

The House met at 9:00 A.M.

Prayers.

At the hour of 9:00 A.M. this day, His Honour the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, came to the Chamber of the House of Assembly and, seated in the Speaker's Chair, was pleased to prorogue this, the Second Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly with the following speech:

"Mr. Speaker and members of the House of Assembly, in closing this Second Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly, thank you for your work and thoughtful consideration to ensure that legislation is as strong as it can be. Eighty-seven pieces of legislation 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legislation that removed red tape for businesses, enhanced pregnancy, parental and caregiving leave, replaced the outdated Motor Vehicle Act with a new Traffic Safety Act, and banned the harmful practice commonly known as conversion therapy.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 and 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 Next Generation Project
- introduced its Standard Household Rate, allowing those receiving income assistance to keep more of the money they earn, 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 a 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. Government introduced its fifth consecutive balanced budget. Employment and immigration were at all-time highs, 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 a Snowbirds crash.

And just this week, a fishing vessel, the Chief William Saulis, and her 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 each other. In our darkest hours, 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 pots and pans. We stayed the blazes home, and 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 ni nos efforts, même en gardant nos distances.

À maintes reprises, nos collectivités se sont ralliées. Nous avons appuyé voisins, amis et étrangers. Nous avons acheté des produits locaux. Nous avons fait du bruit. Nous sommes restés à la maison, puis nous avons exploré notre propre province. Nous avons repensé la façon dont 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 underrepresented in the workforce
- 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, 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. And when faced with impossible circumstances this year, he has

worked tirelessly to keep our province safe, while supporting those who are struggling.

I hope all Nova Scotians will join me in congratulating him and wishing him the 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 interest of Nova Scotia.

I now bid you farewell.”

Hon. S. McNeil, Premier, then said:

“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.”

His Honour was then pleased to retire and the Speaker withdrew.

The House rose at 9:17 A.M.

*Annette M. Boucher, Q.C.
Acting Chief Clerk, House of Assembly*