



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

# SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Delivered at the Opening of  
The Third Session of the Forty-Eighth  
General Assembly of the Province of  
Newfoundland and Labrador

by His Honour

The Honourable Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA  
Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

March 13, 2018



***Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:***

I am very pleased to open the third session of the 48th General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our Government's priority is to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador remains an ideal place to live and raise a family; a place that has the conditions necessary for economic growth and job creation; and a place where people are supported by responsive, innovative and efficient programs and services. The Way Forward is our vision for sustainability and growth; a roadmap guiding our future to a province that is diversified, prosperous and with a high standard of living.

Our Government's plan is focused on the future and on making the choices now that are necessary for the betterment of this province for our children and grandchildren.

We have been steadfast in our commitment and today we reflect on the progress that has been made over the past two years and to chart the course for the year to come. An ambitious plan will encounter challenges, and such challenges are amplified when the circumstances are difficult. We recognize these challenges as opportunities to do better. Our Government will bring the perseverance and commitment that is so characteristic of our province to bear as we tackle our immense fiscal difficulties.

Our answer to these fiscal challenges continues to be balanced. We strike a balance with strong fiscal management while supporting sustainability and growth through the responsive, innovative and efficient delivery of programs and services, advancement of provincial infrastructure and focus on creating new jobs.

Our Government is committed to creating long-term conditions for growth in the province. The path we set out in The Way Forward will encourage and elevate the talents of our people, ensure responsible development of our abundant natural resources and support innovative industries to promote economic growth and build for our future.

Our plan has been strengthened through ongoing engagement with the people of this province. We have listened attentively and learned much. We have forged new relationships and we are working to reconcile with others.

## **INDIGENOUS GROUPS**

Reconciliation with Indigenous people of this province is of fundamental importance to our Government.

To that end, our Government convened the first provincial Indigenous Roundtable last year, which included all Indigenous governments and organizations in the province, including Indigenous women's organizations and Friendship Centres. Our Government is committed to holding the second Indigenous Roundtable this year.

As we reconcile with Indigenous people, we must learn from and atone for the mistakes of the past, so that all present and future generations in our great province can grow in the spirit of reconciliation.

Therefore, we will continue to strive to have the remains of Beothuks Demasduit and Nonosabasut returned to the province from Scotland.

As well, our Government will undertake its own apology to residential school survivors, in consultation with the survivors of the former residential school system and the leaders of Indigenous governments and organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our Government remains committed to implementing the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in collaboration with Indigenous governments and organizations and the Federal Government.

There must not only be atonement, but there must be action to achieve lasting reconciliation.

## **ADVANCING THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

Raising standards and expectations for how our society treats women is an important focus for our Government. Violence against women and girls is one of the most serious issues facing society today. Unfortunately, many women continue to experience violence. Fifty per cent of women over the age of 15 have experienced or will experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. The likelihood of experiencing violence is tripled for Indigenous women. Violence, in any form, is unacceptable.

Tragically, the victimization of Indigenous women and girls remains a national scourge. Our Government issued an Order in Council to fully establish the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls in this province. We were encouraged that the National Inquiry held sessions in Labrador, and we will continue to fully cooperate with the National Inquiry to finally halt the violence against Indigenous women and girls in this country.

Our Government will continue to work in collaboration with community stakeholders to find long-term solutions to eradicate violence. To complement the work of the Minister's Committee on Violence against Women and Girls, a committee of ministers representing multiple departments has been tasked to address issues of violence in our province. Ending violence is not the work of any one committee, community group or government department; we recognize that it requires a collective response. While government is taking a strong stand against violence and harassment, the prevention of violence and harassment in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities is everyone's responsibility.

Victims of violence must be well informed about their legal rights. In collaboration with the Public Legal Information Association and the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, our Government is developing a program to offer legal support to victims of sexual violence. Trained staff will assess and work with an individual's particular needs and experiences, provide general legal information, supportive referrals and trauma-informed responses to help people who have experienced sexual violence.

Our Government will introduce amendments to the *Family Violence Protection Act* to better support adult victims of family violence and their children as Bill 1 for this new session. These amendments will expand the current definition of family violence to clearly include acts of psychological, emotional or financial abuse. These changes will send a strong message that all forms of violence are unacceptable, while supporting victims who are experiencing family violence to obtain an Emergency Protection Order to help protect them and their children.

Our Government will strengthen the capacity of departments and agencies to understand and apply gender-based analysis to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets in order to ensure equitable outcomes for women in the province.

As part of Government's commitment to provide safe learning and work environments for everyone, but especially girls and women, legislation and policy including the Safe and Caring

Schools Policy, the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Municipalities Act* are currently being reviewed using gender-based analysis.

While some progress has been made to recruit and retain women in male-dominated occupations, there is considerable work still needed to reduce systemic barriers. Our commitment to advance the economic status of women and reduce the gender wage gap remains steadfast. To improve the economic status of women, we will continue to develop Women's Employment Plans for new infrastructure projects. Later this year, we will invite women leaders to a forum to help develop initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women in Newfoundland and Labrador in leadership roles. We will continue to require Gender Equity and Diversity Plans for all large resource development projects. These plans improve training and employment opportunities as well as business access for women across a wide range of occupations.

Our Government values diversity in the workplace and is an equal opportunity employer. We recently announced a harassment-free workplace policy to ensure all employees are safe at work. We will continue to work towards gender equality by evaluating our workforce practices to ensure that we advance the social, economic, legal and cultural status of women and girls.

## **FISCAL SITUATION**

As we strive to improve economic conditions in the province, we cannot ignore the province's fiscal situation. Quite simply, we must continue to do better with less and build on the work that we have undertaken over the past two years. The challenges are real and we must make every fiscal decision by balancing the provision of critical programs, services and infrastructure that our residents need and deserve with the requirement to eliminate our deficits, return to surplus and pay down our debt.

Our Government is committed to getting Newfoundland and Labrador on a solid financial footing. That involves new and innovative ways of doing things, smarter investments and stronger partnerships with community groups, industry and other stakeholders.

Improving our fiscal position is also dependent on establishing a stronger economic foundation. Through the continued implementation of The Way Forward and the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, our Government is committed to improve the conditions necessary for private sector investment, job creation and sustainable economic growth. While our economy remains moored to the development of renewable and non-renewable resources, the growth of our knowledge resources through innovation and technology presents one of our greatest opportunities.

We look forward to providing specific details on our fiscal and economic development approach when we release Budget 2018 on March 27.

## **INNOVATION AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

The economy of Newfoundland and Labrador is being driven by an innovative and export-focused business community. In a world where location is not a limitation for developing new business ideas, we are growing a diversified economy where entrepreneurship and innovation are flourishing.

In November 2017, our Government released a Business Innovation Agenda with a goal to expand the pool and capacity of innovation and growth-focused businesses in the province. Last month, we released The Way Forward on Technology - A Sector Work Plan that contains concrete actions to grow the technology industry and stimulate new private sector employment. Our Government is committed to providing 40 high-performing technology firms with the supports required to be more productive, competitive and successful in international markets over the next two

years. Furthermore, the creation of InnovateNL last year will promote more efficient delivery of provincial innovation programs and services.

We know that partnership with industry is key to our future success. Last year, our Government established a Regional Trade Network for Newfoundland and Labrador as a forum to share information, identify potential initiatives and improve collaboration among resource and support providers.

Economic growth and environmental sustainability must go hand-in-hand. Our Government is working to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador's carbon pricing system and the Federal Government's legislative changes to environmental assessment and other regulatory review processes support opportunities for economic growth in the province while ensuring growth occurs in a sustainable manner.

We are committed to undertaking a review of our environmental assessment process and legislation to provide certainty for industry and stakeholders about process requirements while ensuring protection of the environment.

Our commitment to environmental protection is based on a close relationship with our land and marine environments. This relationship is reflected in our music, theatre, art and films. Indeed, it is reflected throughout all aspects of our culture.

## **CULTURE**

Newfoundland and Labrador is home to some of the world's finest artists and performers. For centuries, we have made music, told stories and created images that have moved millions of people to laugh, cry and just want to be like us. It has been said that culture is our greatest export and our

people are its currency. Through this wealth of artistic expression, we have brought the world to our shores.

Our breathtaking scenery, pristine landscapes, talented artists and professional workforce have successfully attracted film and television productions to our province. This attraction is demonstrated in the success of the television series, 'Frontier'. Conceived, written and produced by Newfoundland and Labrador company, Take the Shot, 'Frontier' is now in its third season of production. Including the current season, this high-end production has generated more than \$73 million in total production activity and more than \$45 million in expenditures on goods and services.

CBC recently premiered 'Caught', which stars our own Allan Hawco and is based on the award-winning novel by one of the province's most beloved authors, Lisa Moore.

Other local companies such as Pope Productions, Morag Loves Company, Rink Rat and Spring Water Productions continue to create exciting film projects in this province.

These film and television productions are contributing to a stronger economic foundation for our province through the growth of the provincial film and television industry, which exceeded \$50 million in expenditures for the first time in 2017-18 and employs an estimated 640 full-time equivalent positions.

Our province's artists continue to receive well-deserved national and international recognition.

The Broadway smash hit, 'Come From Away', displayed to an international audience the unparalleled kindness and welcoming nature of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The show received seven Tony Award nominations, winning for Best Director of a Musical, and was also nominated for music's most prestigious honour, a Grammy Award.

In literature, local author Joel Thomas Hynes was the recipient of the 2017 Governor General's Literary Award for his novel, 'We'll All Be Burnt in Our Beds Some Night.'

Recognizing and supporting professional artists is a priority for our Government, as outlined in The Way Forward. In the past year, our Government brought forward a new *Status of the Artist Act* to recognize the important role artists play in contributing to the cultural, social and economic well-being of the province.

To further reinforce our support for arts and heritage, our Government will renew the cultural plan, Creative Newfoundland and Labrador, by January 2019. We will engage cultural stakeholders to discuss opportunities to collaborate, provide better services and support better outcomes for the cultural sector over the next five years.

## **LABRADOR**

Labrador is a distinct and integral part of our province's culture, history and identity. Labrador plays a crucial part in our vision of building on a strong economic foundation in the mining, agriculture, fishing, tourism, forestry and other renewable resource sectors.

Our Government will continue, through the Labrador Affairs Secretariat, to coordinate and implement a focused and innovative approach to improve service delivery in the region as well as to continue to prioritize strategic infrastructure needs.

Transportation remains a critical focus for the development of the region. Our Government is proud to proceed with the completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway, in partnership with the Federal Government. We also continue to support safe winter trail access to isolated Labrador communities through the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy.

## **TOURISM**

Labrador's stunning landscapes, vast wilderness and unique wildlife create an irresistible pull for adventure-seeking people from all over the world. The Big Land was the only Canadian destination to make National Geographic Magazine's 'Places to Visit in 2018' list, helping to spread the news that the Akami-Uapishk<sup>u</sup>-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve offers a tourism experience unlike any other in the world.

The undeniable attraction of the Labrador wild was recently showcased in the running of the Cain's Quest snowmobile endurance race. Characterized as the world's longest and most extreme snowmobile race, the 3,200 kilometre event attracted contestants from Ontario, Quebec, Finland, United States and, of course, Newfoundland and Labrador. Following a circuit from Labrador City to Nain and L'Anse au Clair and back to western Labrador, 41 teams fought for the glory of winning this exceptional event. Team Maine, an international duo from Wabush and Maine, repeated their 2016 victory while local team, the Innu Hawks, finished in second place. Since its inception in 2006, Cain's Quest has continued to grow in popularity in response to the beauty and hospitality of Labrador. We look forward to welcoming the next challengers for Cain's Quest in 2020.

With the world's attention on Newfoundland and Labrador, our tourism industry continues to be a driver for our economy. Last year more than 553,000 people travelled here and spent an estimated \$575 million. This was the highest non-resident spending we have ever seen.

Spurred on by such growth and potential, our Government is committed to reaching \$1.6 billion in resident and non-resident visitor spending by 2020.

## **IMMIGRATION**

Our province proudly offers a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for people from around the world who choose to live, study and work here.

Increasing the province's population through immigration not only benefits us economically, but also strengthens us socially and culturally. In *The Way Forward on Immigration*, our Government has committed to position our province to become a destination of choice for prospective immigrants looking for a new place in which to work, settle and raise a family. In collaboration with our Atlantic and federal colleagues, we launched the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, a new way to assist employers to recruit talent internationally. We also took steps to enhance the recognition of foreign qualifications of newcomers, and to aid international students and graduates in attaching to the local labour market. And there is still more to come. Our Government plans to launch new International Entrepreneur and International Graduate Entrepreneur categories under the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Nominee Program to further encourage economic growth in this province.

## **RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES**

Guided by *The Way Forward* and the Cabinet Committee on Jobs, our Government is working to revitalize and develop traditional and emerging industries – on land and on water – that will support and sustain a better future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The new Department of Fisheries and Land Resources brings together a singular focus on renewable resources, including agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry and lands. This consolidation has supported our Government's objective of a more efficient public sector and introduced new, streamlined client service that aligns program delivery with our Government's

priorities. Since the formation of the department, we have held summits on agriculture and aquaculture, initiated diversification efforts in the forest industry, established the Fisheries Advisory Council and launched the Atlantic Fisheries Fund in partnership with the Federal Government. These actions have set the groundwork to realize true and substantive progress in these industries.

Having a safe and secure food supply is paramount for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We face significant challenges in this province, especially when it comes to access to healthy fruits and vegetables. Our Government has committed to double provincial food self-sufficiency by 2022. To accomplish this, our Government decided to open more Crown land for agricultural purposes. In 2017, approximately 64,000 hectares of land was made available for agriculture. Further actions under the Agriculture Sector Work Plan will support the growth of agriculture and security of food supply in the province.

The fishery has been the backbone of Newfoundland and Labrador for centuries, and it remains a crucial industry for the province. We must continue to focus on strategic research and cutting-edge innovation in the fish and seafood industry, both in our wild fisheries and aquaculture sectors, to optimize the value of these resources for the benefit of our present and future generations.

To compete in the global marketplace, our Government will continue to support the fishery and aquaculture industries to achieve efficiencies and to produce highest quality, sustainably sourced products.

## **NONRENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES**

Over the past 30 years, our economy has benefitted from opportunities brought through the development of our petroleum resources. The Way Forward on Oil and Gas: Advance 2030 – A Plan for Growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industry sets an ambitious path forward, in partnership with industry, the Federal Government and other stakeholders, to nurture continued growth.

By 2030, our Government envisions more than 100 new exploration wells drilled. Multiple basins will produce over 650,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day. Our commitment is to enable industry to accelerate progress from prospectivity to production. By 2030, more than 7,500 people will be directly employed in this industry. We envision a world class energy cluster built upon the integration of a robust, innovative global supply and service sector, commercial gas production and new oil developments. Modern and fair benefits agreements will secure the province's ability to realize enduring economic and fiscal returns.

Newfoundland and Labrador was recently ranked as the most attractive Canadian province for oil and gas investment, and fourth globally by the Fraser Institute. We have a strong track record of success, with our most recent major production achievement occurring with the Hebron project. Our Government will build on these successes with continued support in oil and natural gas exploration and development. It is our commitment to position this province globally as a preferred location for oil and gas development.

Our province continues to receive wide-ranging benefits from our mining and mineral riches. Mining is a significant contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador economy, with a forecast in 2018 of 6,000 people employed in the industry and \$3.4 billion in mineral shipments. We will continue to grow opportunities, particularly in rural areas of our province, by advancing public geoscience, improving service delivery and promoting exploration. A new mineral strategy for the province will be developed, in consultation with mining industry stakeholders, to identify new opportunities and guide future growth.

## **MUSKRAT FALLS**

As we grow our economy, we are faced with some challenges. Our Government has worked hard with Nalcor to get the Muskrat Falls project on a better path. This hard work has paid off, as we witnessed the achievement of unprecedented progress, with several important milestones reached over the past year.

Construction of the project is now almost 90 per cent complete and most recently, the transmission link with Nova Scotia was finished, marking the first time in Newfoundland and Labrador's history that we are connected to the North American power grid. This allows us to import electricity at a cheaper rate than it costs to produce at the Holyrood Generation Station.

While the past cannot be changed, our Government took action to ensure that the Muskrat Falls Project is better managed. It is important that we examine why this project received sanction in the first place and ensure that the circumstances that led to that sanctioning never occur again. That is why our Government launched a public inquiry into the Muskrat Falls project led by Justice Richard D. LeBlanc.

That inquiry, which began its work in January, will examine whether all options were considered at the time of sanctioning the project. It will look at why there are significant differences between the actual cost of the project and the estimated cost at the time of sanction. The inquiry will also explore whether it was justified and reasonable for the project to be excluded from oversight by the Public Utilities Board.

We expect the final report from the inquiry by December 2019.

## **CONSUMERS**

Building on our commitment to consultation and responding to the concerns of our people, we are listening to consumers who are concerned about high automobile insurance rates. Our Government has launched a review to examine why these rates are so high with an aim of identifying ways to lower them. This comprehensive review, led by the Public Utilities Board, includes an independent closed-claim study as well as public consultations. We expect to receive the PUB's findings by June of this year and plan to introduce legislation this fall.

Later this year, the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes will be legalized. This is one of the most significant policy shifts in Canada since the province joined Confederation in 1949.

We will promote public health by keeping cannabis out of the hands of our youth and encourage low-risk use by those adults who choose to use it; promote safety on our roads, in public places and in our workplaces; reduce the burden on our criminal justice system and support new business opportunities.

Our Government has announced policies around the legal age to purchase, place of use and the retail model. We have guaranteed a safe and secure supply of cannabis through an agreement with one of the country's leading producers. This agreement will result in the construction of a multi-million dollar production facility in the province as well as the creation of 145 new, full-time jobs. Our Government remains open to entering into agreements with other licensed companies.

We will launch a comprehensive public education campaign to ensure that residents, and particularly parents, youth, employers and employees, understand the health and safety risks associated with cannabis use.

While much work has been done, we still have to make important decisions on this issue and our Government will introduce legislation in this session of the House of Assembly to address matters related to public safety and health.

## **MUNICIPALITIES**

Municipalities in our province play an important role, not only in town planning activities, but also in economic planning and development. Our approach to engagement has been innovative and collaborative.

Our Government has listened to municipalities, and heard about the need to improve the legislative framework for local governments in Newfoundland and Labrador to enable them to improve their decision-making and address important issues such as conflict of interest. A preliminary round of consultations has concluded and targeted consultations will soon begin. We expect recommendations for improvement to be announced later this year.

The second annual Premier's Forum on Local Governance was held on November 1, 2017. Through forums like this, our Government receives significant insight into what municipalities need and they allow us to better collaborate with communities to reach our shared goals. Feedback allows us to adjust our programs to support community needs. Last year, we focused on building a more sustainable infrastructure program that supports sharing of services and prioritized projects that provide valuable water, wastewater and disaster mitigation infrastructure.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

As we look at the broader infrastructure requirements of our province, our Government is taking a new and innovative approach to the way we build critical infrastructure that serves the needs of residents, creates jobs and generates economic activity.

Infrastructure is a long-term investment that requires a long-term outlook. Planning one year at a time is not sufficient. This is why our Government has taken a five-year approach to infrastructure planning.

Last March, we released *The Way Forward: A Multi-Year Plan for Infrastructure Investments* that outlines infrastructure projects across all sectors of government, such as education, health, justice and transportation. Similarly, we introduced five-year plans for the development and maintenance of road and marine infrastructure.

Long-term planning provides certainty and predictability for the construction industry. Enabling contractors to see projects that are on the horizon allows them to make investments in their own companies, plan their expenditures and business opportunities and position themselves to be competitive in public infrastructure procurement.

With almost 10,000 kilometres of road and more than 1,300 bridges and large culverts, it is simply not possible to enhance our entire highway infrastructure in a single construction season. Developing a continuous five-year roads plan allows residents and motorists to know when highways important to them will receive upgrades. In 2017, more than 508 lane kilometres of highway were paved, more than 365 culverts replaced and 18 bridges repaired. Our Government will continue to issue all tenders for road construction projects well in advance of the road construction season. This ensures contractors are more prepared to start work and take advantage of Newfoundland and Labrador's short construction season.

Our province's physical environment presents unique challenges for transportation infrastructure. Deteriorating asphalt on our roads is a hazard to travelers and costly to replace. Our Government is working with industry to test different asphalt mixes to determine the best types of asphalt for our traffic volumes and environment. In 2017, we paved five sections on the Trans-Canada Highway with different types of asphalt. Beginning this spring, we will analyze the wear of this pavement annually and use this information to improve roads for the future.

Our Government is taking an innovative approach to infrastructure procurement by partnering with the business community to deliver long-term care facilities in Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor and Corner Brook, as well as the new hospital for western Newfoundland. Taking this different approach to infrastructure development is saving in excess of \$100 million across these projects. Our Government remains committed to ensuring that critical health care services are provided by public sector employees.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

Everyone has the right to access services and participate fully in their communities without restrictions. Persons with disabilities should not have to experience barriers or overcome obstacles in their daily activities.

We are eliminating barriers in numerous areas. New regulations under the *Buildings Accessibility Act* come into effect in April. Changes to the Designated Mobility Impaired Parking Regulations took effect in January, which include significantly increased fines for those who illegally park in blue zones. Changes to the *Provincial Wildlife Act* and Regulations and the Hunters and Anglers with a Disability Program have enhanced equitable access to hunting and big game by increasing the allowable distance between a disabled licence-holder and their designated hunter, and changing policies to provide priority access to big game for people with disabilities.

We are working to develop a new Individualized Supports Funding model. This will greatly enhance how individuals access government services by introducing a single point of entry with flexible services that respond to individual needs.

Our Government will continue with a collaborative approach as it moves forward with other initiatives, such as the review of the *Buildings Accessibility Act*. In 2018, we will bring diverse knowledge and experience together in an Inclusion Symposium to inform new legislation focused on equitable access by people with disabilities.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

Supporting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to lead healthier lives will help our province achieve better health outcomes. Recognizing that our health and well-being are shaped by social determinants of health, our government will continue to use a Health in All Policies approach in decision-making.

Our Government recognizes the importance of promoting participation in sport and recreation, and the importance of healthy active living. In *The Way Forward*, we committed to supporting all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to live healthier lives. By 2025, the goal is to increase our physical activity rates by seven per cent and to reduce our obesity rate by five per cent.

Better health outcomes lessen stress on our health care system. Healthier Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will pay dividends for our province as optimal health enhances quality of life, improves productivity and increases capacity for learning.

Our Government will release a Healthy Active Living Action Plan in 2018. Through this initiative, we will increase awareness and public education, introduce new policies and practices, build on existing programs and create environments to support healthy active living.

Our Government recognizes that strong public health legislation is vital to promote, support and protect the health of our population. Our province's public health legislation is more than 50 years old and has not kept pace with the current and changing needs of our population. During this sitting of the House of Assembly, our Government will introduce a new *Public Health Act* to drive improvements in population health.

Given that one in five of us will experience a mental health issue, it is of the utmost importance to continue the public conversation about mental health. Together with community partners, health professionals and people with lived experience we are working to address the significant challenges associated with mental illness and addictions.

Recognizing the serious impact of such conditions in the workplace, our Government has directed WorkplaceNL to modernize its approach to providing coverage for work-related mental stress, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In February, WorkplaceNL announced a review of PTSD coverage in the workers' compensation legislation. This review will help ensure that workers' compensation coverage responds appropriately to issues in the modern workplace.

Our Government values our partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and together we are working with communities to address suicide prevention. Newfoundland and Labrador is the first province to implement 'Roots of Hope', a suicide prevention project, in collaboration with community partners on the Burin Peninsula. This project represents a significant step forward in overcoming the stigma associated with suicide and allows for communities to come together, as they have on the Burin Peninsula, to address suicide in our communities.

Our Government is committed to the full implementation of Towards Recovery. In the near future, we will announce plans to redesign the mental health and addictions services system across the province beginning with the replacement of the Waterford Hospital and initiation of best practices in community support services to allow people to be supported closer to home.

We are committed to the continued implementation of the Opioid Action Plan. Opioid abuse is a significant problem in our province. As outlined in The Way Forward, our Government will open a drug treatment court for offenders with serious drug addictions, who commit non-violent, drug-motivated offences, as an alternative to the traditional criminal justice responses. The new court will address the underlying issues that lead to addiction by offering court monitored treatment, random and frequent drug testing, incentives and sanctions, clinical case management and social services support.

Our Government will ensure that our health care system meets the changing needs of the population. We spend significantly more than the Canadian average on health care, but we need to get better value from our health care expenditures. We will focus on enhancing services in our communities.

We continue to improve access to primary health care and home care services. Our community-based interdisciplinary team approach, involving doctors, nurses and other health professionals, will increase access to the right care, from the right health care provider, in the right place. To this end, we will establish more primary health care teams across the province, invest in electronic medical record systems and implement a home-first approach to seniors' care.

Seniors continue to make significant contributions to our communities. We have a collective responsibility to ensure seniors receive the support they need to lead healthy and productive lives. Our Government has appointed the first Seniors' Advocate, Dr. Suzanne Brake, to collaborate with seniors, service providers and others to identify, review and analyze systemic issues affecting seniors.

## **CHILDREN IN CARE**

Our Government also has an obligation to provide the children in our care with every opportunity to grow and prosper in a safe and caring environment. In 2017, we amended the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, in consultation with the Advocate, so that it is now mandatory for the Departments of Justice and Public Safety and Children, Seniors and Social Development to report child deaths and critical injuries.

Our Government continues to work with the Innu Nation on an inquiry into the treatment, experiences and outcomes of Innu in the child protection system. The overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care is a national crisis. In January, our Government reaffirmed its commitment to collaborate with our federal, provincial and territorial partners and Indigenous governments and organizations on this issue. Working together, we must do better for all Indigenous children.

## **EDUCATION**

Our Government is steadfast in its commitment to better engage all students in learning, fostering skills and competencies development and ensuring an accountable education system through regular reporting.

In 2017, the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes released its report, 'Now is the Time'. Our Government will use this report's recommendations to support children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador to achieve their full potential. We will release an Education Action Plan to guide implementation of the report's 82 recommendations. A number of recommendations will be ready for the upcoming school year, including a new student support services policy that will address issues stemming from inclusive education implementation, and supports for reading and mathematics.

Our Government will also review legislation and make amendments to support students and teachers and ensure a safe learning environment. During this sitting of the House, amendments to the *Schools Act, 1997* will be brought forward to address the provision of alternate instruction where someone's presence would be detrimental to the well-being of others.

Our Government will continue to provide children and youth with modern and engaging learning environments in which they can learn, grow and prosper. Five new schools opened in 2017 and the major development of three others has progressed. Construction of new schools in Gander and Paradise will begin this year.

The earlier that Newfoundland and Labrador's children can develop the skills required for today's high-tech economy, the more prepared they will be to adapt to future entry into the workforce. Our Government will implement a comprehensive technology plan for the K-12 school system, including the addition of coding to the curriculum.

The priority our Government places on high quality education continues beyond the high school years. A strong and prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador requires well-educated and well-trained adults. Some Newfoundlanders and Labradorians may become disengaged from the educational system before realizing their full potential and may require additional support to assist them in achieving their employment and educational goals. Recognizing this, our Government will develop a new adult literacy action plan with the input of multiple stakeholders, including post-secondary institutions, community organizations, adult learners and business and labour groups.

Our support for Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic is unwavering. We will continue to ensure that tuition at both institutions is affordable and among the lowest in the country.

Our tradespeople have long been recognized for their skills and strong work ethic. Our Government is focused on the skilled trades and, in partnership with other provinces, will develop a new apprenticeship management information technology system to streamline the steps in completing an apprenticeship program to meet the needs of today's tradespeople.

## **ATHLETICS**

Our athletes have also been recognized following great success on the national and global stages and are finishing on the top of the podium.

Kaetlyn Osmond, from Marystown, has seen her hard work and dedication pay off as she won gold and bronze medals at the 2018 Winter Olympics. This follows Kaetlyn's 2017 national title and a silver medal at the 2017 world championships.

Paradise's Sarah Davis captured a silver medal at the 2017 Women's World Hockey Championships. Stephenville's Katarina Roxon won two gold medals at the World Para Swimming World Series and nine medals at the Can Am Para-swimming Championships. We wish Ms. Roxon continued success as part of Team Canada at the Commonwealth Games next month in Australia.

Avondale's Angel Hiltz-Morrell captured a silver medal in wrestling at the 2017 Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg. Rigolet's Brooklyn Woolfrey joined Paradise's Nicholas Quinn to win a combined eight medals at the 2017 World Dwarf Games in Guelph.

Liam Hickey from St. John's won a gold medal at the 2017 World Para Ice Hockey Championships and is currently in PyeongChang competing at the 2018 Winter Paralympics. Liam is a phenomenal multi-sport athlete who also competes internationally for Canada in wheelchair basketball including at the 2016 Summer Paralympic Games in Rio, Brazil. We wish him nothing but the best as he goes for gold with Team Canada in South Korea.

Team Newfoundland and Labrador took home 34 medals at the 2017 North American Indigenous Games last summer in Toronto.

After winning the 2017 Brier, Team Gushue wore Canada's colours to capture the 2017 World Men's Curling Championship. They wore those same colours last week to, once again, win the Brier, becoming one of only eight teams to have won back-to-back Briers since 1927. Brad Gushue was also recognized as the skip with the most wins in the history of the Brier. Team Gushue will be representing Canada at the World Curling Championships later this month.

Joanne MacDonald, a native of St. Mary's Bay and three-time Paralympian, and Trepassey's Mel Fitzgerald, a two-time Paralympian, have both been inducted into the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association Hall of Fame.

Professional basketball player, our own Carl English, returned home last fall to compete for the St. John's Edge in its inaugural season in the National Basketball League of Canada. He has been a standout for the team all season, most recently setting a new league single game scoring record of 58 points. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful role model and community ambassador for our young people.

This is an exciting time for the west coast of the province as the 2018 Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games are underway in Deer Lake. Hundreds of young athletes from across the province are in the area competing in sports such as alpine and cross country skiing, curling, hockey, gymnastics and figure skating. We wish all competitors good luck and hope they enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow competitors. Events like the Winter Games would not be possible without the dedication of volunteers. Our Government extends its congratulations and gratitude to the 500 volunteers for their passion and commitment to both sport and their community that ensures the success of these games.

Our Government is so proud of all of these athletes. Their accomplishments inspire the next generation of athletes to chase their dreams.

## **SUMMARY**

Our plan to strengthen the economy, improve our fiscal situation and ensure a healthy, safe and welcoming society is working. We have made significant progress in the past two years, and we are continuing to implement our plan.

It is imperative that we stay the course. The Way Forward is our roadmap to achieve fiscal sustainability and better outcomes for our province. We remain committed to realize our vision for sustainability and growth, and we are honoured to continue to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence this new Session.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.