

JOURNALS AND PROCEEDINGS

of the

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

of the

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

THIRD SESSION

of the

SIXTY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Begun and holden at Halifax on Tuesday, the ninth day of March in the year of Our Lord, two thousand and twenty-one in the Seventieth 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 9, 2021

{The Third Session of the 63rd General Assembly was opened on a cold, snowy day with a hybrid ceremony conducted both physically in the chamber and virtually via videoconference.}

At 1:00 o'clock this day, Members of the House of Assembly being present, 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 being seated, was pleased to open the Third Session of the Sixty-Third General Assembly with a speech as follows:

“RECOVERY, RENEWAL, RESPECT — NOVA SCOTIA’S NEXT CHAPTER

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen, Nova Scotians. Welcome to the 3rd Session of the 63rd General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature.

Today, we would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathering in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people. As such we have a reverence for our natural world and a belief in protecting it and sharing its bounty.

Our gathering may look different than in previous years, but the importance and value of what we are participating in today does not. Nova Scotia is considered the cradle of Canadian democracy — and just as we led the way in creating a fair and equitable system that gives voice to the people, so do we lead today across Canada in the way in which we responded to the virulent coronavirus.

La Nouvelle-Écosse est considérée comme le berceau de la démocratie canadienne. Tout comme nous avons ouvert la voie à la création d'un système équitable qui offre une voix au peuple, nous sommes aussi des chefs de file au Canada dans la façon dont nous avons réagi à la virulence du coronavirus.

As citizens, we have adjusted; we have adapted; we have sacrificed, and, we have emerged as the envy of the rest of Canada. Across the country, Canadians are facing the same issues, yet, throughout this last year of the pandemic, we have managed our public and financial health well. We kept our house in order — and if we continue to make the right choices, we could emerge from the pandemic faster and stronger than our peers.

As COVID-19 cases were multiplying in other provinces, profoundly testing healthcare systems, our streamlined health authority stood up; our foundations remained strong. Nova Scotians are being vaccinated against COVID-19, creating that coveted immunity, and bringing with it the promise of a life that is less uncertain.

As population growth stalled in many corners of the country, we continue to see positive signs that people want to live in Nova Scotia. Every one of our 18 counties welcomed more new residents from across the country than the previous year. Consequently we are able to invest, prudently, in areas that need our attention: our climate; our economy; and addressing issues of fairness, such as systemic racism, mental health and addictions, and those inequalities revealed by the pandemic in our long-term care facilities.

This nexus between the environment, economy, and equity is the focus of my government's agenda. This, and a commitment to the people of this province that my government will constantly strive to improve the lives and livelihoods of all of us. Recovery, renewal, and respect are the themes of our next chapter, and frame my government's vision for this decade of Nova Scotia.

IN MEMORIAM

Before we look to the future, we can't forget our past. This last year, Nova Scotians were tested, shaken to their core by tragic events. And so, we pause to remember the 65 Nova Scotians who died from the coronavirus. We pause to reflect on that horrific and tragic day in April when we woke up to reports of a gunman, posing as a police officer, on a shooting rampage that started in a peaceful corner of our beautiful province, and ended with the deaths of 22 Nova Scotians.

We remember them — and we think of their families, friends, and loved-ones who they left behind.

There were others, too — daughters and sons of Nova Scotia — who died serving our country and province.

Nous ne les oublions pas, et nous gardons dans nos pensées leurs familles, leurs amis et leurs proches. Il y a aussi d'autres fils et filles de la Nouvelle-Écosse qui ont donné leur vie au service de leur pays et de leur province.

Captain Jennifer Casey, a public affairs officer with Canada's Snowbirds, who died while on Operation Inspiration, aimed at honouring those who sacrificed during the early days of the pandemic. She made the ultimate sacrifice.

Three other Nova Scotians, Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough, Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald and Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, were killed in the crash of a Canadian military helicopter, thousands of kilometres from home off the coast of Greece.

Here at home, six fishermen perished in the Bay of Fundy, in the waters that sustained their livelihoods, with the sinking of the *Chief William Saulis*.

Since the last Throne Speech, we lost many members of this House, as well, including former speaker Ron Russell and two of Nova Scotia's political giants, former Premiers John Buchanan and Gerald Regan.

HONOURING ALEXA MCDONOUGH

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Alexa McDonough's election to this chamber, and her extraordinary political career. Ms. McDonough was the first woman in Canada to lead a major political party as provincial NDP leader, and was a party of one for many years, and the only woman, in this House.

RECOVERY, RENEWAL, AND RESPECT

So much of how we are living our lives is viewed through the lens of the global pandemic. It has thrown challenges at us, but also afforded opportunities and revealed areas that need attention, especially around inclusion, economic equality, and respect for our environment.

In framing my government's vision for Nova Scotia, it is nearly impossible to untangle and separate these three elements. These are the threads of steel that support the foundations of our plan. The health of our economy depends on the health of our planet and province; the health of our province depends on the health of our people; the health of our people depends on how we are treated — with fairness and respect.

RECOVERY AND RESPECT: THE ENVIRONMENT

The world went into this global pandemic with problems, conflict, and contradictions that are making it less sustainable, less equal, and more fragile.

Foremost among these problems are the risks and consequences of the climate crisis. Nova Scotians will not be able to socially isolate from the effects of climate change. Climate change is the challenge of our generation, and my government has already begun to take decisive action to address this issue.

My government is committed to accelerating the phase-out of coal for energy use by 2030, 10 years earlier than planned. Nova Scotia will be the first province in Canada to achieve carbon neutrality. We will lead the way by ensuring that all of our government offices use renewable electricity by 2025. And our vision for the future of our beautiful province is not just aspirational.

On day one of our new government we acted — announcing a plan for \$19 million in funding for rebates on new and used electric vehicles, including e-bikes, and energy-efficient home upgrades. Upgrading homes to make them more efficient will help lift low income and vulnerable communities out of energy poverty.

In this way, energy efficiency programs deliver for the economy, the environment, and our cost of living, giving more Nova Scotians the opportunity to take control of their energy bills with new products and technologies and home renovation.

In the forestry sector, my government will accelerate the implementation of the recommendations of the report of Professor William Lahey to adopt ecological forestry principles, placing protection

of the ecosystem and biodiversity in the forefront of forest management practices. My government is committed to higher value production with lower ecological impacts as we innovate away from industrial forestry to ecological forestry.

RECOVERY: THE ECONOMY

As we tackle climate change and work toward our economic recovery, new job opportunities will be created across the province in renewable energy, trades, digital and high tech, and innovative technology related to our ocean or blue economy. This is about creating the jobs of the future across the province in both rural and urban communities.

The biggest challenge we face is also the biggest opportunity available to us. We are already working on this. For example, the Mi'kmaq Home Energy Efficiency Program is targeting energy efficiency retrofits for 90 per cent of band-owned homes in First Nations over 10 years, from 2019 to 2029. We are seizing the opportunity now to stimulate economic opportunity by tackling climate change.

The jobs of the future and the health of our economy are inextricably linked. Just last month, Canada's biggest bank, RBC, which is committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions in its lending by 2050, added \$500 billion to its sustainable financing funds. This is investment we can attract to Nova Scotia.

As these institutions invest in a low-carbon future, in Nova Scotia, we are building one. A Bedford company, Novonix, is involved in the development of high-performance lithium-ion battery materials. It recently entered into a new five-year deal with Dalhousie University, leveraging the economic power of research happening in our post-secondary institutions.

To ensure we harness these opportunities, my government will create an Economic Growth Council. We will partner with municipalities on clean and climate resilient infrastructure investments.

The pandemic has highlighted difficulties faced by women in the workforce, especially around issues of childcare. My government is committed to working with the federal government on a national childcare strategy because childcare is critical to a thriving economy.

Restaurants and the service sector have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Last week, my government announced a \$7 million one-time relief package for these small businesses. Tourism has also been sorely affected, and my government will be there to mitigate the impact of needed border and other public health restrictions, to support the sector as

it adapts and to be a partner in recovering a stronger and better future for tourism in this province.

Food is the single biggest industry in Atlantic Canada, and my government will be there to help it grow. Enhancing food security and supporting innovation in the agriculture sector will help people and lead to a more sustainable food supply.

Also essential to quality of life is adequate housing. My government will provide capacity and financial backing to develop innovative solutions to enable Nova Scotians to access affordable housing. We look forward to receiving the report of the Affordable Housing Commission this spring and acting on its recommendations.

Nova Scotia entered the pandemic with a very strong fiscal, demographic, and economic position. My government intends to continue on a path of fiscal discipline, respecting the hard work of every Nova Scotian and every dollar we spend.

RESPECT AND RENEWAL: A HEALTHY POPULATION AND SYSTEM

Good public health is good for consumer confidence, good for business, good for people, and good for our economy. Nova Scotians have shown the world what a community can do when it works together for a common goal.

Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 reduced job fairs and on-site visits to Nova Scotia communities by prospective international medical professionals. As restrictions ease and vaccinations increase my government will remain focused on the recruitment of healthcare providers from family doctors to specialists.

My government recognizes the impact of the pandemic on our health — not just protecting ourselves from the virus — but how the uncertainty and mitigation measures, such as lockdowns and physical distancing, have affected the mental health of our population.

Recognizing that mental health issues were on the rise even before COVID-19, and have been exacerbated since — in fact, some are characterizing mental health as the echo pandemic — we created an Office of Mental Health and Addictions. This standalone office, which reports to the Minister of Health and Wellness, is focused on a proactive approach to dealing with mental health and addiction issues.

A tragic outcome of the pandemic — one that we are seeing repeated throughout the country — was the way in which our seniors were

living in long-term care facilities. My government is committed to working to improve the standard of care for seniors in long-term care by making investments in retrofits and building more modern facilities.

As much as the pandemic has revealed the prevalence of these issues, it has also helped to reimagine healthcare delivery in our province. Virtual health and telehealth visits with the province's primary care physicians have exploded.

This is a positive outcome — a legacy — of this pandemic. My government is committed to ramping up our digital health technology to improve healthcare delivery and to shifting health spending to place more emphasis on public health with an emphasis on early interventions.

In addition to mental health and digital health, my government's plan for healthcare is one that considers an active and accessible province. Here, again, our three pillars — the economy, environment, and equity — intersect.

We renamed our Transportation Department to include "active transit." Not only are bike lanes, walking trails, and public transit good for the environment, but they are good for our health — and by extension good for the economy as healthier people are less likely to access our healthcare system.

RESPECT: A CONNECTED, AFFORDABLE, AND INCLUSIVE NOVA SCOTIA

Canadians are realizing that Canada needs more Nova Scotia. And the pandemic may have shown just how much.

After decades of outmigration and population decline, beginning in 2015 the tide turned, and Nova Scotia is now experiencing strong population growth because young Nova Scotians are staying here, international students are studying and staying here, and immigrants are being attracted here.

Après des décennies d'exode et de diminution de la population, en 2015 un revirement s'est produit, et la Nouvelle-Écosse connaît maintenant une croissance démographique robuste parce que les jeunes néo-écossais restent ici, les étudiants étrangers viennent étudier et restent ici après leurs études, et les immigrants sont attirés par notre province.

The common denominator is that people are choosing Nova Scotia as a place to live because they believe they will enhance their well-being by making that choice.

More than that, Nova Scotia has embarked on a major plan to get connected with high-speed internet, enabling people to move here and work remotely. Eighty per cent of Nova Scotia homes and businesses already have access to connections — and we are continuing to build on that.

Connected by a ribbon of fibre but also by community, Nova Scotians are known for their friendly and generous spirit. My government will build on that and is committed to creating a more fair and inclusive society. For too many Nova Scotians systemic racism is a lived reality. For many years, people have raised their voices to demand change.

My government is listening. We created a new office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, which will be built alongside community to augment important work, such as the Land Titles Initiative. We also appointed women of African descent to the most senior posts in the bureaucracy, including to head the Public Service Commission, where decisions are made about hiring and promoting our public servants.

RECOVERY: MEASURING SUCCESS AS WE CONSTANTLY STRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

When asked how Nova Scotia should measure success, 82 per cent of Nova Scotians preferred to measure it by improvement in our quality of life.

During the pandemic, success was measured by keeping people safe and healthy, not only by fiscal GDP measures: can we bring the same approach to other aspects of public policy? My government will undertake a recovery review in 2021 to ensure that existing programs of government meet the objective of improving the quality of life for Nova Scotians, including:

- Do programs measurably enhance the social well-being of Nova Scotians, including health, education, and protecting the most vulnerable?
- Do programs cause environmental harm, or do they regenerate the environment?

My government's recovery review will enable a new and improved approach that is inclusive and will challenge old ways of thinking, resulting in more sustainable and inclusive growth and higher life satisfaction.

COVID-19 has brought into sharp focus many of the conflicts and contradictions of the paths we were on globally, the fissures that were making the world less sustainable, less equal, and more fragile.

La COVID-19 a mis en évidence un grand nombre de conflits et de contradictions dans notre parcours à l'échelle mondiale, les fissures qui rendent le monde moins viable, moins équitable et plus fragile.

The parallel challenges for the age — the environment, the economy, and equity — are the foundations of my government's vision for the future. To meet these challenges, it will be essential to enlist all the capacity Nova Scotians can muster. The future will not take care of itself. So, all of us have an opportunity now to guide and create the future we want for Nova Scotia — one that is more sustainable, more equitable, and economically strong.

CLOSING

I now leave you to the business of the session, knowing that you will faithfully discharge your duties and responsibilities in these unprecedented times that call for unity and collaboration. Nova Scotians expect you to work together, as they have done, to keep our province safe and to work on their behalf to meet this crucial moment.

God Bless Nova Scotia, God Bless Canada, God Save the Queen.”

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

The Speaker took the Chair.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

T. Houston, Leader of the Opposition, introduced the new Member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, Dave Ritcey, who had been elected in a by-election.

G. Burrill, Leader of the New Democratic Party, introduced the new Member for Cape Breton Centre, Kendra Coombes, who had been elected in a by-election.

The Speaker let the Members take their seats.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Hon. R. Delorey, 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

The 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 Speech, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy which the Clerk would now read.

Hon. I. Rankin, Premier, moved that the Speech be taken as read. The motion carried.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

R. DiCostanzo, Clayton Park West, then moved the Address in Reply to the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and moved the same do pass. The aforesaid motion was seconded by Hon. L. Glavine, Kings West. T. Houston, Leader of the Opposition, adjourned the debate.

GOVERNMENT NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. G. MacLellan, Government House leader, moved the following notice of motion:

Res. No. 1 - Rules and Forms of Procedure: Winter-Spring 2021
Sitting - Suspend or Amend

Hon. G. MacLellan asked for waiver of notice and passage without debate. The question being put by the Speaker, the motion did not carry and the notice was tabled.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. MacLellan, Government House Leader, then moved that the House rise and meet Thursday, March 11th at 1:00 P.M. The motion carried and the House adjourned.