

At 2:00 o'clock P.M. this day, the Members of the House of Assembly being present, Her Honour, the Honourable Myra A. Freeman, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, came to the chamber of the House of Assembly, and being seated, was pleased to commence the First Session of the Sixtieth General Assembly with a speech as follows:

“Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the First Session of the 60th General Assembly.

To all of the members who are returning to this Legislature, my government extends its sincere congratulations and best wishes. As well, we congratulate and warmly welcome those members who have taken their place in this Chamber for the first time. A proud moment for you and your families. You have been given the rare honour to serve your communities and your province in public life. An honour that comes with great responsibility. An honour the late Michael Forrestall understood well. For more than 50 years, he proudly served the people of Dartmouth, his province, and his country as a Member of Parliament and Senator. It is with sadness we note the passing of a political stalwart, a proud Nova Scotian, and one of Canada's biggest champions of the men and women who serve in our armed forces.

My government also extends its deep appreciation and best wishes to our former colleagues and their families: Ron Russell, Kerry Morash, Russell MacKinnon, Cecil O'Donnell, Gerald Sampson, Gary Hines, Bill Langille, and Jim DeWolfe and Jerry Pye. As well, we congratulate Nova Scotia's Lieutenant Governor Designate, Mayann Francis. Well known to the members of this House for her exemplary service to the province as Chief Executive Officer of the Human Rights Commission and Ombudsman, Ms. Francis brings a wealth of personal and professional experience that will serve her, and the people of Nova Scotia, well in her new role as Her Majesty, the Queen's, vice-regal representative.

OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Nous sommes rassemblés ici aujourd'hui, sachant qu'on a confié à chacun d'entre nous la responsabilité d'agir au nom des Néo-Écossais et toujours dans leur véritable intérêt. Mon gouvernement est conscient que la constitution de cette Assemblée exige la mise de côté de nos différences politiques et le renouvellement de notre engagement envers la coopération et le compromis.

Today, we come to this Chamber knowing that each of us has been

entrusted to act on behalf of, and always in the best interests of, Nova Scotians. My government is mindful that the make-up of this House demands that we put aside our political differences and make a renewed commitment to co-operation and compromise. The people of Nova Scotia rightfully expect that we will work to find common ground and to seek common-sense solutions to the challenges we collectively face.

My government also knows that the people of Nova Scotia have given us a mandate and that it is up to us to lead by example. And we will.

ADDRESSING NOVA SCOTIANS' PRIORITIES

The last Speech from the Throne, tabled just 56 days ago, followed shortly thereafter by our budget and platform, provides reasoned, thoughtful, and affordable approaches for addressing Nova Scotians' priorities.

Together, these three documents outline many of the actions my government will take to:

support individuals and families in need

help our students learn better and live better

reduce wait times and provide more health-care services closer to home

protect and enhance our environment

make our streets, neighbourhoods, and communities safer

build the human capacity and the physical infrastructure needed to support a growing economy.

Together, these actions will make Nova Scotia more attractive to immigrants and investors. Together, they will help our province build on the fiscal, economic, and social progress Nova Scotia has witnessed over the past six years. Our plans are ambitious. Our goal simple. To make Nova Scotia an even better place to live and find success. A goal that, together with Nova Scotians, and with the support of this House, we can and will achieve.

We will achieve a stronger economy by:

lowering small business taxes

eliminating costly, inefficient, and unnecessary regulations

undertaking the largest road-building program in Nova Scotia in over 40 years

reducing the cost, and increasing supports, for new immigrants

aggressively pursuing efforts to make our province the transportation gateway to Atlantic Canada

expanding broadband Internet access to every Nova Scotia community

increasing professional support services for farmers

establishing a new marketing program to encourage the purchase of local agricultural and fish products, and

increasing the marketing budget of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

We will do this and more, knowing that a modern, diverse, and innovative economy is vital to meeting the health, social, and educational needs of Nova Scotians.

My government will help Nova Scotians better manage the costs and the pressures of day-to-day life by:

removing the provincial portion of the HST on home energy costs

lowering personal income taxes

introducing a working families Pharmacare program

implementing a 10-year child care plan to create 1,500 more spaces

increasing the number of affordable housing units

establishing a new Persons with Disabilities Allowance, and

increasing the shelter allowance for Nova Scotians on income

assistance.

We will do this and more, knowing too many Nova Scotians are struggling too much to make ends meet.

My government will address the needs of our growing seniors population by:

increasing the number of long-term care beds by 800 within four years and by 1,300 within 10 years

expanding home support services

adding more restorative beds

increasing the number of adult day centres

doubling the Seniors Property Tax Rebate

providing new funding for seniors home repairs, and

providing a stronger voice for seniors around the Cabinet Table.

We will do this and more, knowing seniors want to live as independently as possible for as long as possible in the comfort of their own homes.

My government will work to make every generation healthier than the next by:

tripling the Healthy Living Tax Credit and making it available to all Nova Scotians

making physical education a mandatory high school credit, and

creating a new, comprehensive sport and recreational infrastructure program.

We will provide Nova Scotians with the health care they need, where and when they need it by:

training more nurses, doctors and technologists

introducing a province-wide telehealth system

increasing funding to implement Nova Scotia's Integrated Stroke Strategy

expanding cancer treatment and support programs, and

enhancing community-based primary health teams.

We will do this and more, knowing that healthy, active kids make for healthy, productive adults and that, above all else, Nova Scotians want their government to provide quality, timely access to care.

My government will work with parents, teachers, and administrators to help our children get the education they need to succeed in life and in school by:

further reducing class sizes

introducing vocational/composite programming in our high schools

expanding the number of schools offering the International Baccalaureate Program

hiring more professional career counselors, and

providing more teachers, resource specialists, books and teaching aids in our classrooms.

We will do this and more, knowing that learning is the gateway to individual success.

My government will work to make our communities - big and small, rural and urban - safer, cleaner, and better connected by:

hiring more police officers

establishing a Youth Attendance Centre

creating a new public safety investigation unit

upgrading our 911 Emergency Response System

creating a central volunteer resource centre, and

opening more parks, green spaces, and trails.

All of these measures will be acted upon, knowing they are key to supporting strong, healthy, and productive families. They are key to building safe, caring and connected communities, and they are key to Nova Scotia's continued economic progress and social growth.

All of these measures will be acted upon within balanced budgets and without compromising our debt-reduction targets or our children's future.

NOVA SCOTIA, RICH WITH DIVERSITY

La Nouvelle-Écosse est bénie par la diversité. Nous accueillons une vaste gamme de communautés ethniques qui sont petites, mais solides. Nous avons l'océan, ainsi que les lacs, les rivières et les ruisseaux qui parsèment l'ensemble de notre province. Nous avons une riche combinaison de terres diverses: des hautes-terres du Cap-Breton, aux paysages marins sauvages de la côte sud, aux vergers de la vallée.

Nova Scotia is blessed by diversity. We have a broad range of small but strong ethnic communities. We have the ocean, along with lakes, rivers and streams practically everywhere. We have a rich mix of diverse lands, from the Highlands of Cape Breton, to the rugged seascapes along the South Shore, to the orchards in the Valley. And we have villages, small towns and growing urban centres. All of these things and more make us the envy of people from around the world.

My government knows that our diversity adds to our strength as a people and our pride in our province. My government will continue to celebrate our diversity and promote it to the world. Halifax's bid to host the 2014 Commonwealth Games offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to showcase Nova Scotia's natural beauty, its culture, creativity and talent to millions of people the world over. The Commonwealth Games would also leave a lasting benefit of world-class sport and cultural venues that all Nova Scotians could share in well beyond the closing ceremonies. In co-operation with the Halifax Regional Municipality and the federal government, my government looks forward to seizing this wonderful and rare opportunity to make our capital city one of Canada's and the world's top choices for future national and international events.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR NOVA SCOTIANS

My government knows we will be judged by our willingness to compromise. We also know, no one party has a lock on good ideas.

We will therefore build on our Community Economic Development strategy by creating a new Division of Rural Economic Growth within the Department of Economic Development and establish evidence-based protocols for regular colorectal cancer screening. As well, we will examine all existing, planned, and proposed student and graduate support programs, including loans, bursaries, debt forgiveness, and tax credits, with a view to maximizing benefits to students and keeping more of our best and brightest here at home where they can contribute to our collective success. And we will take steps to modernize the Rules of the House, to pursue campaign-financing reforms, and to strengthen and clarify the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

CONCLUSION

My government knows that good governments must be open to new ideas, but never timid about protecting the values and principles they believe in.

That is why:

Our budgets will be balanced.

We will address need before want.

Our policies will be fairly applied, and

Our programs efficiently delivered.

My government knows that despite its many challenges, Nova Scotia is the best province, in the best country in the world. We also know that, together with Nova Scotians, and with the support of this House, we can make it even better. And we will. Thank you.”

Her Honour was pleased to retire.

Mr. Speaker took the Chair.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Pursuant to the order, the Hon. The Premier, rose to pay tribute to Her Honour, the Honourable Myra A. Freeman, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia and His Honour, Lawrence Freeman for their service to the province.

Comments were made with Messrs. Dexter and Samson.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Attorney General, pursuant to leave given, introduced the following bill and the same was, on motion, read a first and ordered to be read a second time on a future day:

An Act Respecting Oaths of Office

(Hon. Mr. Scott - Minister of Justice)

Mr. Speaker than advised the House that Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor had been pleased to make a speech to the Members met in the General Assembly of which, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy which the Chief Clerk would now read.

On motion duly passed by the House, Her Honour's Speech was taken as read.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Pursuant to the order, Mr. MacLeod, Cape Breton West, moved the Address in Reply, which was seconded by Mr. Dunn, Pictou Centre. A debate ensued during which the following took part: Mr. Dexter, Leader of the Opposition, who adjourned the debate.

Mr. Speaker adjourned the House to meet Friday, June 30th at 9:30 A.M.