Aquaculture has a future in Nova Scotia as an economic base for coastal communities with hundreds more jobs where they are most needed, provided it is well managed and regulated. As outlined in Nova Scotia's first aquaculture strategy, my

government will develop comprehensive regulations and set the highest standards for fairness, efficiency, and environmental safeguards in Nova Scotia aquaculture.

With a new five-year federal-provincial agriculture agreement, the province's efforts - in partnership with farmers - will be directed to innovation, competitiveness and market development, and industry adaptation and transition. My government will work to attract new entrepreneurs to farming and food-related ventures, and support efforts to make small farms more economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

"Buy Local" has broad support from Nova Scotians, who know their farmers and fishers produce the best and safest food in the world. Buying locally-produced food means Nova Scotians are getting fresher, healthier food and practising environmental responsibility, and it makes good economic sense, too.

My government will increase Buy Local events and efforts through an expanded Select Nova Scotia marketing and awareness campaign. These efforts will help educate Nova Scotians about where our food comes from while supporting farm growth, farmers' markets, locally harvested fish, and direct marketing initiatives.

Nova Scotians are also taking control of their own destiny in bold ways like taking greater ownership of the forests to build an industry for the future, generating power from local sources, and building innovative businesses. Controlling our destiny with a new confidence and self-reliance is helping Nova Scotia turn the corner to that better future.

The infrastructure that delivers our water, powers our commerce and connects our communities requires constant attention of our municipal governments and leadership. My government is committed to working with the Government of Canada on the next phase of the infrastructure funding to begin in 2014.

Inevitable changes to pulp and paper markets caught up with Nova Scotia in one very tough year. Attention is now on the forest of the future. Workers and families have come home to jobs in the world-class mill at Point Tupper, which has an owner focused on success.

Buying the former Bowater lands gives Nova Scotians control over a vast renewable asset. The future of those 550,000 acres is being determined with the participation of communities throughout southwestern Nova Scotia. Community forests will be piloted on those lands as Nova Scotia implements its new forestry standards.

My government and the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs have agreed to collaborate to ensure that Mi'kmaq interests in the land and a Mi'kmaq forestry initiative are part of the better future.

The new forestry innovation centre in Liverpool will further Nova Scotia's position as a leader in cleaner energy, bioenergy, and forestry innovation. The ideas and plans developed through the community transition committee are the foundation for that area to emerge stronger from the closure of a keystone industry.

Today, just over 9 per cent of provincial land is protected from development. When the United Nations established 12 per cent as the global goal two decades ago, many said Nova Scotia could never do its part. My government is about to prove them wrong. Nova Scotia's new Parks and Protected Areas plan will exceed the UN goal and protect more than 13 per cent of the province.

This province is a leader in renewable energy and in waste management, and now Nova Scotians are proving themselves to be leaders in protection of the natural world itself.

While moving toward a balanced budget, my government invested more than a billion dollars in highway projects and improvements. This record investment is providing Nova Scotians with safer roads, businesses with improved access to markets, and visitors with a better impression of our province. More local roads are being improved and maintained because my government is paving more while paying less.

My government established the Nova Scotia Tourism Agency to bring the industry and the government together in a cohesive effort to capitalize on Nova Scotia's vast tourism potential. This industry-led effort will support tourism growth through worker and operator training, infrastructure improvements, and easier access to the province by air and sea.

The province is working with the Nova Scotia International Ferry Partnership, based on the report by my government's expert panel, to gain a viable ferry service between Yarmouth and Maine, and also working with local stakeholders to attract more tourists who will visit and extend their stay in the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores area.

Nova Scotians know that arts, culture, and heritage reflect who we are and contribute to growing healthy and vibrant communities. Nova Scotia's Five-Point Plan for Arts and Culture is now fully underway. In the coming year, the province's new support for Nova Scotia's arts, culture, and heritage will bolster the creative economy.

Millions worldwide watched on-line as a Canadian icon, the Bluenose II, was rebuilt. This summer, the world will be reminded that "Ships Start Here" when Bluenose II sets sail from Lunenburg Harbour.

### **Nova Scotia is powering up**

For the first time in history, Nova Scotians can secure a power supply that comes with a 35-year guarantee of price stability. The Maritime Link is the lowest-cost and most

environmentally-acceptable choice to meet Nova Scotia's power needs as Canada phases out the use of coal to generate power. The Link enables creation of the Atlantic Canadian power grid planned by the four provinces and the federal government. It will make possible more local energy development, including wind and tidal, achieving a more competitive power market without coal's volatile price.

Nova Scotia's energy plan has five key features: local, reliable, green, tax-free, and efficient. Each feature of Nova Scotia's plan means the lowest, fairest power rates, ending the era of double-digit increases.

Nova Scotians are saving hundreds of millions because there is no provincial HST on home energy, and efficiency programs are reducing power usage. These savings are particularly significant for seniors and lower-income families.

Record high offers for exploration rights off Nova Scotia tell us our offshore oil and gas sector is far from dead. The province invested heavily to develop a clearer picture of the geology off our shores, and dedicated public servants used that analysis to revive interest in the vast potential of Nova Scotia's offshore. The best days of oil and gas production off Nova Scotia lie ahead.

### **Safe and secure**

It is the responsibility of government to provide for the safety of the citizens. This is a responsibility my government accepts and backs with action.

This year my government will complete its review and reform of automobile insurance to ensure that it remains fair, affordable, and stable.

Every family should be secure in the knowledge that when their loved one leaves for work, he or she will return home safely. Recent workplace accidents underscore the importance of health and safety on the job. After extensive consultation, the province has a new five-year workplace safety strategy that establishes the long-term goal of making Nova Scotia the safest place to work in Canada.

This year, my government increased the cap on disaster assistance to provide additional help to families, businesses, and non-government organizations whose property is damaged in emergencies or disasters.

Nova Scotians want safe communities, and through the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act people are evicted from properties habitually used for crime. Government's civil forfeiture unit is now in place to seize the profits of crime.

My government also knows that in order to keep Nova Scotia safe, the root causes of crime must be addressed through positive programs for young people at risk, such as its Lighthouses community grants.

My government has also introduced restorative approaches to school discipline, so that students are motivated to work on healthy relationships and manage conflict. Schools report improvements in overall school environment/climate and student behaviour.

The Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children was established by African Nova Scotians when their community still endured segregation as well as discrimination. For more than 90 years, the home has cared for children of all races and cultures with a particular focus on supporting the African Nova Scotian community. During that time, the home has provided invaluable service to many children and their families. The home, however, now finds itself in the midst of a controversy resulting from serious allegations of abuse made by former residents. Allegations of abuse must be taken seriously, with due concern for victims and for justice.

The Premier and other representatives of my government have listened to members of the African Nova Scotian community, including former residents of the home who allege they were abused, about options for moving forward. They heard that former residents and others need an opportunity to have their voices heard; public policies, programs, and services should be reviewed to determine whether they could be more responsive to the needs of at-risk African Nova Scotian children and their families; and there needs to be a means of healing in the community.

My government agrees that action must be taken. In the coming weeks, terms of reference for an independent panel will be developed in consultation with members of the African Nova Scotian community.

My government is now engaged in a wide-ranging public-engagement initiative called Putting People First: Working Together to Support Independence and Dignity. This initiative addresses services for some 40,000 Nova Scotians who are supported by Continuing Care or Services for Persons with Disabilities. Nova Scotians are being asked how these important services can be integrated so these Nova Scotians can enjoy good lives in welcoming and inclusive communities. This is a transformational and far-reaching goal that will be based on the extensive engagement that has begun.

And, my government recognizes that Nova Scotians care deeply about the welfare of animals in our society. During this legislative session, you will be asked to consider legislation to better protect animals and levy stiffer penalties for abuse.

**Putting children first ...**

Starting to turn the corner must mean a better start for Nova Scotian children, so that from the first months of their lives they have every opportunity for success. My government is establishing a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to better coordinate and improve the many ways that the province supports infants, young children, and their families in the first years of life.

In this session of the Legislature, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development will outline the immediate action and multi-year goals for Nova Scotia to make the most of the early years, with both prevention and support that will become available as the plan unfolds.

That plan is based on the advice and ideas received across Nova Scotia during the Early Years consultation, and the teamwork by staff from several departments; they will now form the core of this new initiative in a department with a fresh mandate to support children and their families.

This major development builds on success. SchoolsPlus services will continue to expand. Social services, health services, mentoring, and parenting workshops for students and families are now available in 98 schools. A new practical tool for teachers, school staff, and support teams will help them meet the needs of students with autism spectrum disorder.

In Nova Scotia today, one in three children is overweight or obese, and too many more are facing future health problems because of unhealthy eating, sedentary behaviour, and inactivity. Thrive! is the plan for a healthier Nova Scotia, with an emphasis on children. The plan takes aim at preventing chronic disease through actions focused on healthy eating and physical activity. My government is investing in recreational facilities that offer more ways to stay fit and have fun, and in supporting healthier eating choices. My government is also expanding provincial support for community use of schools by recreational, sports, and other volunteer groups.

Five Mi'kmaw communities are adopting physical activity as part of their daily routine through a new partnership with the province. Annapolis Valley/Glooscap, Eskasoni, Membertou, Millbrook, and Paqtnkek will hire full-time staff to develop and implement physical activity plans.

In this session of the Legislature, the Minister of Health and Wellness will detail the government's next steps to improve children's health care, recognizing the high priority that Nova Scotians place on better preventive care, particularly for children with chronic diseases.

As children move into the school system, my government will take new action that provides children with opportunities for success and growth.

This year Nova Scotia's schools are adopting a highly successful math curriculum to ensure that more students build a solid foundation in this critical subject. Starting this fall, Grade 10 math courses will be year-long to provide more learning time. In this session of the Legislature, my government will announce further steps to help students learn math.

A new literacy support initiative is helping more of Nova Scotia's youngest students learn to read. More than 3,800 children got help last year. With this year's extension of the program into Grade 3, even more children will benefit.

Despite fiscal challenges and shrinking enrolment, provincial funding ensures the smallest average class sizes in a generation. Children's learning needs are a priority, with new funds for boards to hire more program support staff, psychologists, and speech-language pathologists.

### **... and learning**

Secondary, university, and college students also benefit through increased investment and educational innovations. The long-term sustainability of Nova Scotia's universities is assured through system-wide savings and a fair, competitive tuition regime.

My government increased student assistance to ensure that post-secondary education is more accessible regardless of the financial circumstances of students' families. Student debt has been capped, tuition increases will not exceed 3 per cent, and the non-repayable grant portion of student assistance is higher than ever.

A university-wide strategy to recruit and retain international students is being developed. International students enrich the educational experience for everyone and serve as a magnet for immigration and foreign investment.

### **For Seniors**

Ensuring that seniors have the quality of care and life they so richly deserve has been a priority with my government from day one. Building and replacing overdue long-term care beds is one initiative. During my government's term, almost 800 replacement beds in aging facilities and 1,000 beds in new facilities were opened.

Many seniors are able and want to stay at home but need help. Last year, my government invested in new home care initiatives. As a result, today seniors are seeing improvements in accessing services like personal care, meal preparation, caregiver respite, and housekeeping. My government has also increased financial support and services to recognize and encourage the vital role of family and friend caregivers.

Better care for seniors living at home will remain a focus in the year ahead.

My government continues to bring better health care to Nova Scotia's seniors and all Nova Scotians through the Fair Drug Prices Plan, backed up by legislation that honourable members adopted in 2011. For the third year in a row, there will be no increase in premiums or co-payments for Seniors' Pharmacare.

In the face of difficult economic circumstances, my government remains true to its deepest values. Almost 20,000 of the lowest-income seniors no longer pay provincial income tax because my government ended this tax on these women and men who worked hard to make a good life for themselves and their family.

Beginning this year, my government adjusted the fee structure to save seniors from paying more for home care simply because their pensions have increased. Many seniors will now pay less for home care and home oxygen. More low-income Nova Scotians who need services such as the Caregiver Benefit, Personal Alert Assistance, and Supportive Care will now qualify. And the province will adjust the income levels that determine fees so seniors won't pay more for those services just because their pension goes up each year.

For seniors, and for many others in our communities, housing is the biggest worry and the most important determinant of their health and quality of life. My government will set a new direction for housing, one that stresses affordability, choice, partnership, and community-building.

My government is working with district health authorities and school boards to identify more opportunities for Nova Scotians to benefit from shared administrative services, and to plan carefully how to make the necessary improvements. Money saved on administration is invested in better care, better classroom learning, and a better start in life. Nova Scotia is turning the corner to more sustainable public services.

My government will present a budget for the consideration of the members of the Legislature. That budget will be balanced.

My government has a record of achievement that is making life better for families, students, seniors, and other Nova Scotians most in need of help.

Nova Scotia is starting to turn the corner and head in a better direction for today's families. Turning the corner means better care sooner. Turning the corner means no provincial HST on home energy and other family essentials, and more support for the most vulnerable among us. Turning the corner means opportunities for thousands of new jobs, in a cleaner environment, with more control of Nova Scotia's destiny. Turning the corner means balancing the budget, and keeping it balanced.

This is the time to keep headed toward a better future for Nova Scotia's families.



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 his escorts and aides 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.

I wish to advise the House that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a Speech to the members met in General Assembly, of which Speech, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy which I would now ask the Clerk to read.

The honourable Premier.

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

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed that the Speech be taken as read?

It is agreed.

The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

MR. SIDNEY PREST: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here today to rise in my place in the Fifth Session of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature to move the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne given by His Honour Brigadier-General, the Honourable J.J. Grant.

I would like to begin by thanking His Honour for the words of his first Speech from the Throne. You have delivered a superb speech, and I know the people of Nova Scotia would be proud of the work you do across our province in representing Her Majesty The Queen. I am sure I speak for all of my colleagues when I extend this thank you and a warm welcome to the House of Assembly today for your first Speech.

Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction before I get started?

MR. SPEAKER: Most certainly.

MR. PREST: In the east gallery, my lovely wife, Nancy. Could you stand please? (Applause) Also my dedicated CA and savior, Denise. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: We welcome all our guests to the gallery and hope they enjoy this afternoon's proceedings.

MR. PREST: Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne talks about turning a corner - from decline to progress; from the old ways to the new ways. It talks about change in direction and moving towards a better future for all Nova Scotia families. The Speech builds on what government has been committed to, and focused on, since we formed government in 2009. We wouldn't have been able to turn the corner without the support of many Nova Scotians, so when we reflect on leadership and the progress that we have made, it is a reflection of what the citizens have asked us for and told us they need. We are leading Nova Scotians towards a brighter future, and it's just around the corner.

I want to speak about leadership, not just here in the House of Assembly but in all parts of our life. I believe it takes more than just guiding or directing a group to demonstrate leadership.

Leadership is more than just being a spokesperson. Leadership involves making tough decisions, having big ambitions, and accepting challenges gracefully. These traits of leadership are evident here today in this House of Assembly. Over the past four years, our government has demonstrated genuine leadership as we have faced many tough decisions, and we have been working to ensure we make the right choices for today's families. That is why, when we were elected, we made the decision to invest in families, jobs, skills training, schools, hospitals, care for seniors, and our natural resources. The decision to enter into an agreement to acquire hydroelectricity from the Muskrat Falls project was one of the most historic decisions in this province. The leadership that was demonstrated by so many of my colleagues on this project really shows Nova Scotians just how committed to the future of our province I am, and how committed our government is.

All Nova Scotians have ambitions, Mr. Speaker. We are born with them, and all across our province we see each and every day - we have for generations. I have many ambitions. Some of them are personal, like growing older with my wife, Nancy, and

spending time with my children and grandchildren and teaching them about forestry practices in Nova Scotia.

I also have ambitions that are professional. I got involved in politics because I wanted to make Nova Scotia an even better place to live, work, and play. I want to help ensure that our seniors have access to the care they need and the resources they want, and that they have the opportunity to live in their communities for as long as they can. That is why our government is helping provide funding for seniors' homes, positive aging, safety grants, and better health care sooner.

Mr. Speaker, I know that seniors and all people on the Eastern Shore are delighted that we now have access to better health care sooner. With our hospital in Musquodoboit Harbour adopting the Collaborative Emergency Centre model, it means that we have access to primary health care right here in our community.

I also have ambitions for our young people in this province. They are just starting their own list of ambitions: buying houses, beginning careers, and perhaps having a family. We are creating a Nova Scotia that is promising for these young people. We are offering relief to first-time home buyers through the first-time home buyers tax credit, and we are investing in jobs and the economy to ensure that the good jobs they want and deserve are right here at home. We have created additional child care spaces all over Nova Scotia, ensuring that, as their young families grow, there is care for their children as well.

When we were elected, we laid out our ambitions in seven key commitments. I am very happy to say that we have followed through on those commitments, and we will continue to stay the course toward an even better Nova Scotia for the future.

In demonstrating genuine leadership, we have accepted challenges. We took on aggressive goals to reduce our greenhouse gases, and moved toward a cleaner, greener, and more secure energy future. Making the transition from imported coal to a renewable energy source is a challenge, but this government is taking it on and demonstrating success. Just last week the first community renewable energy project came on-line, which is just one part of our plan to ensure the lowest, fairest power rates for families and businesses.

This government accepted the challenge to develop the first aquaculture strategy in Nova Scotia history. I think I will repeat that: the first aquaculture strategy in our history. For the first time ever in our province, we have a process in place, a system to follow, that is based on science. This process has brought many challenges of creating an environment in which the aquaculture industry could thrive and which would not compromise our precious resources.

Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member knows, I am from the Eastern Shore. My family and the families around me have been passionate about our fisheries and oceans for

decades. We play there, we work there, and we live there, and we want to ensure that we continue to do the same for many years to come.

I ask all members in the House of Assembly to pay close attention to my message for the future of this province. If we take a walk inland, away from our beautiful coast, we are embraced by another very precious resource that is historic to the Eastern Shore and our entire province - our forestry industry. Now, you all know I could easily talk for the rest of the day about my life growing up in this industry, my love for the unique species of trees, and my countless experiences working in our forests, but I won't do that.

What I want to talk about is another enormous challenge our government accepted. We took on the challenge of reviewing how our forests are managed, how they are harvested, and how they help promote the industry. My father worked in this industry, and I can only hope that someday my grandchildren will continue our family tradition, to try their hands in the forestry sector.

My father worked in this industry, building his first water-powered mill in 1939. He raised and supported 10 children, of whom nine were directly involved in the forestry, including myself, the youngest. From there, 27 of his grandchildren were raised and supported from this industry. At the present time, five of my seven grandchildren are raised and supported by the forestry industry. If anybody wonders why I feel so much passion for the forestry industry, I would like to sit down sometime with each and every one of you and explain it. It runs deep.

Mr. Speaker, the Prest family's roots in the forest industry are here for generations to come, and not even hurricanes like Juan will discourage us. Some of the most rewarding experience is what nature offers us, which no monetary value could replace.

When we travel our beautiful province and we see the forests that nature has provided protecting our wildlife, water quality, air quality, and wetlands, the fibre in these trees seems to be what is the most sought-after asset. If I could give an economic example of the value of the watershed and wetland protection, I would refer to a case in New York City. Back in the 1990s, when trying to address a drinking water supply concern for the city, it was decided to protect the wetlands that supply the reservoirs by various means, rather than construct a new treatment facility. The cost associated with this decision was a \$1.5 billion investment for the protection, versus \$6 billion to \$8 billion for construction of a treatment facility, plus an additional \$300 to \$500 million in annual operating costs. The plan was implemented, and was successful in the short term. I have not seen any long-term reports; however, I expect that it continued to be a success, as I believe in New York City they are still drinking water - saving taxpayer dollars in the end, and all the other benefits that nature provides for free.

In order for our grandchildren to have the chance to work, live, and play in a beautiful Nova Scotian forest, things had to change. We have introduced modernized

legislation, and we are developing regulations to ensure that our forests will exist, through balanced and sustainable management practices. But we can't stop there. We must continue to ensure these practices are being strictly enforced throughout our province. We must continue to work together to find solutions and opportunities that balance the economic, environmental, and social impacts of resource development and conservation.

In closing, I would like to say what an honour it has been for me to represent the great people of the Eastern Shore. As an elected member I have had many opportunities to work hard for the people who elected me and to demonstrate leadership on the issues that matter the most to them. I will continue to work hard and do my best and hear their questions, and I will ensure their voices are heard by our government.

It's also been an honour for me to stand in this House and speak as a member of this government. It is with confidence in our government and our proven ability to show genuine leadership that I move that this Speech from the Throne, as read by His Honour, Brigadier-General The Honourable J. J. Grant, be accepted as read. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour again to rise in my place to speak on the Speech from the Throne that was read today by His Honour, Brigadier-General The Honourable J. J. Grant, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia. I move to second the Speech from the Throne.

First of all, one of the things that I want to recognize in the Speech from the Throne is the individuals who were mentioned who have passed away - prominent Nova Scotians who have passed away over this past year - recognizing them and their contributions to our province, and building our province the way it is today because of those people - not only the people who were recognized in the Speech from the Throne, but those people who have built our communities right from Yarmouth to Sydney, and every community in between. Those people have really built the foundation of what our communities are today, so I want to recognize those people as well, because they have played such an important role in building our province as we know it today.

Mr. Speaker, I know that earlier there were some HRM councillors who were here in the gallery. In particular, one who I did want to recognize is Matt Whitman, who is the councillor for Hammonds Plains - newly elected after the election in the Fall. He was elected in the 2012 Fall election for the municipal council. Working with him has been an honour so far, and whenever the next election may be, I look forward to working with him into the future.

I want to talk a little bit about the reason why I got involved in politics. I'm not necessarily one of the more, let's say, mature members of the House as far as age goes, and

so I want to take a step back and the reason why I got involved in our Party, in the NDP, and why I am a New Democrat.

Mr. Speaker, I remember I was one of these kids in school, between P to 12, who was - I would consider myself a political geek. I would be one of these kids who would sit back on election night, watch elections on CBC or CTV - any election that was taking place across the country - and watch it with much interest. And I always said that I would love to one day put my name on a ballot to hopefully be elected and represent the community in which I live.

And so I remember the very first time I decided to get involved in Party politics was in the 2003 election campaign. I was 15 at the time and I remember - I lived in the constituency of Sackville-Cobequid - and this was during the election when a good friend and good New Democrat, John Holm, had decided not to re-offer. And, Mr. Speaker, I remember going into campaign headquarters to meet the candidate of that time - he's the member for Sackville-Cobequid currently, and the Minister of Health and Wellness - and I remember walking into the campaign and asking to sign up to be a member of the NDP. And we all know that oftentimes there aren't necessarily a lot of people who come in to sign up to be members of our Party. There aren't droves and droves of people - you have to pay a membership and say hey, you know what (Interruption) Anyway, I digress.

So I go into the campaign headquarters saying I want to sign up to be a member of the NDP. And I remember thinking, I remember hearing what the candidate of the time, the Minister of Health and Wellness saying we thought you were a spy, we thought you might be a spy to come in and look into what we were doing in our campaign.

And so, that was my very first experience with politics, Mr. Speaker. But being able to get involved with the Young New Democrats, but also being involved in my community and my local church, in the various School Advisory Councils in my community, being involved in the various community centre groups, the various community groups as well, really being involved in those different organizations and groups, doing what you do in your community really builds on how we, as MLAs, do our work. And so, during that campaign, I remember getting out and talking to people about why they voted NDP, and quite frankly, why Sackville has been a prominent NDP seat for the New Democratic Party since the early days, in the early 1980s - in fact, even before I was born, that seat has been NDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, that was my first taste of politics, and so after that election I certainly got involved with the Young New Democrats, and getting involved in our Party, going to NDP conventions, and I remember in 2005 I was doing some work at our caucus office as a staff member, and I remember at the time, in 2006, someone asked me: Mat, why don't you put your name on a ballot? And at that time, in 2006, I was 20 years old. I said I can't do that. I'm not mature enough; I don't have the credentials. I don't have, you know, those sorts of things.

So I decided, Mr. Speaker, I would talk to the people in my community. Those are the people I worked with for a number of years, those are the people who know who I am, those are the people who would come out and support me. And so, I was asking these people and I was getting an overwhelming response from those folks to put my name forward. And after speaking to our Leader, he said, yes, let's do this.

One of the interesting parts before that 2006 election campaign was that we had three people on our membership list. There wasn't a lot of organization, and unfortunately, Mary Shultz, one of those people who was involved in my executive, passed away in this past year and a half. Mary Shultz was an amazing woman. She was always the first person you saw when you opened the doors of a campaign office, but unfortunately, she did pass away from cancer.

The 2006 election campaign was an amazing experience. It really was. For someone at the age of 20 to come so close to defeating a Cabinet Minister, it was quite an honour, and I think to have lost - many people in this Chamber have put their names on ballots a few times and have lost, but have continued to ensure that their voice is heard. They have continued to want to do the work of their community by putting their name on a ballot. I don't care what Party you're from - we all do this for a reason. The reason I am with this Party is because I have always believed that. I remember a time when my mom, who was a single mom, who adopted me at 28 days old, a single mom who was a nurse - a CNA, they were called at the time - a CNA who was on strike.

I remember walking the picket line with my mom, and I remember thinking to myself, as a young man, a young Nova Scotian, that this wasn't right. I remember the people who were there with the workers who were on strike were New Democrats. They were there talking with them. They were there listening to their concerns, sitting down and having a conversation about what it meant to be on strike and what it meant to treat people properly in the workplace. I'll never forget that moment when I was out there walking the picket line with my mom.

We take a lot from what our parents teach us. One of the things my mom has always taught me is that if you work hard and you let people know what you think, you will be able to do good in this world. Who knew that a young guy from Sackville, the son of a CNA - an LPN - the son of a single mom raising three kids, would be sitting here in this historic Chamber? I want to say a huge thank you to my family, and to my mom in particular, for doing all the things that she did for me, growing up here in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

I didn't have the opportunity of sitting in Opposition - I know many of my colleagues on this side of the House have. I didn't have the opportunity to sit on the Opposition side, but I have had the opportunity to sit over here, and we know that for the past almost four years now, decisions haven't been easy. We know that. In this Speech, we talk about moving Nova Scotia forward and ensuring that we do have change for the better.

So the things that were taught to me as a young Nova Scotian by my parents, by my mom - those things I now want to instill in my 19-month-old daughter, and one on the way. We want to be able to instill those values. I want to be able to instill those values and build a future that will ensure that Nova Scotia is preserved, that Nova Scotia has policies and initiatives in place that will sustain our province. In the past we didn't have that. We didn't have a vision for health care - things where we had those chronic problems with ER closures. We've come up with solutions. We didn't have a vision for agriculture, we didn't have that. We have that now. We've worked with different sectors across government departments; we've worked with sectors in various community organizations. We've consulted with Nova Scotians in every policy decision we've moved forward with, we've talked with Nova Scotians. That has never happened in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very hopeful, as a Nova Scotian, that our government has - we are building a better foundation so that our future starts here, our future to ensure that we no longer have young people having to leave our province. Why has that, in the past, been the norm? We should never have let that happen but Parties did. Let's move forward, let's ensure that we don't have that happening, so that families can build a life here in this province, so that we can have the jobs of today. Having high-tech companies come to Nova Scotia is a good thing, building an economy of the future, having a commission on the economy of Nova Scotia, listening to Nova Scotians and hearing what they're saying, that's a good thing.

One thing I do want to mention, Mr. Speaker, and I have had the ability over the last couple of weeks - several weeks, in fact - to go around the province with the Minister of Energy and talk about the real concern that I heard from Nova Scotians in my constituency and right across the province about the need for a plan for lower, fairer power rates.

In the past we had this issue where we were shackled to the international fossil fuel market pricing and we just sat back and let that happen, Mr. Speaker. So now we are undertaking a very historic opportunity that will ensure we have 35 years of stable energy rates for Nova Scotians. This has been an issue for many, many years. In fact in the 1970s I note there was one year where electricity prices went up by 47.2 per cent. The Premier of the day said, well, at least it wasn't as much as the utility asked for. That's what the history books tell us.

What we know is that we couldn't continue on that path. So the Muskrat Falls initiative, the Maritime Link initiative, will ensure that Nova Scotians have stable electricity rates for their homes, for their businesses and for community centres right across our province. It's a milestone, Mr. Speaker.

With the help of everyday Nova Scotians, we have developed the first of its kind in the world, a Community Feed-In Tariff program, Mr. Speaker, something that benefits communities right across our province. This plan will ensure that we develop local, green, tax-free and reliable power. It's a hallmark of our energy plan.



We've got to get off coal, Mr. Speaker; we have to, for our future. So we are doing that. We are the first in North America to place firm, hard caps on greenhouse gas emissions from power generation. That is showing that Nova Scotia is a leader. In fact, we were recognized in Copenhagen for that. Our province, our little Province of Nova Scotia, was recognized for that at an international forum on greenhouse gas emissions. We should be celebrating that. We need to take that environment of responsibility, that's what this government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, these are the sorts of things that were outlined in the Speech from the Throne. These are the sorts of things that Nova Scotians voted for in 2009. These are the sorts of things that I believe, as a New Democrat, as someone who sits in this House - we believe will move Nova Scotia forward. I look forward to working with each and every person in this House and people in my communities, the different communities that I have the pleasure of representing, over the coming weeks, months, and years ahead.

I thank you for that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and I will take my seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and say a few remarks today about the Speech from the Throne. First of all I want to acknowledge the Lieutenant Governor for the work that he is doing on behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, and congratulate him on his appointment. I also want to extend my congratulations to Mrs. Grant who I often see in communities across this province as the Lieutenant Governor is going about doing his duties, and I thank both of them on behalf of the people of the Province of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

I want to acknowledge the member for Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville on his remarks and I want to congratulate his mother. All of us in this House think fondly of our parents and . . .

MR. WHYNOTT: She's from Bridgetown.

MR. MCNEIL: Well, he just tells me she's from Bridgetown, all the better. (Laughter) But I do want to congratulate him and I want to congratulate his mother on doing what is a very difficult job sometimes and that is raising children, and she obviously did a great job that you arrived in the House of Assembly so pass on our congratulations. (Applause)

I want to acknowledge the member for Eastern Shore who all of us in this House have had the opportunity to be pigeonholed in some corner of this building, to talk about forestry. His passion was evident today and you can understand why. It has been passed down from his family, from him, and he feels that it's his responsibility to not only pass it on to his children and grandchildren, but to ensure that all of our children and

grandchildren get an opportunity to experience that great natural resource that we have here called our forest industry. We look forward to him continuing to educate us on how we can ensure that that's there. To the member, congratulations, and keep up the good work. (Applause)

I also want to acknowledge the members that were in the gallery, family and friends. I particularly want to acknowledge the brother of the Minister of Agriculture; for a minute there I thought the Minister of Agriculture was sitting in the gallery. I was going to say that maybe the good twin should come down on the floor but that wouldn't be fair, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

I do want to acknowledge that while the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and I may not always agree on public policy, I have always appreciated the kind gesture he has always extended to my family when they have arrived here in Province House, as many members do to family members. I do want to thank all of the family members in the gallery who have made a commitment to public life because a loved one has signed and put their name on a ballot. There may only be one name on that ballot but the entire family gets the joy of running in an election campaign.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge my own daughter, Colleen, who is here. As many of you know Colleen is no stranger to this House, she gets an opportunity to follow me around, come down from Saint Mary's where she will graduate from this Spring, and representing her brother who had graduated from Marconi Campus last year and is one of those Nova Scotians who is working in western Canada, and obviously representing her mother and she does that so well. Colleen, congratulations, and thanks for being here. (Applause)

I, too, would like to remind this House of a few names that were in the Speech from the Throne. Daurene Lewis, who we lost this year - Daurene was the mayor of Annapolis Royal. She was not only a tremendous community builder and educator, but a great inspiration and friend to so many. It is a deep loss for our community, but also for the entire province. As mentioned about the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable James Kinley, I had the privilege of being with some navy reservists in the last few weeks, and one of them was his grandson. We know how proud Mr. Kinley was of Lunenburg, the foundry, the Bluenose, and his love of the sea, so he would be extremely proud to know that his grandson is there continuing the family tradition.

Pat Connolly - all of us know him as the voice of the Mooseheads, but I can tell you that as a young kid from the Annapolis Valley, with a number of my siblings who were ushers at the old forum, I had the privilege of attending a game. All of a sudden, out came this booming voice, and "here come the Veas," and Connolly would bring it in. I remember that, and even had a chance since then, prior to his passing, to get a chance to meet him. What a true gentleman he was, and a great lover of sports.

Ruth Goldbloom - obviously without Ruth, Pier 21 wouldn't exist as it is today. What she lost in height she sure made up for in spunk, and was a great inspiration to all of us. She loved Cape Breton Island and she loved this province. She committed her entire work to ensuring that we remembered the families that immigrated to this country and remembered those who built it. I want to recognize Ruth today.

Obviously with the communities of Woods Harbour and Cape Sable Island, we all mourn the loss of five young Nova Scotians in more recent time. That community's loss was our province's loss. It's one that no community will ever get over, but hopefully, one that a community will be able to come together and move beyond.

Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne there were some other Nova Scotians who were recognized, but each of us in the communities that we represent over the last year have lost either community members or family members who may not have had the public profile of the people who I've mentioned, but who certainly made a lasting impression on our lives and on our communities and made Nova Scotia a better place to live.

Now I'd like to make a few comments about the Speech from the Throne, if I may. This government looks fondly back over the last four years. I can tell you that Nova Scotians do not. This has been a long four years for the people of Nova Scotia: the HST has increased by 2 per cent, and 1,400 user fees have gone up. Mark my words, those user fees will go up again under this NDP Government. Those fees are a tax by any other name.

As we all know, members of the government, when they were on this side of the House, used to remind us that those fees were supposed to be a cost recovery, but since going into power, they see them as a revenue generator. A tax is a tax is a tax.

More and more Nova Scotians are losing their jobs. Full-time jobs are disappearing with the prospect of only part-time work, and 6,400 fewer Nova Scotians are working than last year alone. Fewer Nova Scotians are working today than during the height of the recession in 2008, yet this government claims we are turning a corner. More and more Nova Scotians are leaving this province to find work elsewhere to support their families. Businesses and entrepreneurs are forced to lay off their friends and neighbours. They are forced to close their doors after a lifetime of building a business, building a reputation, and building communities. They are watching their tax dollars being handed over to other businesses - to their competition, using their very own tax dollars to compete against them.

Tourism operators across the province are trying to make up from the devastating loss of the Yarmouth ferry. We call it the Yarmouth ferry, but really it's Nova Scotia's ferry. The short-sighted decision by this government has repercussions from one end of this province to the other.

Those who pay the power bills are paying 30 per cent more today under this government than they were just four years ago. They are watching as their government

defends Nova Scotia Power, its monopoly, and its guaranteed rate of return - guaranteeing profit at every turn. They are frustrated by a government that refuses to stand up for Nova Scotians, that refuses to get the people of this province out from under the thumb of Nova Scotia Power. They are confused by a government rushing ahead with a multi-billion dollar mega-project where Nova Scotians take all the risk and pay all the bills, and Emera collects all the profit. They can't even tell Nova Scotians how much that energy will cost, yet they go around talking about it's the best deal for them.

Mr. Speaker, they're concerned by the fact that their government can't, or won't, tell them how much they're going to pay for Muskrat Falls and what it will mean to their power bills; worried that the government is doing everything in its power to force this project onto ratepayers and strengthen the grip of Nova Scotia Power on Nova Scotia ratepayers and their pocketbooks; and outraged at a government that sees Nova Scotia Power as the answer, when so very clearly they're the problem.

This government likes to talk about investing in children. The only thing this government has offered our children, Mr. Speaker, is cuts to the classroom. Teachers and students - the targets of \$65 million dollars' worth of short-sighted cuts - left scrambling for resources that government has pulled out of the classroom across this province where 700 teachers lost their jobs, educational assistants, support staff, librarians and many others put out of work by this government's determination to gut public education, and students struggling to get by in a system in desperate need of leadership from the province, a system in desperate need of investment.

Mr. Speaker, there are 725 students waiting for speech-language pathologists - 650 of those are in elementary school; and there are 1,343 students waiting for school psychologists - 782 of those are in elementary school. Per-student funding is next to last in the country, and falling further behind under this government; classrooms across the province - elementary, middle, and high school - have more diverse needs than ever before in our province's history; and teachers and students struggling every day because this government refuses to properly fund the most important economic tool we have - our children in our public education system. (Applause)

Those waiting for health care in this province - hundreds of Nova Scotians waiting 10 years or more for ankle surgery, and what does this government do? It allows a specialist to leave our province. Knee replacements: 2,265 people waiting - over 1,200 of them have been waiting six months, and nearly 700 have been waiting more than a year; hip replacements: nearly 900 people waiting - over 400 over six months, and nearly 200 have been waiting over a year; cataract surgery: 4,061 waiting for surgery - over 1,300 waiting more than six months, and over 500 have been waiting more than a year. Mr. Speaker, well behind the national standards.

There are 31 communities across this province that need doctors; another 900 doctors are expected to retire in the next eight years. That's one-third of the doctors in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The CEC model, which this government loves to boast about - despite what government says, Mr. Speaker, emergency rooms across Nova Scotia were closed for 17,717 hours from April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2012. That's the equivalent of 738 days, and while this government won't admit it, the CEC model is just another way of saying your emergency room is closed.

We, in the Liberal caucus, are proud of the expanded scope paramedics are playing in our health care system. We are proud of the work they do. However, we should take heed to what is happening. Advanced care paramedics are leaving for Alberta - 22 in the last year alone. This leaves us devoid of experience and mentors to help newer paramedics learn and excel. This is a government that, after four long years in power, has failed to proclaim the Paramedics Act, Mr. Speaker, the same Party, in fact, that criticized the Tories for failing to proclaim that Act in their previous four years in government. And after all of this, all of these facts, this government has the audacity to spend taxpayers' money on TV ads trying to convince them that they're really getting "better care sooner."

Mr. Speaker, for four long years taxpayers have seen billions of their hard-earned tax dollars handed over to corporations at the drop of a hat, without so much as a job guarantee for Nova Scotians, without these massive corporations having to pay back the Premier's donations - a government that has grown the debt of this province by \$1.4 billion in just four years. Let me repeat that: \$1.4 billion in four long years.

Think about that. After 146 years of Confederation, we have a \$13.7 billion debt and the NDP Government has created 10 per cent of our provincial debt in the last four years. That's \$1.4 billion in just four years. There are 6,400 fewer people working this year than last; power bills are up 30 per cent; 1,400 user fees have increased, and we know they're on the verge of going up again; HST increased by 2 per cent. That's the true legacy of this government's corporate welfare agenda, Mr. Speaker, that's the true cost. I will elaborate more on these issues when I continue later in the week.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children. Words cannot express how disappointed I am today in this announcement by government. All of us are all too aware of the tragedies that were suffered by children there, children that were supposed to be protected by this province, a duty this province and governments of all political stripes failed to uphold. Victims wanted a public inquiry, the community wanted a public inquiry and the people of this province have asked for a public inquiry. Yet this government has failed all of us and this government has failed to listen. A panel is this government taking the easy way out. It's this government failing the victims; it's this government denying justice to an entire generation of Nova Scotians.

With those few words, I will adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion for adjournment has been made. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. FRANK CORBETT: Mr. Speaker, with the concurrence of the House and unanimous consent, I wonder if we would allow the Official Opposition to introduce two bills today, which I believe they will use for tomorrow's business on Opposition Day.

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

The motion is carried.

## **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 1 - Entitled an Act to Ensure Accountability in Providing Economic Development Assistance in Nova Scotia. (Hon. Stephen McNeil)**

**Bill No. 2 - Entitled an Act to Ensure Better Reliability in the Delivery of Electricity in Nova Scotia. (Mr. Andrew Younger)**

MR. SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be read a second time on a future day.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

That concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on the morrow from the hours of 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. Now I'd ask the Official Opposition to announce their business for tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. MICHEL SAMSON: After the daily routine and Question Period tomorrow, the Official Opposition's business will be debate on Bill Nos. 1 and 2, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow at 2:00 p.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.

[The House rose at 4:06 p.m.]