



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2020

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HALIFAX, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2020

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Brendan Maguire, Hon. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, is without.

[THE SPEAKER: Let His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, be admitted.]

[The Speaker and the Assistant Clerk left the Chamber.]

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

[The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, preceded by his escort and by Mr. David Fraser, 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 Kevin Murphy, and Assistant Clerk Annette Boucher.

The Speaker, with the Assistant Clerk on his right, 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.

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: Mr. Speaker and members of the House of Assembly, in closing this Second Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly, I thank you for your work and thoughtful consideration to ensure that legislation is as strong as it can be. Eighty-seven pieces of legislation were passed.

Mr. Speaker, the circumstances under which this session began could not be more different than those today, but the session has had a consistent theme: building a strong economic foundation for our province and finding ways to support all Nova Scotians to share in it.

In Fall 2018, members passed legislation that removed red tape for businesses; enhanced pregnancy, parental, and caregiving leave; replaced the outdated Motor Vehicle Act with a new Traffic Safety Act; and banned the harmful practice commonly known as conversion therapy. Bond rating agency Standard & Poor's predicted that Nova Scotia would outperform most others for the next two years and gave us our best-ever credit rating. Government outlined steps for the QEII New Generation Project; introduced its Standard Household Rate, allowing those receiving income assistance to keep more of the money they earned; and released its strategy to make Nova Scotia accessible by 2030.

In Spring 2019, government passed the Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act, giving patients waiting for a transplant the chance to get one sooner. This House also passed legislation to protect our coastlines, ban single-use plastic shopping bags, support clean tidal energy, and set bold goals to fight climate change.

2020 began, and Nova Scotia's economic engine was running strong. My government introduced its fifth consecutive balanced budget. Employment and immigration were at an all-time high. The population was growing faster than it had in 50 years, and our exports were setting records.

Our province released the largest capital plan in its history, including investments in health care and on new roads and schools. Free pre-Primary became available to all four-year-olds. Nova Scotia continued to support student loan forgiveness. More seats were added for medical students, family medicine residents, and nurses. More investments were made to help Nova Scotians find a doctor, and government supported more adults and children with disabilities, giving them options to live in the way that suited them best.

That, Mr. Speaker, was the world on March 10, 2020. Nova Scotia announced its first presumptive case of COVID-19 five days later. Since then, the pandemic has altered virtually everything about how we live, learn, work, gather, and travel. It has claimed 65 lives in our province, and continues to look for more.

As we were reeling from the pandemic, a gunman stole 22 lives and left us questioning how such a thing could happen here. In May, a helicopter crash in the Mediterranean claimed three Nova Scotians. Then we lost a Halifax native in the Snowbirds crash. And just this week, a fishing vessel, the *Chief William Saulis*, and a six-member crew were lost in the Bay of Fundy.

Black Lives Matter gained momentum. Those who are born with privilege must work harder to understand the racism experienced by people of colour and how it impacts the lives of so many. We resolved, as a province, to do better.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, our foundation is strong. Nova Scotians care deeply for our province and for each other. In our darkest hour, we pulled together, even as we kept our distance. Time and again, our communities rallied. We supported our neighbours, friends, and strangers. We bought local. We banged on pots and pans. We stayed the blazes home. Then we explored our own province. We retooled and reimagined how Nova Scotia businesses could continue to operate safely.

Heureusement, Monsieur le Président, nous avons des bases solides. Les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse se soucient énormément de leur province et des autres. Dans les moments les plus difficiles, nous avons unis nos efforts mêmes en gardant nos distances. À maintes reprises, nos collectivités se sont alliés. Nous avons appuyé nos voisins, nos amis et étrangers. Nous avons acheté des produits locaux. Nous avons fait de bruit. Nous sommes restés à la maison, puis nous avons exploré notre propre province. Nous avons repensé la façon dans les entreprises de la province pourraient continuer leurs activités en toute sécurité et nous leur avons donné les outils nécessaires.

It has not been easy. Some people still face real hardship, but Nova Scotians look for reasons to keep hoping and keep dreaming. Government has worked hard to help. In the last several months alone, government has invested in technology to help students learning from home; supported food banks to keep food on the tables of those in need; offered grants, loan support and programs to businesses; expanded high speed internet to more homes and businesses; offered early intensive behavioural intervention to more children on the autism spectrum; supported employment programs for those under-represented in the workforce; and announced new rent control measures.

I would like to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize Premier Stephen McNeil, who will soon leave political life. Throughout his 17 years, he has worked to build a strong province and a more inclusive economy by reducing barriers and offering support to those who may have been left behind. He imagined a Nova Scotia where everyone could come share in our success and create a life to be proud of. When faced with impossible circumstances this year, he has worked tirelessly to keep our province safe while supporting those who are struggling. I hope that all Nova Scotians will join me in congratulating him and wishing him the very best in his next chapter.

I thank you for the ample provision you have made for the Public Service, and I assure you that care and prudence will be exercised to ensure that amounts voted are expended in the best interests of Nova Scotia. (Applause)

[9:15 a.m.]

I wish all members present and absent the best of holidays and Merry Christmas, and a safe and healthy 2021. I now bid you farewell.

HON. STEPHEN MCNEIL (The Premier): Thank you, Your Honour, for your kind words, and on behalf of all of us, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you as well.

Mr. Speaker and members of the House of Assembly, it is the will and pleasure of His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, that this, the Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly be prorogued, and this session is accordingly prorogued, and that the Third Session of the said General Assembly meet on the 16th day of February 2021, for the dispatch of business.

[The Speaker and the Assistant Clerk left the Chamber.]

[The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.]

[The House rose at 9:17 a.m.]