



NOVA SCOTIA SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

HER HONOUR
THE HONOURABLE MAYANN E. FRANCIS, O.N.S.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



NOVA SCOTIA SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

HER HONOUR
THE HONOURABLE MAYANN E. FRANCIS, O.N.S.
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2007

FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SIXTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Throne Speech
for the
New Nova Scotia



Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, the people of Nova Scotia:

I welcome you to the second session of the 60th General Assembly.

When we met in this House in May, celebrations were announced for the 250th anniversary of the birth of representative government in Nova Scotia in 2008.

As I noted then, “may all Nova Scotians celebrate and embrace this anniversary. May we truly understand its significance and never take it for granted.”

Laying the Foundation for a Stronger Nova Scotia

It is so fitting, then, that our Select Committee on Participation in the Democratic Process will soon consult with voters, many of whom feel disengaged from our electoral process.

Our government looks forward to the committee’s recommendations.

While a disturbingly high number of Nova Scotians choose not to exercise their right to vote, every November the red poppy reminds us that our democratic rights have come with a high price.

To ensure accountable, responsible government, citizens must participate in our political system. But to truly engage Nova Scotians, it is the duty of our legislature to give them something in which to believe.

As we prepare to celebrate our democratic heritage, it is vital that all members in this historic chamber continue to work constructively within the minority government delivered by the people of this province, finding positive common ground and ideas to change our province for the better.



As part of our democratic system, we welcome both our newest MLA, representing the people of Cole Harbour–Eastern Passage, and our new Speaker. I know all members wish them well in their duties in this chamber.

We are so blessed in Nova Scotia that we sometimes take for granted the very real reasons we choose to live, raise families, and thrive here.

From my own Whitney Pier and the experiences and wisdom of the many immigrants who made a life in our community, to the rugged shores off Lockeport, a community built on the riches of our fishery, I have had the privilege of seeing this province in a new light in my first year as the Queen’s representative.

I appreciate, more than ever, our unrivalled natural beauty, our abundant resources, and the vibrant spirit and hard work of Nova Scotians.

And it is thanks to that combination that the economy of our province is healthier and stronger today than it has been for decades.

Our unemployment rate has become the lowest the province has experienced in a generation, with an unemployment rate in Halifax even lower than in Toronto.

Help wanted signs are everywhere.

And there’s more good news on the horizon.

Over the next five years, we are looking at 600 new high-paying jobs in aerospace, 1,100 in the financial services sector, and 2,500 in information technology.

EnCana will develop its \$700-million Deep Panuke, natural gas project, creating over 1,000 jobs and helping to keep our skilled petroleum workers at home.

Of course, ensuring that the full benefits of our offshore petroleum resources flow to the people of our province is an extraordinary victory for our economic well-being, now and for our future.

The 2005 Atlantic Accord is alive, well, and better than ever.

In fact, it is anticipated that Nova Scotians will gain more dollars over the original estimates of the 2005 Accord and also more than the 2007 federal budget offered us.

Resolving this dispute with the federal government on the Atlantic Accord confirms that Nova Scotians are the principal beneficiaries of their offshore resources.

Our Premier's negotiations also secured a federal promise to finally settle the 20-year-old issue of our Crown share of offshore resources. Our government is confident the Crown share will mean hundreds of millions more dollars for the people of this province.

The resolution of these important issues and our positive economic outlook, combined with our government's sound fiscal management, have put Nova Scotia firmly on the path to becoming a "have" province.

From one end of our province to the other, local entrepreneurs are using their ingenuity and determination to make a better future. In Yarmouth, for example, Tri-Star Industries opened doors in Panama through a \$2-million contract to provide this new market with emergency ambulances.

Our provincial business development agency's new five-year plan will build on the 18,600 new direct and spinoff jobs created over the last five years and continue to help transform our economy and help us get to *The New Nova Scotia*.

This growth has been cultivated by positive leadership.

Six back-to-back balanced budgets, with the seventh on its way, a plan that has put us in a position to start paying down the debt, and increasingly positive credit ratings from major bond-rating agencies are drawing the world's attention.

We are getting out of the way of business growth by cutting red tape and taxes.

Our government will continue to provide leadership in growing our economy.

While a strong dollar is great for consumers, it challenges our exporters, as do high energy prices, plummeting housing starts in the US, and changes in global market conditions. Just ask the Christmas tree growers, our people in the forest industry, or our tourism operators.

Our Premier has joined other provinces in urging the federal government to quickly set up a meeting of first ministers to discuss the impact of the high dollar on Canadian companies and workers.

In the meantime, our government will continue to help our fisherman and farmers and others adapt to these challenges and take advantage of emerging opportunities and new technology.

Our growing cultural sector not only represents economic success for our province, but also offers the world a picture of who we are. We recognize that enriching the opportunities for our musicians, our artists, our organizations, and our communities is vital to our growth.

To help develop and promote the talent of our people, we will double our spending on culture over the next three years.

An increase in our film tax credit will help us compete in the film production industry.

Our economy is doing well. We will continue our efforts to ensure that all parts of Nova Scotia enjoy the benefits of our economic growth.

A healthy economy is our province's foundation. Without it, we would be unable to reach our vision of *The New Nova Scotia*.

Vision of *The New Nova Scotia*

The New Nova Scotia is our destination for this province for the year 2020.

... It is a place that offers everyone a fair shot at life's success, while helping those who need a hand.

... It is a place with safe streets and safe communities.

... It is a place with world-class health care and education and a vibrant economy with a bright future.

... It is a place where protecting our environment and growing a green economy have a central place in economic planning and daily decision making.

... It is a place where people and governments understand that living within your means is crucial to sustained growth.

The New Nova Scotia is a place where people stay to build careers, raise families, and realize their dreams. It is a place where proud and determined people work hard to ensure that their province secures its rightful place in Confederation.

Our vision is supported by carefully developed economic and social plans elevating what truly is, as others constantly discover, one of the best places on earth to live.

Economic Plan

Our economic plan, as outlined in *Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity*, outlines a bold vision for making Nova Scotia one of the economic leaders of the 21st century.

This plan sets out a framework to achieve economic competitiveness, as well as defining specific actions that will produce results for years to come.

This plan calls for investment in and strategic access to our human, social, financial, natural, and built capital.

It calls for tax and regulatory regimes that encourage competitiveness, more efficient transportation, and better communication links and infrastructure.

It calls for investments in clean air, water, and natural spaces and a skilled work force to sustain vibrant communities.

Our economic plan will ensure that we have a foundation for positive growth throughout this century.

Social Plan

Sustainable economic progress can only occur if we are also making progress on the social issues facing Nova Scotians.

Our social plan will outline how we will reduce the barriers that prevent Nova Scotians from enjoying and participating to the best of their abilities in the economic life of our province.

Our government will shortly unveil the *Social Prosperity Framework*, expanding on how existing programs and planned initiatives will be co-ordinated to support social prosperity now and in future.

The *Strategy for Children and Youth* and the *Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy* will flow from that framework, as we begin to put this plan into action.

Public consultations are taking place on a *Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Strategies relating to labour force development, caregivers, improvements to health-care delivery, and educational achievement will follow.

The focus of our plan is to offer essential social support for our citizens and our communities to enable them to become full participants in *The New Nova Scotia*.

Our economic and social plans are inextricably linked. One's success depends on the other.

Five Immediate Priorities

Five immediate priorities, flowing from our economic and social plans, will move us along the path towards *The New Nova Scotia*.

Over the next 12 months, our government will focus on

- Educating to Compete
- Protecting our Environment
- Better Roads and Infrastructure
- Safer, Healthy Communities
- Shorter Wait Times

Educating to Compete

The skills shortage we once said was on the horizon is here, now. Nova Scotia must compete with other strong economies, with Alberta leading the pack, for every skilled trade and profession.

It is telling when, in Nova Scotia today, it is easier to get an appointment with a dentist or optometrist than it is to find a skilled, experienced—and available—carpenter.

Because our skills shortage is driven by long-term trends in trade, technology and demographics, a solution to the skills shortage will not be found overnight.

We must act now to address these challenges and prepare Nova Scotians for the jobs of the future—a future that can be realized to its fullest potential only with a skilled and educated workforce, ready to compete in the economy of the 21st century.

Educating to compete means raising the bar for our children's education.

In just three years, we have invested almost \$50 million to achieve the goals of the province's four-year plan for public education, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*. We will continue to fund the goals outlined in *Learning for Life II* and work with our education partners to develop the next steps.

The Premier's Forum on Student Achievement generated ideas that will help us reach new global standards in classrooms across our province, forming the basis for *Learning for Life III: Learning to Excel*.

We are making a difference for all students by

- expanding our *Options and Opportunities* program—a program that represents the most significant change in our high schools in three decades
- extending the international baccalaureate program
- reviewing Mi'kmaq services to guide future programming
- ensuring that our Acadian and francophone students receive high-quality education in their language
- completing the final few recommendations from the *Black Learners Advisory Committee Report* with a commitment to review the programs to ensure that they are working
- continuing to support students with special needs and making changes that we and our partners feel are necessary to offer more support

We will move forward by offering

- an increased number of mathematics and literacy mentors
- continued implementation of provincial student assessments in math and literacy
- increased access to online public school programming
- new or upgraded schools to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students

We know that the cost of post-secondary education often dictates the career choices our young people make, so we have lightened the student debt load for our future leaders.

- We will continue to expand our community college system and keep tuition at affordable levels.
- Tuition fees at Nova Scotia universities were frozen in 2007–2008 for all students and reduced by \$500 for Nova Scotia students studying at Nova Scotia universities. The tuition freeze and further reductions will be continued in a new memorandum of understanding on funding and tuition fees with Nova Scotia universities.
- Changes to the Student Debt Reduction Program and to qualifications for government student loans are easing the burden.
- A new agreement on funding will ensure the stability and competitiveness of our university system over the next several years.
- To make post-secondary education more affordable, our government will change the way the student loan program works. By direct lending to students, government can offer a saving of 2 per cent in interest compared to what is now charged by banks.

While we have made progress, more will be done to bring Nova Scotia tuition in line with the national average by 2010–11.

Recent losses in our manufacturing sector have seen good-paying jobs disappear. Our government is helping these distressed workers through a new and often difficult chapter in their lives.

- A fully integrated labour market development model will better align training and skills development with current and future economic needs and provide broader funding support.
- Initiatives such as raising the number of certified tradespeople through apprenticeship training will help meet growing industry demands and ensure that Nova Scotians have access to high-quality programs and trade services.

Educating to compete means capitalizing on the skills and ideas of newcomers to our province and providing opportunities to lure expatriates back home.

- Recruitment, retention, repatriation, and retraining strategies will encourage more people to come and work in the province.
- To attract nationally and internationally trained professionals and skilled workers to Nova Scotia, we must make it easier and faster for people to become licensed in their fields of expertise. Legislation will be brought forward this spring to streamline the credential recognition process.
- A new immigration agreement with Ottawa removes restrictions on the number of people the province is able to nominate for residency, making it easier and faster for temporary foreign workers to enter Nova Scotia.
- A new Ministry for Labour and Workforce Development in the new fiscal year will focus our province on these challenges and opportunities so that we can reach our goals for 2020.

Protecting Our Environment

There is no concern with such far-reaching consequences for our planet than climate change. The world is slowly waking up to this threat.

Our province has become a leader in tackling this issue head on. Nova Scotians have given us the momentum through their desire to protect our environment.

Some believe that protecting the environment is bad for business, but we know that the health of our environment, the economy, and our people are interconnected. We legislated this crucial connection in our *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

Real progress will be made on our 2008 environmental goals as we move aggressively to meet our 2020 provincial targets. The province's Round Table on Environmental Sustainability will hold our government accountable to those aggressive targets.

In our commitment to protect 12 per cent of Nova Scotia lands by 2015, consensus was reached between stakeholders like the Colin Stewart Forest Forum members, along with industry players and government, to designate a large new wilderness area at Ship Harbour–Long Lake in Halifax County.

This follows the designation of the Blue Mountain–Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, situated on Halifax’s doorstep.

Nova Scotia has one of Canada’s best conditions for wind power generation and some of the highest tides in the world. These present opportunities for Nova Scotia to become a leading producer of renewable energy. The Bay of Fundy is a prime example. We will champion efforts to make tidal power a key and growing component of our energy mix.

So that local communities can meet higher environmental standards, we will

- help municipalities ensure that municipal drinking water supplies meet provincial standards
- help the home building sector put in place a rating system for energy efficiency in new homes
- develop action plans setting waste water treatment standards and waste diversion targets
- release a discussion paper to lead to a water resource management strategy by 2010

Our coastal areas are essential to our economy, our environment, and our heritage. Our government will ensure that a coastal management framework is in place within two years.

While the benefits are obvious, reaching our environmental goals costs money. The \$42.5-million Canada ecoTrust for Clean Air and Climate Change, which includes the Nova Scotia Municipal Climate and Clean Air Fund for local governments, will help.

Our actions to reduce the impact of our carbon footprint are working. In response to our renewable energy standards, Nova Scotia Power is increasing the availability of renewable wind energy six-fold over the coming years. This will result in enough clean, renewable energy to power 100,000 homes and contribute to Nova Scotia's growing reputation for leadership in climate change.

In the next fiscal year, a dedicated Ministry for the Environment will be created.

While the task ahead is monumental, greater still is the reason for reducing the effects of our carbon footprint on this planet. It is, and always will be, our priority to adhere to our commitments, meet the targets we've set, and help change the habits of Nova Scotians so that all will act as stewards of our environment.

Better Roads and Infrastructure

In order to compete in the global economy, in order to better connect Nova Scotians to each other, in order to provide the services that a modern economy and all Nova Scotians demand, our province requires better roads, libraries, courthouses, schools, hospitals, and Internet connections.

Our problem is that Nova Scotia has an \$8-billion infrastructure deficit standing in the way of our ability to provide the connections and public buildings that Nova Scotians need.

Despite our financial constraints, progress has been made.

Aggressive efforts to maintain and enhance our vital road links mean that our government has met the first half of its four-year goal to pave 2000 kilometres of roads in the province. Every cent from the gas tax, plus tens of millions dollars more, has been invested in our highway system.

The most significant infrastructure program is bringing high-speed Internet to every corner of our province by 2009. Nova Scotia will be the only jurisdiction in North America to put broadband within reach of all its citizens.

This is one of the building blocks of *The New Nova Scotia* and will invigorate lives, both young and old.

The expansion of broadband to areas beyond the successful Cumberland County pilot project is under way. Rural businesses will be able to participate in the online economy for the first time. Lack of high speed will no longer be a barrier to rural investment. No longer will IT jobs be urban jobs only.

Becoming Canada's Atlantic Gateway is a significant achievement of our government.

The agreement with the federal government recognizes that the distance from many Asian ports through Suez to Halifax is shorter than the distance from those ports to Vancouver. It recognizes that Halifax is a vital link to markets as far as Chicago and beyond.

While the Port of Halifax is central to the gateway, there are opportunities for projects in other ports such as Sydney, the Strait of Canso, and Yarmouth.

Gateway funding will be used to market our ports to shippers around the globe, build a Centre of Excellence for Transportation Logistics, and address the issues of truck congestion in downtown Halifax. We will begin the design work on the Burnside-Sackville Expressway in 2008. Construction will begin in 2008 connecting Highway 101 with Trunk 1 in Middle Sackville.

The time to plan for a growing Port of Halifax is now.

Creating a brighter future for the entire province requires lifting the potential of our capital city, Halifax, to a higher level. The heritage of our capital is a treasure but often is used to block or slow development.

We enjoy our proud heritage because early entrepreneurs like Alexander Keith and Samuel Cunard took advantage of business and commercial opportunities to sow the seeds of prosperity that we enjoy today. Today's entrepreneurs should be encouraged, not discouraged, from contributing to the growth of Halifax.

There is keen interest from financial service companies to locate here. More Class A office space is needed to make room for new growth. Shortening the appeal process for new development will help ensure that we do not lose those opportunities to another city.

We will combine the old with the new to grow this beautiful region. A perfect example is the revitalization and greening of an old city tradition—the Halifax Farmers' Market. A \$2.25-million investment made by this province will help bring our farmers' goods to a bustling market. This new eco-friendly seaport market will put money into the hands of Nova Scotian farmers and entrepreneurs while building on a historic tradition.

But what we have been doing so far to prepare for the future is not enough.

To grow our economy for the 21st century, we will improve our road system through a program to twin and modernize highways from Yarmouth to Sydney by 2020.

Our need to grow our province for the new century also means new courthouses and libraries, arenas and recreation centres, hospitals and schools. What we do not need, and will not do, is increase our debt burden to build this vital infrastructure.

Many governments are dealing with their infrastructure deficits through partnerships between the public and private sectors. Bridges and roads in British Columbia ... hospitals in Ontario ... courthouses in Alberta ... highways and ferries in New Brunswick ... ring roads in Australia ... public schools in England ... have been delivered on time

and on budget. Examples in Nova Scotia include the Cobequid Pass and the East Coast Forensic Hospital.

Our government is building its expertise to develop and manage strategic infrastructure partnerships. Our first step was to create the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Our second step will be to make it mandatory that significant government infrastructure investments will pass through a filter forcing consideration of them as a transparent, accountable Strategic Infrastructure Partnership.

Nova Scotia has learned from the mistakes of the P3 schools of the 1990s. Instead, our government will build responsibly, with a transparent financial process, the infrastructure needed for communities and people.

Safer, Healthy Communities

While ensuring that our communities grow economically, there is no greater need than to ensure that our communities are safe.

Building safer, healthy communities is a priority for Nova Scotians and for our government.

News in the past months of random acts of violence startled all who value the otherwise safe communities in which they live and raised fears about the effects such violence could have on our streets, our way of life, and how others view us.

We have acted by

- Adding 250 police officers to our streets: New officers will be added to all 55 municipalities by spring of 2008, with more headed to the larger centres.

- Forcing drug dealers out of our neighbourhoods through the new Public Safety Investigative Unit: Evictions at 20 sites of illegal drug activity in response to community complaints mean citizens can again live in peace and safety.
- Fighting for tougher changes to the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act*: A new federal bill would bring about positive changes with tougher bail for gun crimes and mandatory jail time for serious gun crimes.

And there's much more to come.

- Through our Task Force on Safer Streets and Communities, we listened to issues of concern to Nova Scotians. Our government will soon release a new crime prevention and reduction strategy reflecting the many ideas we heard.
- Our government is incorporating all of Justice Nunn's recommendations, including developing a provincial youth strategy and creating a new youth attendance centre and youth bail supervision programs in Halifax.
- New legislation this fall will require the reporting of gunshot and stabbing wounds to police.
- Legislation will make our streets safe by dealing with crosswalk safety, soliciting on public roadways, and street racing.
- With the aid of new alcohol detection equipment, a dedicated, joint RCMP-municipal police unit will target impaired driving through a pilot project in southwest Nova Scotia.
- A new mental health court will be introduced.
- Youth Crown attorneys and more youth mental health professionals will be hired.
- Proceeds of crime legislation will be introduced to reduce incentives for criminal acts.

In addressing the roots of crime, we must continue to battle against the growing gap between rich and poor.

Of course, the best weapon in the war against poverty is a job. Our healthy economy is helping to make a difference.

Between 1996 and 2005, the number of Nova Scotia families living in poverty has fallen by 35 per cent. With 65,000 more Nova Scotians working today than in 1996, more of our neighbours are earning a living, contributing to our economy, and growing stronger as individuals.

For many families, no matter how hard they work, it is difficult to get ahead because providing the essentials for their children consumes so much of their pay cheque. That leaves too many mothers and fathers in our province forced to make the agonizing decision to go without family prescription medicine insurance, when their employer doesn't offer it and private coverage is too expensive.

That is about to change.

On March 1, 2008, all Nova Scotians will have access to a new *Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare* program. There will be no cost to sign up. This will offer the 180,000 Nova Scotians without coverage of any kind the support they need.

Even those with insurance know there are some life-saving prescription drugs that are so expensive that private insurers will not cover them.

There is more we can do. We are

- continuing to add affordable, accessible, quality child care to reach the target of 1,500 new placements across Nova Scotia so that a parent can secure a job knowing their child is cared for
- building on initiatives such as allowing people on income assistance to keep a portion of income tax refunds
- pushing forward the Affordable Housing Initiative to make more spaces available for those in need of a place to call home

Wayne MacNaughton, who lived in shelters for six years, said, “people living in poverty know what the solutions are.” Our government is listening to those suffering in our communities and will find new ways to raise their standard of living, and their sense of independence, self-worth, and hope.

Shorter Wait Times

Nova Scotians are justifiably proud of their health-care system. That we dedicate so much of our hard-earned tax dollars to ensure that our fellow Nova Scotians have universal access to health care is indicative of the caring and compassionate nature of our people.

Too often, however, Nova Scotians who need medical care are waiting too long to get the attention they need. Waiting for months or sometimes years for a specialist appointment or a necessary procedure robs the individual of their quality of life. These delays can prolong a person’s pain, interrupt careers, and disrupt family life.

Working harder to shorten wait times is crucial.

Immediate relief is being prescribed through the following:

- We are working to keep our ERs open. In Digby, two nurse practitioners along with a new doctor, and with the assistance of another physician, will set up a walk-in clinic at the hospital.
- The ground has been broken on the site of a new \$17-million ER at the QEII Health Sciences Centre, so that we will have access to the best trauma centre in the east.
- Construction is under way on a new hospital in Truro, along with an expansion at the Valley Regional Hospital.
- Six newly installed MRIs will cut wait times in half and lessen the anxiety for 5,000 people in need of diagnosis.
- A \$48-million agreement with Ottawa will help put in place a wait-time guarantee for cancer radiation therapy.

- New, full-field, digital screening equipment units will now allow mammograms for twice as many patients on a given day. Our Cobequid Community Health Centre is home to a new digital unit. Yarmouth is home to the first fixed diagnostic mammogram unit. A new mobile digital unit—a first in North America—is in place in Cape Breton.
- New chronic pain clinics just opened their doors to new patients to ease the distress of those who endure our longest wait times.

On the issue of retaining and recruiting health professionals, the good news is:

- More registered nurses are coming to our province to work.
- Nova Scotia continues to enjoy the largest number of general practitioners per capita of any province.
- Our nursing strategy is helping to retain 80 per cent of our nursing graduates in Nova Scotia. Investments such as the \$2.2-million federal-provincial pilot project in Sydney will mean more nurses can upgrade their skills closer to home.
- We are continuing to add to our collaborative teams of health-care providers.

Having enough hospital beds for those in need means opening vital long-term care beds throughout our communities. Within weeks, 72 new beds will open up for seniors in the capital region. Like the new beds scheduled for 2010, they will reflect home-like environments for smaller numbers of residents, modernizing the way we treat our most valued members of society.

Our continuing care strategy, which includes a 50 per cent increase in home care and over 800 new long-term care beds by 2010, will continue to ease waiting times for a hospital bed. We will also focus on efforts to ensure that more seniors are able to stay in their own homes longer. Our new Department of Seniors will ensure that seniors remain a vital part of our success.

To look at the issue of shorter wait times with a long-term view, we must continue to promote a healthier population.

By focusing on health promotion and disease prevention, we can create a generation less dependent on the health system, reducing wait times and creating a healthier society.

- We are teaching our children lessons to truly last a lifetime in our schools to make in-roads in the battle against childhood obesity.
- Smoking, alcohol, and gaming addiction prevention efforts are making a difference, with new, targeted programs and initiatives on the way.
- A \$50-million, 10-year commitment to support the construction of sport and recreation facilities will help make our next generation a healthy one.
- The promised 500 kilometres of newly built trails for Nova Scotians are in place. We will build another 500 kilometres to become the province in Canada most connected by trails.

Whether it be to prepare a soccer player for the 2011 Canada Games in Halifax or simply to know that your child is a strong enough swimmer to stay safe in our lakes and ocean, the ultimate goal is a fitter, healthier society.

To ensure that the differences we are making and will make in the future on wait times are protected, along with the vital day-to-day health services Nova Scotians rely on, our government will introduce legislation that will help avoid unnecessary interruptions in service as a result of a strike, or the threat of a strike, as is more often the case.

The legislation will protect the collective bargaining rights of our valued and hard-working health professionals.

Consistent with the *Canada Health Act*, our government will establish protection, standards, and control that will allow publicly funded, private facilities to play a clearly defined role in providing access to certain and prescribed health services.

This initiative will help us shorten wait times, while adhering to our firm pledge to honour the *Canada Health Act* and a universal, publicly funded health-care system.

Conclusion

The New Nova Scotia will lay the foundation of the new century. We have social and economic plans that describe our policies from now to 2020. Our government will focus its energies on our five immediate priorities for the next 12 months.

As I said at the outset, we are blessed to live in this province. As one passenger on one of the dozens of planes that took refuge at our airport on September 11, 2001, said of Nova Scotia, “I was flying from Frankfurt to New York for a vacation, but landed in heaven.”

Our government and our people are building on our success and reaching for the stars ... literally.

Members of the International Phoenix Science Team at Dalhousie lent their expertise to the construction and operation of the Canadian-led laser radar—LIDAR. When the Phoenix Mars lander touches down near the northern polar cap of Mars in May 2008, our explorers of today will be part of this historic moment.

Our military men and women stand in harm’s way in service to our country here, in Afghanistan, and around the globe. Shaun Fevens of Yarmouth is an outstanding representative of such bravery.

Our Nova Scotia farmers put food on our tables every day—food that hasn’t cost our environment because of the miles it has travelled to reach our plates.

The tremendous talent and depth of ability within this province was recognized through Joyce Barkhouse, Peter Clarke, Tom Forrestall, Flora MacDonald, and William Stanish—this year’s recipients of the Order of Nova Scotia.

Groups like the volunteer fire department in Westchester prepared food for area residents left in the dark when Noel blew through the province. And our power crews worked through the nastiest elements of that storm to restore light to thousands of residents.

Amherst resident Mike Fullerton ran into a burning building to save a neighbour and the family’s pets with no thought to his own safety.

High school students David Shepherd and Travis Price stood up to bullies and said, “enough” on behalf of a fellow student and, with the help of hundreds of fellow students, sent a creative and peaceful message to bullies everywhere.

Jackie Barrett, the “Hercules of Halifax,” brought home four gold medals at the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer games.

This summer, Joe DiPenta carried, with great pride through his home community, the famous Stanley Cup. Cole Harbour native Sidney Crosby won the NHL scoring championship, the Hart Memorial Trophy for most valuable player, and the Lester B. Pearson Award. Al MacInnis, the Pride of Port Hood, was honoured for his hockey excellence when he became the first Nova Scotian inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

This is such a small sample of the many stories of heroics, of personal conviction, and of purpose in Nova Scotians, both young and young at heart. Our government, along with all those who wish for a better future, will leave the beaten track when necessary to find solutions and make new in-roads on the path to *The New Nova Scotia*.

It is what Nova Scotians have always done to succeed.

It is what Nova Scotians will continue to do.

Thank you. Merci. Tapada Leibh.

God bless Nova Scotia.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.



NOVA SCOTIA



NOVA SCOTIA

Come to life

novascotialife.com