

JOURNALS AND PROCEEDINGS

of the

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

of the

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

FIFTH SESSION

of the

SIXTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Begun and holden at Halifax on Tuesday, the twenty-sixth day of March in the year of Our Lord, two thousand and thirteen in the Sixty-second year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady Queen Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2013

{The Fifth Session of the 61st General Assembly was opened with historic ceremony on a cool, sunny day.}

At 2:00 o'clock this day, Members of the House of Assembly being present, His Honour the Honourable J.J. Grant, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, came to the Chamber of the House of Assembly, and being seated, was pleased to open the Fifth Session of the Sixty-First General Assembly with a speech as follows:

Starting to Turn the Corner to a Better Future

“Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen, Nova Scotians:

Welcome to the Fifth Session of the 61st 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.

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% in 2014 and 13% in 2015.

Despite the worst world-wide 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 29th 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's steady and wise contributions, Paul Comeau's proud advocacy for Acadians, and John H. Boudreau's community economic accomplishments. 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 advisors, 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 cooperative 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 cooperation will advance better care sooner when PEI 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 ten 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 cooperation: 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 cooperated 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 number 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 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 online.

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 online 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 online 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 practicing environmental responsibility, and it makes good economic sense, too.

My government will increase Buy Local 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 change in 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 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 that 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 one 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 online 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 again 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 clear 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, 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 three, 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 three 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 copayments 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."

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Mr. Speaker took the Chair.

The Honourable Minister of Justice, 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

Mr. Speaker then advised the House that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a speech to the Members met in 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, His Honour's Speech was taken as read.

S. Prest, Eastern Shore, then moved the following Address in Reply to the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and moved the same do pass. The aforesaid motion was seconded by M. Whynot, Hammonds Plains-Upper Sackville. A debate arose thereon with Hon. S. MacNeil, Leader of the Official Opposition, who adjourned the debate.

Hon. F. Corbett, Government House Leader, asked for the unanimous consent of the House that the Official Opposition be permitted to introduce two Bills to be considered as part of opposition business on Wednesday, March 27th. The motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The following bills were introduced by the following Members, read a first and ordered to be read a second time on a future day:

No. 1. An Act to Ensure Accountability in Providing Economic Development Assistance in Nova Scotia

(Hon. S. McNeil, Annapolis)

No. 2. An Act to Ensure Better Reliability in the Delivery of Electricity in Nova Scotia

(A. Younger – Dartmouth East)

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. F. Corbett, Government House Leader, then moved that the House rise and meet tomorrow, Wednesday, March 27th, at 2:00 P.M. The motion carried and the House adjourned.