

Nfld.  
JL  
209  
A8  
L453  
2003  
c.2

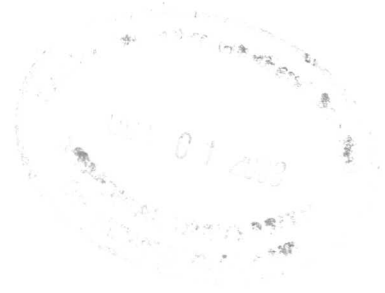
# Liberal

*Take A Closer Look*

**PLATFORM OF THE LIBERAL PARTY  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

[www.takeacloserlook.ca](http://www.takeacloserlook.ca)

NFLD  
JL  
209  
A8  
L453  
2003  
C.2



**Liberal**  
*Take A Closer Look*

**PLATFORM OF THE LIBERAL PARTY  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

September 2003



September 29th, 2003

Fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians,

The Liberal Government has a plan. That plan reflects our fundamental belief that we can continue to grow and prosper as a province by investing in people. This Platform is an opportunity to chart a new course for the next four years and build on our successes.

Our province and its people have persevered through some difficult times in the past. We have stood together and worked hard to overcome challenges. The Liberal government has always differentiated itself from other political parties by dedicating itself to one task: *we invest in people*.

We are committed to ensuring that there are opportunities for all our people. We believe that we must be pragmatic and results based. The people of our province want and deserve progress based on a concrete plan of action. The Liberal government is a government that seeks solutions to our problems, not reasons why we should not act.

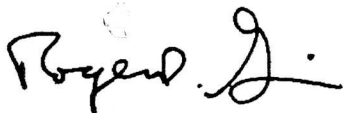
Our economy is vibrant and growing. In fact, we are leaders in economic growth and job creation in Canada. We have worked hard to honour our commitments and cultivate a climate of investment. We are creating new opportunities for our people.

Our commitment to a proactive development agenda is providing a secure foundation for investment in quality, accessible health care. It also supports an education system that is current and relevant, one that challenges our students to achieve and excel.

I invite you to *take a close look* at the work of this government and our platform for the next four years. I ask you to compare and decide what approach you believe your government should take for the next four years.

Finally, I ask for your support so we can continue to work together to continue improving the lives of all our people.

Thank you.



Roger Grimes  
Leader,  
Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

**Liberal**  
*Take A Closer Look*

**PLATFORM OF THE LIBERAL PARTY  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

## MEETING OUR COMMITMENTS

WITH RESULTS ..... 11

THE NEW MANDATE ..... 11

INVESTING IN PEOPLE ..... 13

Tax Relief for Post-Secondary Graduates ..... 14

Greater Accessibility to Student Loans ..... 15

Elimination of School Fees ..... 15

Free Textbooks ..... 15

New Seniors' Drug Program ..... 16

Seniors' Benefit ..... 16

No Layoffs and No Service Reductions ..... 16

Increase Minimum Wage Rate ..... 17

Lowest Electricity Rates  
in Atlantic Canada ..... 17

Gasoline Taxes Targeted for  
Improved Roads ..... 17

30% Reduction in Mandatory  
Automobile Insurance Rates ..... 18

## EDUCATION AND HEALTH

### THE PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES ARE

OUR PRIORITIES ..... 19

Excellence in Education ..... 20

Active Living and Community Service ..... 20

Preparing our Students to  
Make Good Choices ..... 20

Career Development  
Promotion Campaign ..... 21

Student Achievement-Closing the Gap ..... 21

New Curriculum Development ..... 22

Scholarship-Recognizing  
our Achievements ..... 22

Marketing our Education  
System Abroad ..... 22

Pupil/Teacher Ratio ..... 23

Distance Education ..... 23

Greater Opportunities ..... 23

Professional Development-More  
Investment in Teachers ..... 23

Major Capital Works  
Better Learning Environments ..... 24

School Reform Savings ..... 24

Giving Young Adults Another  
Chance at Success ..... 25

Testing-Making Progress ..... 25

Providing New Learning Tools ..... 26

Early Childhood  
Education Opportunities ..... 26

Resources for Students with  
Special Needs ..... 26

Building Safe and Caring  
Learning Environments ..... 27

Acknowledging Teacher Excellence  
and Innovation ..... 27

Public to Play a More Active Role ..... 28

Literacy Development Council ..... 28

Investments in Literacy ..... 28

Affordable Post-Secondary Education ..... 29

Tax Incentives to Hire Apprentices ..... 29

Entrepreneurship and Innovation  
Educational Programming ..... 29

Matching Skills with Need ..... 30

A Strong Community College System ..... 30

Quality Accessible Health Care ..... 31

Improving the Quality of Health Care ..... 31

Strengthening Health Care ..... 33

Board Governance ..... 33

Enhancing Programs and  
Services for Children and Youth ..... 33

Expansion and Replacement of Equipment and Infrastructure .....	34	Community Employment Initiative .....	52
Waiting Lists .....	36	Multi Service Centre for Youth at Risk .....	52
Primary Health Centres .....	36	Services to Aboriginal Communities .....	52
Strengthening Public Health Emergency Responses .....	37	Self Sufficiency Research Project .....	52
Federal Role in Health Care Reform .....	37	Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities .....	53
Anti-Smoking-Focus on Youth .....	37	Support Application Program Expansion .....	53
Integrated Seniors' Strategy .....	38	Implementation of Ex-patriate Registration Desk .....	53
Long Term Care and Supportive Services Strategy .....	38	A New Approach to Disability Issues .....	53
Family Caregiver Support .....	39		
Home Support Workers .....	39	A Focus on Labrador and its People .....	54
Commitment to Nurses .....	39	Inuit Final Agreement .....	54
Recruitment and Retention of Physicians .....	40	Innu Land Claims Negotiations .....	54
Health Charter .....	41	Creation of Federal Reserves at Natuashish and Sheshatshiu .....	55
		Access to Federal Programs by Mi'kmaq and Labrador Metis .....	55
A PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP .....	43	Timely Decision on the Labrador Metis Land Claim .....	55
Committed to Our Communities and Volunteers .....	44	Meaningful Consultation with all Labradorians .....	55
An Innovative Strategic Social Plan .....	44	5 Wing Goose Bay .....	56
Committed to a Social Audit .....	45	Phase III of Trans Labrador Highway .....	56
Strengthening our Voluntary Sector .....	46		
Strengthening Local Governments .....	46	A STRONG AND GROWING ECONOMY .....	59
Province-Wide 911 .....	48	Increasing the Viability and Sustainability of the Fishery .....	60
Provincial Waste Management Strategy .....	48	Quality .....	60
Pollution Prevention .....	49	Diversification .....	61
		Aquaculture .....	62
Helping People in Need .....	51	Joint Management and Action Team for Cod Recovery .....	62
Income and Employment Supports .....	51	Processing Policy Review .....	63
A New Income and Employment Support Act .....	51	Foreign Overfishing .....	63
Labour Market Development Strategy .....	51	Labour Relations Stability in the Fishing Industry .....	64
A New Service Delivery Model/New Pay System .....	51		
Supports to Victims of Violence .....	52		

Inshore Shrimp Fishery .....	64	Maximizing Benefits from Energy	
Sealing Industry .....	64	and Mineral Resources	
New Opportunities in Agriculture and Forestry		Development of Hebron/Ben Nevis .....	73
An Agricultural Policy Framework .....	65	Developing our Natural Gas Industry .....	73
Agricultural Diversification .....	66	Developing the Lower Churchill .....	74
A New Forestry Ecosystem Act .....	66	Pursuing Renewable	
Growing our Non-Timber		Energy Initiatives .....	74
Forest Products .....	66	Integration of Newfoundland Power .....	75
Integration of Sawmilling		New Mandate for Newfoundland	
and Pulp and Paper Industries .....	67	and Labrador Hydro .....	75
Forest Industry Development		Atlantic Accord Review .....	76
in Labrador .....	67	Electricity Policy Review .....	76
Strengthening the Business Sector		A Coordinated Approach	
Growing the Economy .....	68	to Climate Change .....	76
New Business Attraction Agency .....	68	Mineral Incentive Program Extended .....	77
An Aggressive Small		Increased Geological Information .....	77
Business Agenda .....	68	A New Focus on Tourism and Culture	
Increasing Investment Opportunity .....	69	New Tourism Marketing Strategy	
Promoting our IT Industry .....	69	and Tourism Marketing Council .....	77
Payroll Tax Eliminated for		Tourism Product	
Small Business .....	70	Development Strategy .....	78
Broadband Strategy .....	70	Cultural Policy Phase II .....	78
Regional Economic		Opening of The Rooms and	
Diversification Fund .....	70	the West Coast Exhibition Centre .....	78
Provincial Venture Capital Investment .....	70	Outdoor Adventure and Eco-Tourism .....	79
Professional Ambassadors .....	71	Natural Resource Management .....	80
Rural Banking .....	71	A Dynamic Recreational Policy .....	80
Canada/Newfoundland and Labrador		A New Provincial Sport	
Economic Development Board .....	71	Training Facility .....	80
Strategic Partnership Forum .....	71	Improving Labour Relations and Workplace Safety	
Strengthening Rural		Improving the Labour	
Economic Development .....	72	Relations Climate .....	80
Growing a New Industry		Expansion of Preventative	
for our Province .....	72	Mediation Program .....	81
Exports-A Vital Part of		Grievance Mediation Legislation .....	81
our Economic Performance .....	72		
Red Tape Reduction Task Force .....	72		

Improvements to Labour		A Strategic Women's Agenda	92
Arbitration System	82	Equitable Access in	
Annual Labour Standards Forum	82	Resource-based Sectors	93
Expanding Industry		Violence Prevention Initiative	93
Specific OHS Strategies	82	Women's Centres	93
Workers Health and Safety Reforms	83	Increase the Number of Women on	
Young Workers' Health and Safety	83	Agencies, Boards and Commissions	93
Ergonomics Strategy	83	Equity Working Group for Labour	
Offshore Health and Safety	84	Market Development Agreement	93
Meeting the Challenges		Long Term Housing	93
Facing Small Business	84	Enhancing the Work of the	
		Provincial Advisory Council	93
PLANNING FOR SUCCESS	85	Elimination of Harassment	
Sound Fiscal Management		in the Workplace	94
Elimination of the Annual Deficit	87	Gender Inclusive Analysis	94
Accountability	87		
Pension Funding	88	Democratic Reforms	
Ensuring Fairness for Consumers		Strengthening Democracy	94
Petroleum Products Act Improvements	88	Elections Act Reform	95
Enhancing Consumer Regulations		House of Assembly Act	
and Protection	88	Reform- Fixed Terms	95
Enhanced Security for			
Identification Documents	89	Modernizing Transportation Infrastructure	
Regulation of the Security Industry	89	Improving our Provincial	
On Line Companies Registry	89	Highway System	96
On Line Registry for Financial		Vessel Replacement Program	96
Services Industry	89	Intra-provincial Ferry	
Meaningful Automobile		Services Rate Freeze	96
Insurance Reform	89	Innovative Road Weather	
Improvements to the Justice System		Information System	97
New Legal Aid Family		Federal Involvement with	
Law Improvements	90	Transportation Infrastructure	97
Expansion of Court Security Services	91		
Video Conferencing	91		
Expansion of Unified Family Courts	91		
Enhancements of Support			
Enforcement System	92		

A STRONG RURAL AGENDA .....	99
Committed to Rural	
Newfoundland and Labrador .....	100
Sharing in the Province's	
Economic Recovery .....	100
Rural Small Business Growth .....	101
Attracting Investment .....	101
Committed to Regional	
Economic Development Boards .....	102
Strengthening Communities .....	102
Community Accounts .....	103
A PATHWAY TO RENEWAL .....	105
Strengthening out Partnership with Canada	
Laying the Foundation for Prosperity	
and Self- Reliance .....	106
Increased Understanding .....	107
Strengthening Inter-provincial	
Alliances .....	107
Advancing the Agenda .....	108



## MEETING OUR COMMITMENTS WITH RESULTS

On January 18, 1999, the Liberal government presented a platform to the people. That platform and the commitments made in 1999 have been met.

In 2001, the Liberal government, re-energized with a new leader, embarked on a renewed plan of action. The commitments made by Premier Grimes have also been met. While realizing those commitments for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Premier Grimes has produced real results. Our economy has been growing and has become much more diversified. Employment is increasing, unemployment is falling and for the first time since 1982 the province experienced positive net migration. The trend line for all economic indicators is moving in the right direction. Our plan is working and we are committed to continuing the progress with a new mandate.

## THE NEW MANDATE

People expect their families, their communities and their province to move forward and make progress. People also have great expectations that their children's lives should always be better than their own. People expect that if they work hard their lives will get better.

The people of our province have an opportunity, now, to *take a closer look* at the women and men who want to represent you and your families for the next four years. Good representation is about listening and caring. It is about thinking with your head and your heart while living within your means. It is about making clear decisions to improve people's lives. The Liberal government has been listening.

We invite you to *take a closer look* at your Liberal candidate who commits to serve you by striving to make the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador better each and every day - sometimes in a big way, sometimes in a smaller way, but striving to do so each and every day.

*Take a closer look* at what we can do for you and your family. *Take a closer look* at what we can do for your community, its citizens both young and old, its workers, its students. *Take a closer look* at the commitments made to you in the past that have been kept. *Take a closer look* at the commitments that we are making now for a new mandate - commitments that we will also keep.

We invite you to *take a closer look*.

**Liberal**  
*Take A Closer Look*

**PLATFORM OF THE LIBERAL PARTY  
OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

# Investing in People

## INVESTING IN PEOPLE

The Liberal government is rooted in the liberal principle that strives to ensure that no individuals are marginalized. We believe the role of government is to ensure that all citizens are able to realize their full potential as meaningful contributors, to a strong and vibrant society.

We can achieve this by investing in people. The Liberal government has a vision for this province. This vision is one of a healthy, well-educated people ready to seize the opportunities that are now before them. Our province and our society will prosper when we provide the people with the means to excel. Achieving this success is realized when governments are pragmatic, realistic and responsible.

The success of our province will be determined by its people. The Liberal government believes that we will succeed as a province if the lives of all our citizens are improved. Our focus for the next four years will be to provide people with the means to succeed. The Liberal government has a social and economic plan for the future that will put greater control and power into the hands of individuals. We will continue to invest in people as a means to continue our forward progress.

The following initiatives will be delivered during the term of the new mandate. They are possible because the Liberal government is willing to challenge itself to find new solutions.

## TAX RELIEF FOR POST-SECONDARY GRADUATES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will introduce a personal income tax credit for Newfoundland and Labrador residents equal to an amount of Newfoundland and Labrador personal income tax paid on the first \$100,000 earned after the graduation from a post-secondary institution.

**Action:** Government is committed to helping our graduates who choose to remain and work in the province after graduating with their degree or diploma. A tax incentive will be provided to those graduates who remain here to work following graduation to assist them in addressing their student debt and establish themselves.

New graduates of recognized post-secondary institutions who work in Newfoundland and Labrador after graduation will receive an exemption from provincial income tax on their first \$100,000 of earnings. This tax credit will be available to those eligible, regardless of how long it takes to earn the maximum of \$100,000.

## **GREATER ACCESSIBILITY TO STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE INCOME FAMILIES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will raise the income eligibility threshold for Student Financial Assistance to allow more students from middle-income families to qualify for Newfoundland and Labrador Student Loans.

**Action:** Many middle-income families in the Province are forced to borrow from commercial lenders to finance the post-secondary education of their dependants because their current family income precludes eligibility for adequate assistance under the existing Canada/Newfoundland and Labrador Student Loans Program. This is often cited as an impediment to accessing post-secondary education and causes a significant financial burden for many parents.

The Province will introduce a Newfoundland and Labrador Student Loan Supplement, in the form of a student loan, by implementing a 40% reduction in the required parental contribution.

## **ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL FEES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will eliminate school fees.

**Action:** The Liberal government will eliminate all school fees directly associated with the delivery of the province's K-12 curriculum in the classroom. Beginning in September 2004, parents will no longer be required to pay for resource materials and services which are part of the province's authorized curriculum. The government will put in place a clear, consistent, province-wide policy to eliminate school fees and help ease the financial burden parents face each year.

## **FREE TEXTBOOKS**

**Commitment:** Government will expand the free textbook policy to encompass all students in the K-12 system.

**Action:** The government will provide free textbooks to all students enrolled in the province's education system. Currently, the government provides free textbooks to students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. This program will now be extended to grades 9 to 12 with a phased-in approach over the next four years, beginning with Grade 9 in 2004.

## NEW SENIORS' DRUG PROGRAM

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will implement a new income based drug program that provides coverage to eligible seniors 65 years of age and over.

**Action:** Currently many seniors do not have access to private drug insurance or government drug cards. The government will rectify this by introducing a new drug coverage plan for seniors to ensure that seniors in the province can have affordable access to medically necessary pharmaceuticals listed on government's formulary.

Design work on the new program will start immediately and be completed by mid-March 2004.

The government will also work in partnership with the federal government to provide a catastrophic drug program for all citizens who may be faced with drug costs so high that they are threatened with financial catastrophe.

## SENIORS' BENEFIT TO COVER WINTER EXPENSES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will provide an increased grant for low-income seniors to assist with expenses incurred during the winter months.

**Action:** The winter months in our province can place an enormous financial and at times unexpected burden on many of our senior citizens. The Liberal government is concerned that in many circumstances seniors have no choice but to suffer during this period because financial circumstances do not allow an alternative.

Government will increase the Low Income Seniors' Benefit from \$350 for single seniors to \$500 and from \$700 for married seniors to \$1,000.

This benefit for seniors is based on family income and will help with the added expenses incurred during that time of the year.

## NO LAYOFFS AND NO SERVICE REDUCTIONS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will not lay off public servants or reduce services and programs during the term of the next mandate.

**Action:** The Liberal government has worked in partnership with public servants to turn our province around. Their dedication and commitment to Newfoundland and Labrador is critical to the success of the province.

The Liberal government has also worked hard to achieve labour peace in our province and will continue to honour all

collective agreements. The Liberal government has a record of fairness in collective bargaining. Our commitment to the public service will continue during the term of the next mandate and the Liberal government will not layoff public servants.

Furthermore, the Liberal government will not use attrition as an excuse to reduce public services. By committing to not reduce services, vacancies will be filled to ensure these important public services are maintained.

### **INCREASE MINIMUM WAGE RATE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will increase the province's minimum wage rate to ensure that the rate remains competitive with minimum wage rates in Atlantic Canada.

**Action:** The government, as a matter of policy, will ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador's minimum wage rate keeps pace with the rest of Atlantic Canada. The government will consult with labour and business regarding a planned approach to increases beginning March 31, 2004.

### **LOWEST ELECTRICITY RATES IN ATLANTIC CANADA**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will guarantee that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador maintain the lowest electricity rates in Atlantic Canada.

**Action:** The government will introduce amendments to the *Electrical Power Control Act, 1994* and the *Hydro Corporation Act* which will permit the government to set electricity rates in the province. The goal of this amendment will be to allow the government to ensure that domestic, industrial and commercial rates remain the lowest in Atlantic Canada and ensure that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have reasonable rates. It will also assist the province to maintain and attract industrial development by guaranteeing competitive rates within Atlantic Canada.

### **GASOLINE TAXES TO BE TARGETED FOR IMPROVED ROADS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will earmark all revenue raised by the gasoline tax to improve the roads in the province.

**Action:** Most of the revenue generated from the Province's gasoline tax is collected from road vehicles. The Province collects approximately \$132 million annually from this source.

Government makes expenditures on roads in the province through the Department of Works, Services and Transportation and the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. Currently, \$108.5 million annually is spent for this purpose.



In recognition of the priority of this government to ensure a safe transportation system that facilitates economic growth, the government will earmark revenues received from the gasoline tax. This will provide an additional \$23.5 million annually to make the necessary improvements to our road system.

### **30% REDUCTION IN MANDATORY AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will guarantee a 30% reduction in the cost of mandatory automobile insurance premiums.

**Action:** The Liberal government will pass legislation to mandate a 30% decrease in third party liability rates for all consumers of automobile insurance in the province. This is only one part of a recently announced comprehensive automobile insurance reform package that ensures cost reductions and fairness for all consumers.

# **Education and Health: The People's Priorities are Our Priorities**

## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

People continually tell their governments that education and health are critical components to success individually and as a society. The Liberal government continues to make strategic investments in its people by ensuring that our educational and health reforms receive priority.

Since the advent of education reform in 1997, Newfoundland and Labrador has seen its education system go through a successful transformation. Twenty-three new schools have been constructed and more than 50 others have been redeveloped, extended, or received major upgrades. The province has also made remarkable reforms in the delivery of post-secondary education. Our people are being given more opportunities to realize their individual potential because we have made post-secondary education more affordable and accessible.

Our students are now housed in better learning environments, receiving instruction with updated curriculum, and showing improved performance on standardized tests issued at the provincial, national and international level. There is, however, still work to be done.

The following are some of the initiatives that the Liberal government will deliver during the course of its next mandate.

## ACTIVE LIVING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure our young people in school lead healthier, and more active lives. The Liberal government will also ensure that volunteerism and community service are an integral part of their education.

**Action:** Changes will be made to the province's high school graduation requirements to provide that students complete three physical education courses or at least 60 hours of active living activities each year during the course of high school, along with 90 hours of community service over those three years, in order to receive a diploma.

## PREPARING OUR STUDENTS TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to develop career education and career development opportunities in our schools so that young people have the knowledge - and in some cases, the experience - to make choices about their post-secondary pursuits.

**Action:** New graduation requirements will include completion of two career development credits and an individual student portfolio. The portfolio will contain a running record of active

living and community service courses/hours achieved, will also include a student's individual career development plan.

The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation will also provide students in small schools with online career counseling advice and programming. High school students in small schools will have the opportunity to avail of enhanced career counseling services. In addition, recruiting agencies will have greater and direct access to these students.

The Liberal government will ensure our young people are prepared to benefit from the emergence of jobs in the skilled trades and technology sector, as these jobs are vital components of a vibrant economy and provide well-paying, meaningful career opportunities. The government will develop options, at the high school level, for training in apprentice trades.

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will launch a Career Development Promotion campaign.

**Action:** This campaign will specifically be targeted at parents to provide them with the best information available to assist them in counselling their children about the career and post-secondary education decisions students make. The campaign would use a

long-term, three-year approach in order to sustain the message and would involve an approach similar to the successful *Read and Succeed* program.

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT – CLOSING

### THE GAP

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to work with educators and parents to improve the achievement levels of all students - and to focus particular attention on raising the achievement level of boys in the elementary and secondary grades, who generally lag behind their female counterparts.

**Action:** The widening gap between male and female student performance is an observable trend which must be addressed - but not at the expense of female students. The government will conduct a number of demonstration projects, to be conducted at the school level, in the 2003-04 year. These projects will provide a showcase of possibilities that schools can replicate or adjust for implementation in other schools throughout the province. At the end of the school year, the department will host a symposium to discuss the projects.

## NEW CURRICULUM REVIEW

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will review the new curriculum that has been recently developed and implemented to ensure students are reaping the full benefits of new programming.

**Action:** The government has engaged in a period of significant curriculum development to ensure our educational system is current and relevant. In the next two years, the Liberal government will focus its attention on ensuring teachers and students have the expertise, tools and resources to ensure the goals of the new curriculum are being realized. This will include reassigning department staff to work on web-based projects to assist teachers and students in the successful delivery and completion of courses.

## SCHOLARSHIPS – RECOGNIZING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will enhance its provincial scholarship program by making more scholarships available to graduating high school students in order to better help them finance their post-secondary pursuits. An enhanced scholarship program will also demonstrate government's commitment to easing student debt.

**Action:** The government will enhance and expand its scholarship program by increasing the number of Centenary of Responsible Government Scholarships to 100 from 55. These will be awarded to the students who earn the top 100 scores on the provincial scholarship exam.

## MARKETING OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM ABROAD

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will increase its efforts to attract more students into our system. Our educational system has undergone tremendous improvement in the past number of years. This has enabled us to market our educational system abroad.

**Action:** The government will implement a policy on International Student Enrolment in K-12 Schools designed to guide school boards in the intake, monitoring of academic progress and delivery of education programs to international students within the K-12 school system.

## **PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO – CONTINUING TO INVEST IN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to maintaining the best teacher-resourced classrooms in the country.

**Action:** Newfoundland and Labrador boasts the best pupil-teacher ratio in the country, at 13.4 to 1. Over the past three years, average class sizes have declined in every school district in the province.

The government is committed to ensuring a generous allocation for teaching services and, whenever appropriate, to invest more than the allocation demands (as done in the past three years) to ensure we maintain or even improve our pupil-teacher ratio.

In the upcoming school year, the Liberal government will increase the operating expenditure per student. In 2003-04, the expenditure per student will be \$7,688, up from \$7,200 per student this year and \$4,957 in 1993-94. This represents a 55% increase in 10 years.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION – GREATER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to be pioneers in the field of distance education through one of the

most exciting education initiatives developed over the past number of years. The Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), which has enabled students in rural and remote regions to access high school courses/programs previously unavailable to them, taught by some of the provinces most qualified teachers.

**Action:** The Liberal government will increase its high school course offering. In 2003-04, 27 high school courses will be offered to students at 95 sites throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The continued development of CDLI, in partnership with the NLTA, Memorial University and school districts, has led to the recognition of Newfoundland and Labrador as being among the world leaders in the delivery of distance education.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT - MORE INVESTMENT IN TEACHERS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government believes that we must invest in our teachers. We will maintain an additional fund for teacher professional development. In Labrador, we will continue to improve the Online Learning Community Institute for Coastal Labrador.



**Action:** For the past three years, government has maintained an additional fund of \$900,000 for teacher professional development. This investment brings the total budget for professional development to \$4.4 million for the 2003-04 fiscal year. This investment will continue into the future.

The most recent teachers' collective agreement added five days to the school year; three of which are specifically designated for teacher professional development.

One of the more innovative teacher professional development initiatives is the recently established Online Learning Community Institute for Coastal Labrador which the government will continue. This initiative will help to recruit and retain teachers in the Labrador School District. Using technology and support from the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) and the Virtual Teacher Centre (VTC), participating teachers will be able to collaborate with their peers who are teaching in similar settings or teaching the same courses/subjects/grades. The teachers will also be able to avail of tailored services, offered through the VTC, which will be designed to assist and support teachers as they face the challenges of living and working in an isolated environment.

## **MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS**

### **– BETTER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will invest \$100 million over the next five years to ensure all students are provided with learning environments that meet or exceed national standards.

**Action:** Since the beginning of education reform, the government has remained committed to providing school facilities that offer the best possible educational environment for our students. The result has been the largest program of school construction and upgrading in our history.

In consultation with school boards, the government will develop and implement a five-year plan to address school construction and maintenance/repair priorities in Newfoundland and Labrador, including \$10 million to continue establishing "Smart Classrooms" which are wired for connectivity and provide students with access to the world through modern technology.

### **SCHOOL REFORM SAVINGS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to leave savings realized from school reform with our school boards

**Action:** In 1997, Government committed to school boards that savings realized as a result of consolidation and reorganization would remain with school boards for a three-year period for use on capital expenditures. Despite declining enrolment, government met that commitment and since the expiration of the three-year period, government has continued to leave those savings with school boards. To date nearly \$54 million has been saved allowing school boards to reinvest the full amount in education. Government will continue this practice.

## **GIVING YOUNG ADULTS ANOTHER CHANCE AT SUCCESS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will develop a flexible, web-based means to graduation for young people, specifically those aged 18-35, which would allow them to earn a high school diploma. This is designed to increase young people's individual chances for success and allow them to better contribute to society as a whole.

**Action:** The government, under the Labour Market Development Agreement and in partnership with Memorial University, will develop a program to help adults who do not have a high school diploma, particularly those aged 18-35. Web-based programming through the CDLI will be a major component of this program.

## **TESTING – MAKING PROGRESS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to work with educators and parents to improve the achievement levels of all students, particularly in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics.

By 2006, our students will rank among the best in the world as measured by national and international test results.

**Action:** The performance of Newfoundland and Labrador students in provincial, national and international standardized tests has improved significantly over the past several years - and we intend to build on that success. For example, the results of provincial testing show that from 1995 to 2002, the percentage of children who were writing at the appropriate level grew from 61 to 94 per cent. In fact, more than a third of our students exceeded the expectations compared to only 14 per cent in 1995.

The government will monitor and review testing results to determine how the implementation of new curriculum over the past several years is impacting on test scores. If weaknesses are identified, either in the curriculum itself or in the professional development provided to educators, they will be addressed. Meanwhile, provincial testing will continue in the form of annual criterion-reference test (CRTs) for Grades 3, 6 and 9.

## PROVIDING NEW LEARNING TOOLS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will make provision for the development of a new set of learning tools designed specifically for students, parents and teachers which will help improve student achievement levels in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Action:** With the advent of new technologies, opportunities exist to develop instruments that support students, parents and teachers in their efforts to improve achievement levels. The government, in consultation with school boards, will implement a series of learning tools, such as online tutorials, sample exams and a 1-800 homework help line for parents and students, as well as sample lesson plans, assessment tools and professional development information for teachers. These learning tools will be available for all students, all parents and all teachers for every grade level and every subject area.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to explore early education opportunities for children, particularly those who are socially disadvantaged, and to place emphasis on providing children a good foundation in reading, writing and mathematics from the moment they enter school.

**Action:** The Liberal government will provide greater opportunities to prepare pre-school age children for primary school by increasing grants to community-based organizations which operate early childhood education programs; developing a provincial program which can be delivered through these organizations focusing specifically on what parents can do to help prepare their children for success in school.

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure that children with special needs are provided with the appropriate resources to learn and grow as individuals.

**Action:** Our province has the most comprehensive and well-resourced system of supports and services for students with special needs in Atlantic Canada and one of the best in the country. However, the recruitment and retention of qualified specialists is difficult, particularly in rural areas.

The government will establish an endowment fund to support a bursary program designed to help recruit speech-language pathologists, itinerant teachers for the hearing and visually impaired and educational psychologists - as required - in rural areas. This program will require students to sign a return-in-service agreement.

The government will also increase spending on teaching resources (books, software, etc.) to support programming for students with special needs and allocate increased funding for specialized technology used to support students with specific needs.

In a move that will benefit all children, the government will increase the allocation of guidance counsellors. This will result in more support for students with special needs, more support for students investigating career options and more support for students in general.

## **BUILDING SAFE AND CARING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will make provision for the implementation of the province's Safe and Caring Schools Action Plan, designed to promote healthy peer relationships and safe and caring learning environments.

**Action:** To help facilitate this goal, the government will implement programming on bullying and harassment in all schools. Resources on bullying and harassment will be distributed to all schools and the department will also make provision to allow teachers, guidance counsellors and program specialists in the education system to avail of professional development to help

them implement these resources.

In addition, the government will implement *Choices for Positive Youth Relationships*, a program that can be used in schools offering Grades 9-12 to help students identify warning signs of abuse (i.e., dating violence), develop skills to sustain positive relationships and connect to supportive community resources.

The government will also make provision to allow teachers, guidance counsellors and program specialists in the education system to avail of professional development to help implement the Safe and Caring Action Plan.

## **ACKNOWLEDGING TEACHER EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION**

**Commitment:** Government will establish a provincial awards program to recognize teaching excellence and innovation.

**Action:** The Liberal government will work with its education partners - the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association, Memorial University and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils - to establish a teacher awards program to acknowledge excellence in teaching at the provincial level.

Teachers play a critical role in the development of our young people, both academically and as the responsible citizens of tomorrow. Highlighting innovation and excellence in teaching will serve to recognize the achievement of individuals, share information on successful teaching strategies, and promote teaching as a profession.

### **PUBLIC TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to providing the public with the information they need to play a more active role in school boards and school councils.

**Action:** School boards and school councils were established in response to public demand for more decision-making power over education issues in the regions. Elected school boards are much like elected town councils and have decision-making responsibilities which are set out in legislation.

The government will provide training opportunities for school council members in an effort to allow councils to function more effectively as advisors to the school board and representatives of the educational interests of the school.

The government will also undertake an information campaign designed to encourage people who care about the education of children to run for board trustee and school council positions. Such a campaign would also be designed to motivate

the public to vote for the individuals who make the decisions which impact directly on schools and learning in their region.

### **LITERACY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will restructure the existing Literacy Development Council to create a stronger organization.

**Action:** Legislation governing the Literacy Development Council (LDC) gives the organization a very broad range of responsibilities. A recent, independent evaluation recommended the role of the LDC, and its structure, change in order for it to become a more stronger council.

The government supports the views of literacy stakeholders as outlined in the evaluation report and will move forward on this initiative in an expeditious manner.

### **INVESTMENTS IN LITERACY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to improving the literacy levels in Newfoundland and Labrador over the next four years.

**Action:** The government, in partnership with federal and community organizations, will continue to develop programs and projects to meet literacy challenges facing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The government in partnership with the federal government will participate in a ABE/Level 1 pilot project in nine sites throughout the province. Each site will receive \$83,000 over a two-year period to work with a new program delivery model. Initiatives such as the ABE/Level 1 project and programs will continue to be supported by the government.

## **AFFORDABLE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure that post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador is amongst the most affordable in Canada.

**Action:** The cost of post-secondary education is one of the most significant contributors to student debt. By keeping tuition costs low, we will be better able to retain our post-secondary education graduates, and help keep post-secondary education in this Province accessible. The government will pursue a strategic infrastructure fund with the Government of Canada to help keep our institutions modern, without increasing costs to students. The government will provide sufficient operating grants

to Memorial University, Marine Institute, and the College of the North Atlantic to maintain high quality instruction and research capacity, without increasing tuition costs to students.

## **TAX INCENTIVES TO HIRE APPRENTICES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will provide tax incentives to employers who hire apprentices.

**Action:** The government will provide tax incentives to assist employers with the cost of attracting and retaining apprentices particularly during the first two years of their four-year apprenticeship program. In the initial periods of apprenticeship, employers bear a substantial burden in continuing to operate a profitable business while assuming the responsibilities for an apprentice's education. This is a particular problem given the vast number of small employers and the demands the apprenticeship program places on these employers.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will launch an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Educational Program.



**Action:** An Entrepreneurship and Innovation Program will tap into the resourcefulness of our students. This program will place a major emphasis on providing all the supports to youth, including secondary and post-secondary students, to establish the necessary linkages between entrepreneurial concepts and the existing expertise of business leaders and academics. Incentives will be provided to students, businesses and academics to showcase accomplishments.

## **MATCHING SKILLS WITH NEED**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work with industry and educational institutions to ensure our graduates have the skills that employers in the province need.

**Action:** Skills shortages have begun to appear in some industries, and many skilled workers will retire in the coming years, leading to increased opportunities for new graduates and re-skilled workers in many occupations. The government will work with the federal government to ensure sufficient investment in apprenticeship training under the Labour Market Development Agreement. The government will strengthen its existing partnerships with HRDC, educational institutions, Skills Canada, industry and labour in the promotion of career opportunities in the skilled trades, and the manufacturing and technology sectors, including promoting increased participation in those occupations by women and other under-represented groups.

## **A STRONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure a strong community college system throughout Newfoundland and Labrador focused on giving graduates the skills employers need, and providing accessible, affordable, and practical adult education to increase the ability of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to participate in today's labour market.

**Action:** The government will work with the College of the North Atlantic to increase its focus on the skilled trades, and develop expanded and more accessible opportunities for adults with less than a high school education to achieve high school equivalency and improve their participation in the labour market.

The government will work with Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic to improve the transferability of credits between those institutions.

## QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

The Liberal government has a responsibility to ensure that the people of Newfoundland Labrador have a quality, accessible and sustainable health and community services system. The Liberal government has a five-year plan to meet these responsibilities. This roadmap sets out three major long-term goals: improve the health status of our people, improve the capacity of communities to support health and well being, and improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of health and community services.

Our health plan is a living document. The Liberal government will continue to challenge itself to be innovative and adapt to changes in population health status, demography, technology and the economy.

The following are some of the initiatives that the Liberal government will deliver during the course of its next mandate.

## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to enhance the quality of health services in Newfoundland and Labrador and improve the health status of our people.

**Action:** The Liberal government has a specific plan to improve the quality of health services provided to the people of the province. Proactive reforms will serve as a roadmap for the future. Our Strategic Health Plan, *Healthier Together*, sets out a range of measures to enhance the quality, accessibility and sustainability of health services in the province. The plan clearly outlines specific goals and objectives for the next mandate of the Liberal government:

### *A PRIMARY HEALTH CARE STRATEGY*

Our new direction for primary health care expands the point of contact to include in addition to physicians, nurses and other health professionals, working cooperatively to provide services using a team-based, interdisciplinary approach. The result will be a well-integrated primary health care service leading to better outcomes and better health status.

#### *A WELLNESS STRATEGY*

Wellness is an overarching theme of government's new strategic health plan. To create a system which is sustainable and supportive of health and well-being, the focus of our health and community services system needs to be shifted from one which primarily treats illness to one which promotes wellness. Four key areas have been identified to further work around wellness in this province: health promotion, injury and illness prevention, health protection, and child and youth development.

The advisory committee on the Wellness Strategy has completed its framework document as well as three of several documents on priority areas. Government has committed \$1.1 million toward the Wellness Strategy in year one; additional resources will be committed to action the full range of recommendations.

#### *MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE STRATEGY*

Government is committed to a new strategy for mental health services, especially community-based services. Through the Strategic Health Plan, Healthier Together, we will develop a mental health strategy to achieve a more comprehensive set of mental health services. This strategy will be built on the current initiatives available in this province and will provide the basis for policy direction in this area.

Recommendations including legislative reforms will be prepared for early 2004.

#### *LONG-TERM CARE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES STRATEGY*

Long-term care and supportive services include programs and services to meet the needs of seniors who are frail or physically or cognitively impaired, individuals of all ages with disabilities, those who have long-term illnesses such as arthritis and children, youth and adults with mental health problems; as well as other groups of people. Several related actions are underway including home support review, supportive housing for youth review, personal care home review and a call for expressions of interest to establish a long term care centre in Corner Brook.

#### *LOCATION OF SERVICES STRATEGY*

A location of services strategy is in the developmental stages. This strategy will ensure that there are appropriate and sustainable services located in those centres. Innovative alternate delivery models will also be considered. This will include enhanced ambulance services, telecare/teletriage, telehealth, electronic health

records, visiting clinics and appropriate primary health care services. Where secondary and tertiary services are located people can expect a high quality, diverse range of services.

#### *OTHER INITIATIVES*

Other new initiatives which will focus on improvements and enhancing the quality of health services will occur in partnership with the federal government. These include the establishment of a National Health Council, a Patient Safety Institute, a Common Drug Review approval process and continued participation in the Canadian Council of Health Services Accreditation.

### **STRENGTHENING HEALTH CARE BOARD GOVERNANCE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association to strengthen the governance of our health care system.

**Action:** The government will ensure that all new health care board members receive both a global provincial-level orientation and a local Health Board specific orientation when they are appointed. The provincial-level orientation consists of a two-

day in-person workshop. New board members are also expected to complete a self-learning program entitled "The Better Director Program".

### **ENHANCING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will enhance programs and services for children and youth.

**Action:** The Liberal government continues to take progressive action to strengthen strategic direction and programs and services for children and youth in the province. The government has demonstrated considerable leadership by implementing four new pieces of legislation: the Child Care Services Act (1999), the Child Youth and Family Services Act (2000), the Child and Youth Advocate Act (2001) and the Adoptions Act (2003).

Implementation plans are in place with emphasis placed on increasing and improving child care services for children and families; expanding the number of family resource centres available in the province; increasing prenatal services such as healthy baby clubs and the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement; expanding home-based intervention services for children with developmental delay and Autism; increasing early literacy and school readiness opportunities for children; and improving mental health and residential services for youth at risk.

The following are several new initiatives that the government will undertake:

- Increase access to programs and services for low and middle income families by changing the Child Care Subsidy Program so that more families qualify for support; and exploring options for an incentive program so that more families may participate in community activities relating to wellness.
- Increase opportunities for children with special needs to participate in child care services by enhancing support and improving training opportunities for child care providers.
- Improve the quality of child care services in the province by introducing a system to measuring standards of practice in licensed child care facilities; increasing public awareness around parameters of quality child care; and further enhancing recruitment and retention strategies for early childhood educators.
- Increasing the number of family resource programs in the province by 25% by 2007 thereby expanding opportunities for children and families to participate in child development and parenting programs.
- Improving the health status of children and youth through the implementation of the provincial food and

nutrition strategy; supporting the implementation of the provincial physical activity strategy; and collaborating with the other Atlantic provinces to develop and implement the Atlantic Wellness Strategy.

- Committing to the Model for the Coordination of Services to Children and Youth by ensuring full implementation in all regions of the Province.

## **EXPANSION AND REPLACEMENT OF EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to invest in health care with expansion and replacement of equipment and infrastructure.

**Action:** The government has invested \$101 million in medical equipment since 1999, with \$59 million allocated from provincial capital and \$42 million provided under the 2000 and 2003 First Ministers' Accords. Government will continue to make the investments necessary to provide good quality medical equipment in health institutions. The \$100 million spent during the past five years has been used to acquire new technology and replace medical equipment.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- Government will provide \$25.4 million this year to purchase new technology and replace existing equipment in health facilities.
- Government commits to four MRIs in the Province. MRIs will become operational in Corner Brook and Central Newfoundland within the next 12 - 18 months. A second MRI will be purchased for the St. John's area over the next four years.
- Government will establish new dialysis services in Carbonear and Gander.
- Government will begin planning for a facility renovation or replacement in Labrador West.
- Government commits to provide \$1 million for defibrillators and other equipment for the road ambulance program.
- Government will provide \$1.4 million to the Give to Feel Good Campaign this year. This funding will complete our \$25 million commitment.
- Government will match funds with various Health Foundations across the Province to assist in leveraging funds from other sources for the purchases of clinical services equipment in health facilities.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:**

- The new 50 bed hospital in Stephenville will become operational this year at a total cost of \$34.5 million.
- Construction will continue on major renovations at James Paton Hospital in Gander.
- Work is progressing on the new 20 bed health facility on Fogo Island and occupancy is expected early summer 2004. The total investment is \$11.5 million.
- Construction has begun for the new Health Centre in Grand Bank. This facility will replace the existing cottage hospital and nursing home. The total investment is \$17.5 million and occupancy is expected by Spring 2005. This project will introduce a new model of care for dementia residents in the Province.
- A new Cancer Clinic at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor will be built. The total cost is \$4.1 million with Government's share of \$3.2 million.
- Government is committed to a new long term care facility in Clarenville. Preliminary planning is underway with a view to commencing construction 2004-05.
- Government recognizes the need to replace aging nursing homes in Corner Brook, St. John's and Carbonear. Expressions of interest for the Corner Brook facility have been received and are being evaluated. A Request for Proposals will be issued following the review.

- Government commits to the expansion of medical research space at Memorial University. This commitment will attract more research spending by the federal government and the private sector, primarily pharmaceutical companies. This commitment will generate increased economic activity in the province, attract world-class researchers and improves our skills and capabilities in the health sector.
- Government will acquire a new CT Scanner for the Peninsulas Health Care Corporation to be located at the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre.

## WAITING LISTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government commits to meeting the following wait time targets over the next four years:

- Reduce the average wait time for cardiac surgery to six months.
- Reduce the current wait time for routine MRI to the national standard of six months.
- Reduce the wait time for nursing home services by 10%.
- Increase the range of residential options available to individuals.
- Increase the proportion of the population who have reasonable access to community based mental health services.

**Action:** The government commits to improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of our health and community services. Government is focused on the importance of accessibility. People in the province must be able to obtain a basic or core set of health and community services close to where they live, supplemented by additional services through information and communication technologies.

## PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES

**Commitment:** Government is committed to continuing the enhancement of the quality of primary health care services to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and reducing the reliance on emergency room services.

**Action:** Government is committed to a transformation of primary health care to ensure that family doctors, nurses and other “first contact” health professionals are available close to where people live, 24 hours a day, providing a comprehensive range of services. By 2007, primary health care sites will be identified in locations within 60 minutes drive for 95% of the population. These services will be supplemented by a toll-free, province-wide telephone service staffed by nurses to provide health information and advice.

To date seven areas have been accepted for proposal development; Connaigre Peninsula, Grenfell Health Region, Bonne Bay, Twillingate/New World Island, Bonavista, Labrador East and St. John's. Proposal development for each of these sites is expected to be completed this fall and the project development and implementation is expected to be completed in 2004.

## **STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will improve emergency responses and health protection structures and policies.

**Action:** Newfoundland and Labrador like other jurisdictions has taken steps to address emergency response and health protection measures in the wake of SARS and other recent public health threats.

The government is currently conducting a review to develop the health elements of a provincial response plan that will improve our public health protection capacity. The government will then establish a committee of frontline healthcare workers to consult and seek input.

## **FEDERAL ROLE IN HEALTH CARE REFORM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to press the federal government to increase financial support available to sustain current health care services and proceed with health care reform.

**Action:** The provincial government will continue to press the federal government for adequate health transfers and fair equalization funding to address chronic under-funding of health by the federal government.

Both the Kirby and Romanow reports underscore the position of the provinces that the federal government must provide greater financial support if our health care system is to be sustainable.

## **ANTI-SMOKING – FOCUS ON YOUTH**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government's goal is to significantly decrease youth and adult smoking rates.

**Action:** This goal will be achieved through sustaining and expanding the Teen Tobacco Teams and other anti-smoking campaigns, and stronger legislation to ban smoking in public places. The government will also continue its legal action against tobacco companies.



Our government has been proactive in working to prevent, reduce and protect the people of our province, in particular children and youth, from the negative impacts of tobacco use. This includes: the formation of the Provincial Teen Tobacco Team; assisting with the development of educational resources which support the outcomes of the curriculum and comprehensive school health program; dissemination of Kick the Nic, a stop smoking program for teens; supporting the Provincial Tobacco Reduction Strategy; recent amendment to the Smoke-Free Environment Act, which aim to protect people from the dangers of second-hand smoke; partnership with the Lung Association's Smokers' Help Line and pursuing litigation against the tobacco industry to recoup health costs associated with smoking.

## **INTEGRATED SENIORS' STRATEGY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will develop an integrated seniors strategy in 2004.

**Action:** A new and focused Seniors' Strategy will contain new initiatives to address access to drugs, injury prevention, home support and other forms of supportive living. It will also include plans for the upgrading and construction of long-term care facilities.

## **LONG-TERM CARE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES STRATEGY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure that people who need long-term care, whether they are seniors, persons with disabilities, people who suffer from long term illness or people with mental health problems, can get the type of care which fits their circumstances. Supportive living in the community will be preferred, where possible and appropriate, over institutional care. Respect for the individual is paramount.

**Action:** The government will establish a long term care strategy in service delivery that meets the needs of clients through innovation, excellence in service delivery and best practices. The government's goal is the development and implementation of a plan for the delivery of a seamless continuum of services that maximizes client choice, quality of life and independence. This service continuum will range from minimum supports in an individual's home to facility based care for persons with high care needs. A new legislative framework to ensure quality long-term care and supportive services will be established.

## FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will implement a new plan to support family and informal care-giving. It will ensure appropriate respite, education and information.

**Action:** The role and value of family and informal caregivers has long been recognized as critical to maintaining individuals who require health and home care services to maintain independent living in their homes. This is expected to grow as the population ages and caregivers themselves are aging. Therefore it is essential that the present five-year health care plan of government include a directed campaign to support family caregivers.

## HOME SUPPORT WORKERS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure fair rates for home support services which will allow reasonable compensation for workers, improvements in quality, and respect for the independence and autonomy of clients who choose to self-manage their home support services.

**Action:** Many citizens of the province are able to remain in their own homes because of the services provided by home support workers. The continuum of health services relies heavily on the valuable work performed by this group of workers.

Government already spends over \$60 million annually on home care and will continue to support the home support sector.

## COMMITMENT TO NURSES

**Commitment:** Government remains committed to measures which sustain the nursing workforce through a number of initiatives.

**Action:** Nurses play a central role in the health system. That is why government increased funding to raise enrolment in nursing education, used recruitment incentives during years when nursing retention was difficult, raised wages to make nurses compensation competitive with the Atlantic provinces, added a \$325,000 education fund to the collective agreement and worked with nurses to develop a human resource plan for the future. The government will continue to work with nurses on their priorities: pursuing opportunities to implement the Nursing Strategy for Canada in this province, establishing primary health care sites where nurses play a central role in the health care team, involving nurses in efforts to improve infection control systems and communication systems in hospitals so that we respond adequately to the lessons learned from Canada's SAR experience, monitoring and responding to nursing shortages before they become a problem, and ensuring that the Department of Health and Community Services has a senior official designated with responsibility for nursing issues.

## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PHYSICIANS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work to stabilize physician retention and improve recruitment, particularly in rural areas.

**Action:** The government will focus on retaining a higher proportion of Memorial University medical graduates, improving the physician bursary program, maintaining tuition for medical students at the lowest in Canada outside Quebec, and improving the work/life balance for practicing physicians. The government will also increase the resources available for recruiting physicians to be competitive with other jurisdictions. This builds on physician initiatives that are ongoing:

### *PROVINCIAL OFFICE OF PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT:*

- Development and implementation of a Provincial Office for Physician Recruitment established at the Memorial University Medical School. In addition to assisting regional Health Boards in their recruitment efforts, the office coordinates world wide advertising strategies and the promotion of the province among medical students and graduates.
- The establishment of a list of eligible physicians for locum services.
- Introduction of a program of student placements with rural promotion, through a summer employment program.

### *MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND*

#### *INITIATIVES:*

- Introduction of the MedQuest program throughout regions of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase high school students exposure to a career in medicine.
- Exposure to rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador included into the MUN Medical School curriculum with on-site rural rotations during medical school and some postgraduate programs.
- Introduction of a web-based interactive continuing medical education vehicle – Mdcme.ca, in conjunction with several other University partners.

### *DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND COMMUNITY*

#### *SERVICES:*

- Introduction of salary scales at or above those in the Atlantic provinces resulting from the recent Arbitration award.
- Continuance of benefits for salaried physicians in excess of those in the Atlantic provinces.
- Continuance of an annual bonus payment for salaried physicians scaled to reflect years and practice and remoteness of location of services.

## HEALTH CHARTER

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will release a Health Charter that provides clear commitments from the government to individuals as to what they can expect from the health care system in terms of service delivery.

**Action:** The underlying theme of the Health Charter is shared responsibility – government's responsibility for the health and community services system and the general public's role in their own health and well-being. The Health Charter development process was informed by a two-month public consultation period during March and April that elicited feedback from health care organizations, professional associations, unions and individuals. The Charter will be unveiled later this year.

# A Progressive Social Partnership

## COMMITTED TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND VOLUNTEERS

The Liberal Government is committed to a plan for healthy, educated, self-reliant and prosperous people living in vibrant, supportive communities within sustainable regions.

This will be achieved through the collective actions of the provincial government, local governments, community organizations and volunteers. This fundamental principle requires a government willing to accept the challenges that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador and develop the reforms and innovative initiatives to meet these challenges. We believe we can build and maintain clean, safe and sustainable communities supported by strong local governments and community supports when we take innovative approaches to development by linking social and economic factors.

The Liberal government has created a structured and interactive way to look at how our communities are progressing. *Community Accounts* is the award winning data system that anyone can access to find out how communities and regions are performing in terms of health, education, income and employment.

By developing strong partnerships with communities and volunteers the provincial government can make evidence-based decisions. This allows government and communities to identify and quantify challenges to overcome thereby targeting resources effectively.

The following are some of the initiatives that the Liberal government will deliver during the course of its next mandate.

### AN INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC SOCIAL PLAN

**Commitment:** Newfoundland and Labrador has something that no other province has – a structured interactive way to look at how communities and people are doing socially and economically. The Liberal government is committed to the Strategic Social Plan (SSP). This plan reflects government's vision for healthy, educated, distinctive, self-reliant and prosperous people living in vibrant, supportive communities within sustainable regions.

**Action:** This goal will be realized through collective action, between governments and community organizations and is reflected in SSP initiatives that emphasize building community involvement, linking social and economic development, focusing on early intervention and prevention, and using solid statistical information in decision making. The Liberal government is committed to the following four initiatives:

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS TO RELIABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DATA**

This will be achieved through further development and ongoing maintenance of the Community Accounts.

**SEEKING ADVICE AND INPUT FROM THE  
COMMUNITY**

The Premier's Advisory Council on Social Development, with representatives from across the Province, will continue to provide timely and impartial advice on key social policy and program initiatives.

**SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING THE VOLUNTARY  
AND COMMUNITY-BASED SECTOR**

This sector plays a vital role in providing much needed services and programs and provides employment opportunities in a wide variety of occupations. Using recommendations from the Premier's Council, a committee with representatives from the sector and senior government officials will develop practical and sustainable ways in which to work together to ensure the ongoing viability of the sector

**FINDING REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO REGIONAL  
ISSUES**

Regional committees will continue to partner on many initiatives that offer training and skills-building opportunities to community volunteers, offer students in small rural communities access to after-hours transportation so they take part in after-school activities, collect information on recreation infrastructure, recognizing the vital role that recreation plays in

community well-being, develop human resource strategies that better prepare young people to stay and work in their regions, and teach young people in remote communities about suicide prevention and intervention.

**COMMITTED TO A SOCIAL AUDIT**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to the continued development and maintenance of a social audit. The Liberal government has the courage to measure its work in a social audit. The government remains committed to being accountable to the people it serves.

**Action:** Measuring progress towards achieving SSP goals requires the rigorous collection and analysis of evidence to determine whether the actions of government are having desired outcomes. The Social Audit is a process that will measure progress in the areas of general well-being, employment and economic security, and community stability. The government will complete the first Social Audit by the end of 2003. The information and lessons learned will be used to further inform the development of policies and programs. Ongoing monitoring of and reporting on key indicators over the coming years will allow both the public and government to ensure we focus our limited financial and human resources in areas that will effect real change in our social and economic development.

## STRENGTHENING OUR VOLUNTARY SECTOR

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will implement the recommendations of the Premier's Council on Social Development to strengthen and support the voluntary and community-based sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Action:** Government recognizes that the voluntary and community-based sector with its many organizations are critical to building resilient, self-reliant communities. The sector plays a critical role in training and leadership development, in providing employment opportunities, and in delivering social and community services.

Government will work in cooperation with the sector to develop an action plan to: raise awareness of the sector within government; further the knowledge base; address financial needs; support human resource (volunteer and staff) development; design responsive employment programs; and mobilize broad-based public involvement.

## STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to strengthen local governments.

**Action:** The Liberal government is focused on ensuring that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador enjoy healthy, safe and sustainable communities supported by strong local governments. The Liberal government has identified four strategic initiatives to strengthen local governments throughout the province:

### *IMPROVE THE FINANCIAL STRENGTH, VIABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS*

- Government will establish municipal service and taxation standards to ensure municipalities maximize local revenue sources, without imposing excessive burden on local taxpayers.
- Government will develop benchmarks and policy guidelines to assess the financial viability and stability of municipalities and provide incentives to support greater cooperation and regionalization of services.
- Government will develop a provincial policy for municipal taxation of large industrial and resource based industry to ensure all municipalities attain maximum taxation benefit while ensuring a level playing field for business and industry.
- Government will work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities to redefine the role and authority of municipal governments, enhanced by establishing in legislation "spheres of power", similar



to the approach currently being taken in a number of other provinces.

- Government will implement controls on the level of borrowing by municipalities to ensure they do not exceed their fiscal capacity to repay.
- Government will evaluate the variable cost sharing ratio on municipal infrastructure development to ensure that municipalities can access affordable infrastructure funding.

***INCREASE THE STRENGTH OF LOCAL***

***GOVERNMENT THROUGH INCREASED SELF-  
RELIANCE, COMPETENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.***

- Government in cooperation with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities and the Municipal Training and Development Corporation, expand training support for elected municipal officials as well as municipal administrative staff.
- Government will develop and implement minimum certification requirements for key municipal officials such as administrators and water system operators.
- Government in cooperation with the NLFM, develop a peer review and support system where larger, more sophisticated towns, can lend support and assistance to

those towns that cannot sustain a particular level of competency.

***DEVELOP THE MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE***

***REQUIRED FOR SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES,  
PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE  
PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT.***

- Government will negotiate a new federal/provincial cost sharing agreement for municipal infrastructure development to keep the cost affordable to residents.
- Government will conduct an evaluation of the current infrastructure programs and unmet needs re-establish funding approaches, priorities and targets for future municipal infrastructure development.
- Government will develop a policy framework to support regional approaches to service delivery and a framework on cost sharing arrangements with larger towns and cities.

*BUILD REGIONAL MUNICIPAL COOPERATION AND  
ENHANCE THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL  
GOVERNMENT IN PROVIDING MORE EFFECTIVE/  
EFFICIENT SERVICES AND ENCOURAGE PLANNING  
IN SUPPORT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT.*

- Government in cooperation with the NLFM, examine the current policy and approach to local governance and develop a strategic plan to guide efforts at enhancing the local governance model to provide more equitable treatment of all areas and improve the viability and sustainability of local government bodies.
- Government will develop a policy framework to guide and support the involvement of municipal governments in economic development activities.
- Government will develop and implement models for the establishment and management of shared regional infrastructure, including regional water supply systems, regional waste management systems and regional sewage treatment systems.
- Government will continue to provide financial and in-kind support and utilize the Community Cooperation Resource Centre as a mechanism to enhance the delivery of municipal services.

## **PROVINCE-WIDE 911**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will partner with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities to study the feasibility of a province-wide 911 service.

**Action:** Currently only Corner Brook and the Northeastern Avalon Peninsula have basic 911 service. With rapidly changing technologies it is important to determine the current feasibility of designing and implementing a province-wide 911 coverage.

## **PROVINCIAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to continuing a waste management strategy which will divert 50% of materials currently going to disposal by 2010, phasing out the use of incinerators and dumpsites and developing a regional system of waste management.

**Action:** Since the release of the Provincial Waste Management Strategy last year, the government has been actively pursuing the implementation of the strategy.

Government will provide leadership, establish standards and ensure compliance, as well as provide capital funding for waste management infrastructure.

Government will work with municipalities to assume responsibility for the administration of their waste management systems. New regional governance structures, designed primarily by municipalities, will be necessary to achieve this objective.

The role of the federal government should be to provide funding for infrastructure development based on municipal and provincial priorities.

## POLLUTION PREVENTION

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will prepare new regulations that will improve the overall quality of our environment.

### *AIR*

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will introduce new regulations to improve air quality in the province.

**Action:** It is the Liberal government's objective to improve our overall air quality. Based on detailed discussion with industry stakeholders, new Air Pollution Control regulations will be prepared. These regulations will establish an annual provincial sulphur dioxide emissions cap; a limit on sulphur content in fuel; and allow for

the establishment of vehicle emissions standards. The regulations will also implement guidelines related to above ground storage tanks and gasoline distribution networks and require that new industry employ best available control technology.

### *OZONE DEPLETION*

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will provide updated regulations in line with national commitments and provide timelines for the continued phasing out of ozone depleting substances.

**Action:** Ozone depletion has been recognized as a major environmental concern problem for several decades. Existing regulations recognize the importance of reducing our use of ozone depleting substances and moving toward appropriate substitutes. Updating of the current regulations will occur, in order to bring current regulations in line with our national commitments and to provide timelines for the phasing out such substances. New regulations will be consistent with practices that are being developed by industry.

## PESTICIDES

**Commitment:** The improper use of pesticides is a significant concern for the Liberal government. Following a consultation process, the government will develop the necessary regulatory changes.

**Action:** The Liberal government will continue to participate in initiatives developed by working groups of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Committee on Pest Management and Pesticides, such as the Healthy Lawns Strategy of the Healthy Lawns Working Group. The government also participates in an Atlantic Working Group on Pesticide Education.

The government will release a discussion paper on pesticides, which will propose changes to current regulations. This paper will form the basis of industry and public consultation and will consider the unnecessary use of pesticides, what new controls are required, possible bans on pesticides and the promotion of rational "best practices."

## WATER

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will increase its emphasis on water quality operator training and education to reduce the risk and incidence of drinking water contaminants, increase public confidence in water supplies and to protect groundwater resources.

**Action:** Government has a responsibility to provide safe and reliable drinking water and to properly manage our water resources. Considerable progress has been made in terms of water resources management in our province. Newfoundland and Labrador is one of only two provincial governments, which have assumed the direct responsibility for monitoring and reporting on public drinking water. The Liberal Government recently embarked on a unique training program for water system operators. In May 2001, the Liberal government released the report *Source to Tap: Water Supplies in Newfoundland and Labrador*. Within a year, approximately 855 municipal operators attended operator education and training seminars. In 2002-03, the Liberal government spent an additional \$1.5 million for drinking water initiatives such as a mobile Operator Education Training and Certification unit that trained over 700 people. The focus on operator training and education has

yielded significant results. In 2000, only 10 operator certificates were issued. In 2002, this had increased to 94.

The government is committed to this program and will increase its activities so that more certified operators are trained in the next year. Government's Disinfection Assistance Program has invested approximately \$17 million to assist 275 municipalities and local service districts, with 100% funding, up to \$100,000, for chlorination system upgrades and test kits.

Government will continue to provide financial assistance to municipalities to maintain clean and safe drinking water systems. Government will also work with municipalities on other measure such as the acquisition and installation of proper technology, training in the maintenance of the technology and on going monitoring and support.

## **HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED**

### **INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to reduce the incidence of poverty, provide income support services to those in need, eliminate barriers to employment, enhance self-reliance and self-sufficiency of individuals and support the development of a healthy and well functioning labour market.

**Action:** By working collaboratively with social, community and economic development partners, the government will undertake the following initiatives:

#### ***A NEW INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT ACT***

This new Act and regulations reflects government's efforts to ensure dignified financial assistance and to support those who are unable to find and maintain employment. It incorporates for the first time employment support services. The government will finalize the necessary regulations by the end of this year.

#### ***LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY***

This strategy will help ensure that the province is positioned to meet labour market challenges in the future. The Liberal government will conduct a series of regional information sessions in partnership with the Labour Market Development Council.

#### ***A NEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL/NEW PAY SYSTEM***

The Liberal government will implement a new computer pay system that will allow a more efficient delivery of income support to those using the system. The piloting of this new approach to service delivery for the income support and employment programs, including the introduction of telephone application process will commence this year.

#### *SUPPORTS TO VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE*

The Liberal government is committed to improving income support services to victims of violence. The majority of the recommendations of the Working Group for Supports to Victims of Violence have been implemented. Currently the government is studying the extension of the province wide recommendation relating to a start-up allowance for re-establishing a household for families affected by violence.

#### *COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE*

The Liberal government is piloting an initiative to extend community based pre-employment services to clients throughout the province. An initial pilot, the Life Works Project under the Community Education Initiative in Stephenville, integrates a variety of employment readiness services including: life and employability skills, work place literacy opportunities and generic and specific skills related to employment. This approach directly links clients to local labour market opportunities. Government will launch a second pilot another region of the province in 2004.

#### *MULTI-SERVICE CENTRE FOR YOUTH AT RISK*

The Liberal government has partnered with Choices for Youth, a community youth serving agency. The

government will commit resources to allow for the development of a youth shelter, transitional housing and multi-agency youth services site for youth at risk in the St. John's area. This model will provide youth long term housing, educational, career development and health services.

#### *SERVICES TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES*

The Liberal government has collaborated with the federal government to devolve the delivery of income support and related services to Natuashish and Sheshatshiu. This new approach enables the province to deliver these services on behalf of the federal government until the Innu have developed the necessary delivery capacity. The proposed transfer date is December 2003. The recent Land Claims Agreement in Principle signed with the Inuit will allow a similar arrangement to be pursued following formal signing of the agreement.

#### *SELF SUFFICIENCY RESEARCH PROJECT*

The Liberal government will develop a substantial proposal aimed at enabling income support clients to avail of local employment opportunities through the provision of additional employment support services, including earnings supplementation, and other non-wage benefits. This would target rural employment

opportunities. The project allows for the participation of approximately 3000 income support clients extending over six years. This proposal will be a joint initiative of the federal and provincial governments.

**EMPLOYABILITY ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

The Liberal government will finalize a new funding agreement to replace the current Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities. The Liberal government, along with other jurisdictions, will advocate strongly for additional federal resources to accompany this agreement to enable expansion of these services.

**SUPPORT APPLICATION PROGRAM EXPANSION**

The Support Applications Program was introduced in 1992 to assist income support recipients in starting and completing the process of obtaining orders for Child Support. Government will expand the Support Application Program with the hiring of five new Support Applications Social Workers. These staff will be Registered Social Workers who are trained in counselling, negotiation and mediation. The expansion will enhance the delivery of service throughout the province to income support clients as well as meet the growing demand for service from non-Human Resources and Employment clients.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF EX-PATRIATE**

**REGISTRATION DESK**

This service will match Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who live outside the province and are interested in returning to work with employment opportunities in skills shortage areas in the province.

**A NEW APPROACH TO DISABILITY ISSUES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will address disability issues in a more inclusive, coordinated and long-term manner.

**Action:** The government's five-year strategic plan, *Healthier Together* outlines the focus of health and community services and is inclusive of all residents of the province. The goals of the plan speak to many of the areas which need to be addressed if persons with disabilities are to realize full citizenship and inclusion in their communities. The plan provides a basis for a provincial framework of coordination of services and programs for persons with disabilities.

The government will develop a government-wide disability action plan. The strategy would include the creation of an office of disability issues within the Department of Health and Community services and the formation of a Council on Disability Issues. The council and the office will be given the mandate to lead and coordinate the development of a disability action plan in concert with *Healthier Together*.

One of the first tasks for the Council will be to facilitate the expansion of the Model for Coordination of Services to Children and Youth with Special Needs to include adults. The Council will build on the formative evaluation of the Model that was completed this year. Expanding the Model to include adults with special needs will provide a smoother transition into adult services.

Government is committed to an improved coordinated and collaborative of including individuals with disabilities and their representatives in the development of policies and programs that affect their well-being.

## **A FOCUS ON LABRADOR AND ITS PEOPLE**

The Liberal government is committed to dealing with the issues of concern to Labradorians and Aboriginal peoples in a meaningful way. This can be achieved by respecting the important role that Labrador and its development have in future of the entire province. The Government will ensure that the people who live in Labrador share in the development of the area's resources.

The government is also committed to respecting the contribution and rights of our aboriginal peoples through the entire province.

The Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will continue to administer government programming in Labrador that will promote and advance development opportunities, funding agreements and social issues affecting Labradorians.

### **INUIT FINAL AGREEMENT**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ratify and implement the Inuit Final Agreement

**Action:** On August 29, 2003, the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement was initialed by chief negotiators for the Province, LIA and the Government of Canada. Government will work with its partners in 2004 to ensure final ratification and implementation of this Agreement that will contribute to the economic and social well-being of the Labrador Inuit.

### **INNU LAND CLAIMS NEGOTIATIONS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to ensure a timely conclusion of Innu land claims negotiations with the provincial and federal governments.

**Action:** The Province, the federal government and the Innu Nation are actively negotiating the Innu land claim. The Liberal government in partnership with the Innu Nation and the federal



government are committed to the process of timely land claims negotiations.

### **SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF FEDERAL RESERVES AT NATUASHISH AND SHESHATSHIU**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will actively support the realization of a federal reserve at the Innu communities of Natuashish and Sheshatshiu.

**Action:** The Province, federal government and the Innu Nation are actively working towards the creation of federal reserves at Natuashish and Sheshatshiu. It is anticipated that the Natuashish Reserve will be created this year and Sheshatshiu by mid-2004.

### **ACCESS TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS BY MI'KMAQ AND LABRADOR METIS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government supports the efforts of the Mi'kmaq and the Labrador Metis in gaining access to federal funds.

**Action:** The Province supports the Mi'kmaq and the Labrador Metis in gaining access to those federal programs for which they are eligible, and participated in exploratory discussions with Canada and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) on FNI access to federal programs and services.

### **TIMELY DECISIONS ON THE LABRADOR METIS LAND CLAIM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to ask for a timely decision by the federal government.

**Action:** The Province will continue to urge the federal government to make a decision on the Labrador Metis land claim, especially in light of the recent decisions in the Powley case which has brought some clarity to Metis issues. If the land claim is accepted by the federal government, and the Province determines through its own independent review that it meets the criteria, the Province will participate in settling the claim of the Labrador Metis.

### **MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION WITH ALL LABRADORIANS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will strengthen its presence in Labrador by meaningful consultations with all Labradorians.

**Action:** The Liberal government will continue to use the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs to bring Labrador issues to the forefront. One of the department's primary roles is coordination and advocacy. The department will continue to assist and advise other provincial government departments with

respect to activities and policy development on issues impacting on or specifically aimed at addressing the needs of all Aboriginal people in the Province and residents of Labrador.

The department will build upon existing relations with all government bodies, and as a new department, its presence is continuing to grow stronger with respect to policies/issues related to Labrador. Of great impact, is the establishment of the departmental office in Labrador, where the Minister and Deputy Minister reside.

### 5 WING GOOSE BAY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will aggressively work with the federal government to ensure the enhancement and future viability of 5 Wing Goose Bay.

**Action:** The provincial and federal governments have recently established a Goose Bay Marketing Committee to identify mechanisms to ensure the long-term viability of the foreign military training program at 5 Wing Goose Bay. The government will be fully involved in marketing 5 Wing Goose Bay and will play an active role in negotiating the next Memorandum of Understanding for Allied military flight training.

The committee has been working to enhance new training opportunities and is identifying initiatives, which may generate greater efficiencies at 5 Wing Goose Bay. Initiatives that may facilitate the promotion and marketing of the operations include the implementation of a more cost effective organization model; development and implementation of a new cost and fee recovery model, and development of a new marketing strategy.

### PHASE III OF TRANS LABRADOR HIGHWAY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to completion of Phase III of the Trans Labrador Highway.

**Action:** The Environmental Impact Assessment for Phase III of the Trans Labrador Highway is currently underway. Subject to public review and approval by the Department of Environment, public hearings are scheduled to commence this winter. Construction is anticipated to start in 2004. Cost of Phase III is estimated at \$100 Million over a six-year period.

In an effort to ensure a better highway for the transport of people and goods across Labrador, a tender has been called for approximately seven kilometres of chip seal to be placed as a pilot project on the Trans Labrador Highway just outside of Happy

Valley-Goose Bay and approximately eight kilometres on the highway east of Wabush.

As part of this project three variations of chip seal are is being tested on a trial basis in order to determine the suitability to the highway and performance in this climate. The primary advantage of chip seal is that it provides a protective coating to road surfaces, increasing its durability and skid resistance.

# **A Strong and Growing Economy**

## A STRONG AND GROWING ECONOMY

The economy of Newfoundland and Labrador has seen unprecedented growth since 1998. GDP has led the country in three of these five years. This performance was capped with 13.4% growth in 2002, the strongest on record.

Exports have been the main driver of growth and now account for 30% of GDP - double that in 1996. While oil is now the Province's largest export item, and has been the key driver of growth, other sectors, such as fish, newsprint and mining, have also increased since 1996.

While GDP is a measure of the overall strength and performance of our economy, other economic indicators also support the increased level of activity in the Province. Real personal income has increased by about \$1 billion since 1996, an average of over 1.5% per year. Retail sales have reached record levels and housing starts, in excess of 2,400 in 2002, are at the highest level since 1991. These indicators are reflective of a growing and vibrant provincial economy.

The most tangible impact of a strong, growing economy is employment opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Between 1997 and 2003, employment increased by 15.1% or 28,500 jobs. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest employment numbers since 1989. The unemployment rate has declined substantially,

fewer people are using the EI system and social assistance caseloads are down substantially, over 20%, since 1996.

The benefits of a growing economy are being realized by the people of the Province in a very tangible way through employment and income growth. The impact of this is seen in substantially higher consumer spending.

The Liberal government is not willing to bask in the success of the past few years. We must look ahead, challenge the status quo and continue the forward momentum. The following are some of these initiatives that the Liberal government will deliver during the course of its next mandate to continue that growth and progress.

## INCREASING THE VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FISHERY

The Liberal government in cooperation with its clients and partners, will increase the viability and sustainability of the province's fishing industry. The following initiatives will ensure the future success of our fishing industry.

### QUALITY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to build upon its success in seafood quality assurance through initiatives and practices targeted towards improved quality.

**Action:** The Newfoundland and Labrador fishing industry has made great strides in the area of quality assurance, as the production of quality products is critical to maximizing the value of our fish resources.

Prior to the implementation of the new fish price settlement mechanism, final offer selection, the province's reputation for producing quality seafood was inconsistent. The government will continue to build upon its success in seafood quality assurance by increasing its complement of inspectors, and partnering with the industry to deliver more workshops on handling practices to improve quality. Through partnerships with harvesters and processors, and regulatory enforcement, government will promote the benefits of producing high quality products.

Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing industry has made great progress in its drive to achieve world recognition as a reliable supplier of top quality seafood products in the global marketplace. Government will build upon successes to date and continue to work with fishing industry participants on quality assurance initiatives designed to ensure maximum landed values for catches and maximum returns from the marketplace.

## DIVERSIFICATION

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work with industry, and development organizations, to further diversify the industry away from traditional species, towards new species, new products and new markets.

**Action:** A cornerstone of the future success of the fishing and aquaculture industries is continued diversification of these industries. In the fisheries sector, once underutilized species such as snow crab, shrimp and whelks are now valued at more than \$375 million. Investments vehicles such as the Federal/Provincial Fisheries Diversification Program and Aquaculture development programs are critical to the future of these industries. It is imperative that funding continue, for development and diversification initiatives, especially in light of the recent closures of cod stocks.

In the absence of a federal/provincial cost-shared agreement, the Liberal government will spend \$500,000 in its 2003-2004 budget to continue its fisheries diversification activities. These activities will focus on underutilized species such as shrimp, sea urchin, sea cucumber, whelks, and toad crab. The government will also develop a proposal for a new cost-shared fisheries diversification program valued at \$10 million building on past successes.

The province's commercial fishing industry continues to be the most important contributor to the sustainability and prosperity of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Government is

committed to continue to assist the industry to diversify and develop. This will be accomplished through support for professionalization in the harvesting and processing sectors, investments in industry diversification and strategic fisheries infrastructure, and through a strong voice to protect Newfoundland and Labrador's share of adjacent fish resources.

## AQUACULTURE

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to give priority to the development of the province's aquaculture industry.

**Action:** As a result of government's focus on aquaculture, the industry has made significant progress over the past several years. The Liberal government will continue to invest in research, productivity, regulatory reform and partnership building.

This investment will ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador is a world leader in the cod aquaculture industry. The availability of research, expertise, and infrastructure gives this province the competitive advantage of becoming an international leader in cod aquaculture. Currently, with private sector investment, the industry is perfecting the growing of cod through an egg-to-plate process. Government will work with and assist industry to ensure that the cod aquaculture sector achieves its full potential in our province as an economically viable and employment generating contributor to rural economies.

The government supports innovative approaches to maximize the province's aquaculture potential in both the shellfish and finfish sectors.

Capitalizing on opportunities in the province's aquaculture industry will be a key element of sustainable rural economies. Government is working with the aquaculture industry and other stakeholders to ensure maximum benefits are realized from our aquaculture development potential.

## JOINT MANAGEMENT AND ACTION TEAM FOR COD RECOVERY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government through the recently established joint action team will develop a Newfoundland and Labrador Cod Stock Recovery Strategy. Such a collaborative and coordinated approach with the federal government to the serious issue of stock rebuilding is a precursor to a more formal and definitive role for the province in the management of its adjacent fish resources.

**Action:** The importance of the province having a greater say in the management of its most important resource, the fishery, has been made clear in the province's White Paper on Joint Fisheries Management and in the final report of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in

Canada. The province's position in this matter was strongly supported by industry stakeholders during a recent series of roundtables on joint fisheries management.

As a step to achieving this objective, the province will be collaborating with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans on an Action Team for Cod Stock Recovery.

The task of rebuilding depleted fish stocks and improving fisheries management processes to ensure long-term sustainability of our fisheries demands cooperation between governments and fishing industry participants. Government will work with the federal government and fishing industry on a priority basis to develop and implement an aggressive strategy for rebuilding of our groundfish resources as a precursor to agreement on a new approach to joint management of our fisheries by the federal and provincial governments.

## PROCESSING POLICY REVIEW

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to a timely review of the Commissioner's recommendations and implementation of necessary changes prior to commencement of the 2004 fishery.

**Action:** As a proactive approach to addressing the changing circumstances within the fishing industry, the province announced the appointment of a Commissioner to conduct a comprehensive

review of the province's fish processing policy. This important initiative will address several important issues in the fishing industry, including resource availability in relation to processing capacity, regional balance, economic viability and industry competitiveness.

Our fishing industry operates in a global environment which demands that we remain competitive if it is to return the maximum economic and social benefits to the people and communities of our province. Government has appointed a Commissioner to review fish processing policy and recommend changes necessary to promote industry stability, economic viability and improved returns to industry participants.

## FOREIGN OVERFISHING

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will aggressively press the federal government and the international community to take all necessary measures to rebuild and conserve straddling fish stocks.

**Action:** Despite efforts by the Government of Canada, and the strong and vocal position taken by the province over the last several years, the problem of foreign overfishing continues to persist on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and on the Flemish Cap. Repeated violations of conservation measures such as use of small mesh gear, mis-reporting, and overfishing quotas has shown that NAFO continues to be ineffective at enforcing its conservation and management measures. Such action does not support Canadian efforts to rebuild and protect valuable fish stocks.



In the short term, the Province will continue to demand that Canada take custodial management of straddling fish stocks, including the establishment of a Canadian Custodial Management regime outside the 200 mile limit.

## **LABOUR RELATIONS STABILITY IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government, upon completion of its review of the Fisheries Industry Collective Bargaining Act, will develop the necessary legislative amendments to ensure stability in the fishing industry.

**Action:** The Liberal government is currently conducting a review of the Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act to ensure that the Act provides a framework for labour relations stability for the 2004 fishing season and beyond. A consultant has been retained to provide recommendations regarding the effectiveness of the legislation, including the Final Offer Selection Model with a view to recommending changes if and as required. The current model has been operating in the fishing industry since 1997. Following the submission of the consultant's final report, the government will develop the necessary legislative amendments to ensure continued stability in this most important sector of the provincial economy.

## **INSHORE SHRIMP FISHERY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work with the industry and the federal government to improve the industry's competitive position, and maximize the returns to the province from this abundant and adjacent resource. Action to address issues such as excess handling, trucking, and quality assurance are critical to the success of this fishery.

**Action:** The inshore shrimp fishery has faced many challenges since its development in the late 1990s. A global over supply of shrimp and strong international competition has had a negative impact on the viability of the industry. The Province has been working with the industry to address inefficiencies as identified by the provincially sponsored Inshore Shrimp Panel.

Government commits to continue to work with harvesters, processors and the federal government to address impediments to long term growth and viability, and to maximize benefits from the shrimp resource.

## **SEALING INDUSTRY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to make strategic investments to assist the private sector in developing the sealing industry. These investments will continue through various cost-shared agreements, budgetary commitments and through advocacy.

**Action:** The sealing industry now has a market value in the order of \$35-\$40 million annually. Industry participants project that, with continued support of government, the industry has the potential to reach a value of \$100 million annually.

With provincial support, a new tannery in Dildo, Trinity Bay is expected to begin operation in 2004. This new operation will increase the province's capacity to produce garment ready seal skins, thereby creating additional employment and adding value to the province's seal resource.

The government continues to support industry efforts to fully utilize the seal resource. A much larger focus is being placed on seal oil production, especially for its use as a health food supplement. Also, directly related to government's promotional efforts, seal fur has also regained popularity in the international fur markets.

## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY AN AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government will implement an Agricultural Policy Framework for the province that will increase by 20% to \$100 million of farm receipts over the next five years.

**Action:** The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) will be funded to \$32.5 million over the next five years. This federal/provincial framework is the largest in the history of the agricultural funding for Newfoundland and Labrador

The APF will provide the funding platform upon which the agrifoods industry will grow and prosper. Through the five elements, the industry in our province will see advances in environment, food safety, research and development, technology adoption, secondary processing, and education. This will create a strong and stable base. The APF will foster an environment for innovation, growth, and profitability. Further diversification and expansion of all commodities is projected.

Government will also develop specific programs that will enhance the growth of the agrifoods industry in Labrador.

## AGRICULTURE DIVERSIFICATION

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government will partner with industry to develop initiatives that strengthen the industry's diversification opportunities. The governments target for the next five years will be a 20% increase in diversification efforts for all agricultural sectors.

**Action:** Consumer taste preferences are changing and a growing demand is emerging for high-value crops that can be grown right here in the province. Nutraceuticals and biotechnology are also areas of rapid development globally. Technology has become more advanced and smaller scale efficient secondary processing equipment is available to use in this province. Diversification provides choices for our growing industry.

The dairy sector has the ability to double the size of the industry over the next 15 years. With this increase will come the requirement for the expansion of secondary processing into dairy products such as cheese, yogurt, and butter.

There are also significant capabilities and opportunities in the vegetable, berry and meat sectors as well. Diversification initiatives of the government also include: research into the economic potential of our native plants in the horticultural and medicinal industries and agronomic and economic research of feed grain production and alternative feed products.

## A NEW FORESTRY ECOSYSTEM ACT

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will introduce a new Forestry Ecosystem Act.

**Action:** New advances in how forests ecosystems are managed, coupled with changing demands on our forests and forest resources, necessitate the need for a new Forest Ecosystem Act. The overall theme of a new act will be balancing current demands on the forest resource in the Province. These include economic needs such as providing a timber resource for industry and ensuring the economic viability of the forest industry, social needs such as recreational use of the forest, and biological values. The new legislation will be in place in the late spring of 2004.

## GROWING OUR NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will focus on the development and growth of a non-timber forest products industry.

**Action:** Non-timber forests products (NTFP) is becoming a major economic industry in Canada with a estimated retail value of over \$500 million. During the next five years development of a NTFP

sector in the province will be pursued, with the goal of creating a one million dollar industry. Non-Timber products can include forest products for crafts, berries, tree cones and balsam fir tips for wreaths, caribou moss and Christmas trees.

## **INTEGRATION OF SAWMILLING AND PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRIES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will facilitate further integration of timber industries.

**Action:** The Liberal government is committed to the successful integration of the sawmill and pulp and paper industries in our province. This has already lead to improvements in wood utilization and 100% expansion of sawmill production. The province will continue to encourage agreements for the exchange of sawlogs from the pulp and paper companies to the sawmills. The sawmills return to the pulp and paper mills, the sawlog volume in the form of wood chips and pulpwood size trees.

## **FOREST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN LABRADOR**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work with Labradorians and realize the full potential of a sustainable forest industry in Labrador

**Action:** With the approval of the forest ecosystem-based management plan for District 19 and agreements with the Innu Nation and Labrador Metis Nation, the province is poised to develop a sustainable forest industry in Labrador, maximizing benefits to residents of Labrador, with an estimated value of \$50 million in forest products. The Innu Nation have promoted their relationships with the government as a model for governments and aboriginal people across Canada. At a recent workshop in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, it was stated the relationship developed between the government and Innu Nation is the best example of government/aboriginal cooperation in forest management in Canada.

The Liberal government in consultation with a number of local stakeholder groups will conduct a study on the use of fibre in Labrador, including: value-added initiatives, marketing of products, transportation costs, optimum sawmill size, dry kiln development, and the marketing of sawmill by-product. The government will also be working with the Town of Port Hope Simpson in assisting in the development of a \$2.1 million log lay down area in support of the existing forest industry in the Port Hope Simpson area.

## STRENGTHENING THE BUSINESS SECTOR

### GROWING THE ECONOMY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue with its plan to grow the economy with its Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth.

**Action:** The government is committed to a very action oriented Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth. This is the cornerstone of the Liberal government's economic agenda. It is structured around five major policy thrusts and commits to 135 specific priorities for action, with over two-thirds of them focused on rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The implementation of the strategy will continue as it is contributing directly to the strong economic performance we are currently experiencing. The following new initiatives will continue this growth.

#### *NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION AGENCY*

The Liberal government's new Business Attraction Agency will become fully operational in late 2003. The new agency will be responsible for enticing new investment, companies and jobs to the province in strategic growth sectors of the economy, building on and incorporating the success achieved to date by NETWORK Newfoundland and Labrador in attracting call centres

to the province. The Agency will work in partnership with the business community and regional and municipal economic development organizations.

The new Business Attraction Agency will adopt a focused approach to marketing the province as a prime location for foreign direct investment in specific targeted sectors which have significant and sustainable growth potential for the creation of new jobs and new wealth for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### *AN AGGRESSIVE SMALL BUSINESS AGENDA*

Small businesses will continue to make a real difference in our economy. Almost 95% of all businesses in our province are small businesses – there are over 20,000 of them in Newfoundland and Labrador today, accounting for over one-third of total employment and creating 80% of all new jobs in our economy. Government's small business development agenda, strengthened and refocused through the Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth, is helping make this happen – through measures like an increase in the tax free threshold for the payroll tax that has removed 95% of all businesses from that tax today – like our new Small Business Seed Capital Equity Program, our new Venture Capital Tax Credit Program and our new Small Business and Market Development

Program. The recently established Small Business Advisory Council will provide ongoing advice on added measures government should consider to help stimulate and grow the small business sector in our province even further.

#### **INCREASING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The Liberal government will encourage private investment in new or expanding small businesses, as a means of creating new jobs and diversifying the economy, by providing investors with provincial tax incentives with enhanced incentives if they invest in rural areas.

Government recently announced a number of new measures to strengthen the small business climate in the province, including the following related to venture capital. The government made amendments to the existing Direct Equity Tax Credit Program to make corporations eligible for investment tax credits, in addition to individual investors, in order to open up new sources of capital for eligible small businesses.

Government will support the establishment of a privately managed pooled venture capital fund in the province, supported by a provincial tax credit for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage them to invest in the fund. The fund would, in turn, invest the

pooled monies in a number of small to medium sized businesses. A tax-based incentive for investors would lower the financial risk for investors and increase the probability of providing a reasonable rate of return to them by the fund. The public call for fund proposals closed in August and government is currently evaluating all proposals. The government will provide a 10-year provincial corporate income tax holiday, starting in 2003, for existing or new venture capital corporations in the province, whose objectives are to invest in growth-oriented sectors of the economy. If the business objectives of the venture capital corporation focus predominately on rural Newfoundland and Labrador, an additional five-year tax holiday would be provided, for a total corporate tax-free holiday of 15 years.

#### **PROMOTING OUR IT INDUSTRY**

The advanced technology industries have been targeted as a priority for action in governments Jobs and Growth renewal strategy. The government will proceed with plans to establish a three year 'Near Shore Development Initiative' to promote the province as a location for outsourced work for large IT companies. The province will continue to strengthen distance education services,

telemedicine services, online government services and e-commerce throughout the province, especially in rural areas.

The government will build on the successes of the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation and various community based organizations that promote new business and economic development opportunities in the regions, such as the Burgeo Broadcasting System, the Smart Labrador group, the recently established Information Technology Centre at the Burin Campus of the College of the North Atlantic and e-business pilot projects with a number of businesses on the Avalon Peninsula through ONLINe's e)merge initiative.

#### ***PAYROLL TAX ELIMINATED FOR SMALL BUSINESSES***

The Liberal government will, by the end of its next mandate, eliminate the payroll tax for all small businesses.

#### ***BROADBAND STRATEGY***

In partnership with provincial stakeholders, government will develop a high-speed broadband Internet strategy with a goal of connecting every community in Newfoundland and Labrador by the year 2006. The Government of Canada will be called upon to support the implementation of this strategy, consistent with its national obligations and policy commitments in this area.

#### ***REGIONAL ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION FUND***

The Liberal government will seek the support of the federal government to establish a \$100 million Regional Economic Diversification Fund to accelerate the implementation of the strategic economic development plans and priorities of the 20 regional economic development boards. The rural development associations across the province will play an active role in the implementation of these plans and priorities as appropriate.

#### ***PROVINCIAL VENTURE CAPITAL INVESTMENT***

The Liberal government will seek consensus with public sector representatives to require public service pension investment funds to invest a prescribed value of their portfolios (e.g. 5%) in provincial growth oriented companies that are in need of new venture capital. This provincially based, labour sponsored venture capital corporation will be supported by a provincial tax credit as an incentive to set up such a fund in the province.

#### *PROFESSIONAL AMBASSADORS*

Government will appoint professional Ambassadors representing Newfoundland and Labrador in key provincial cities of Canada and other countries to promote the general interests of Newfoundland and Labrador and to serve as a business consulate service for Newfoundland and Labrador companies.

#### *RURAL BANKING*

The Liberal government will develop a strategy to partner with credit unions to enhance and strengthen their role as personal and commercial banking institutions in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### *CANADA-NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR*

##### *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD*

The Liberal government will continue to encourage the federal government to partner with the establishment of a Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Economic Development Board to pool the collective resources of the two orders of government in support of common economic development objectives and priorities and to eliminate the overlap and duplication that exists in this area.

#### *STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FORUM*

Business, labour and government recently formed a new strategic partnership to identify areas where all three parties can work together more effectively to take advantage of our growing economic opportunities. It is based on successful partnership models in other North Atlantic countries, such as Ireland, Iceland and the Netherlands. It is a new way of doing business in Newfoundland and Labrador. The government is encouraged by the success of this initiative and will be expanding its role so that a more cooperative and collaborative approach to building our province can be realized.

Future work of the Forum will focus on strategic factors affecting the competitiveness and productivity of the provincial economy and the identification of where partners can effectively work together to address particular challenges and opportunities for advancing economic growth. Inclusion of the broader voluntary or "community" sector will be pursued to ensure appropriate linkages between economic and social development.



#### **STRENGTHENING RURAL**

##### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Liberal government is committed to strengthening its partnerships with the 20 Regional Economic Development Boards and other community-based development groups. These relationships are central to our economic development agenda and it is producing real results. The real changes happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador were profiled at Rural EXPO 2003 which built on the momentum of the past few years and showcased the best rural Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer the world.

##### **GROWING A NEW INDUSTRY FOR OUR PROVINCE**

The call centre industry did not exist in Newfoundland and Labrador five years ago. The Liberal government will continue its aggressive international marketing and support through NETWORK Newfoundland and Labrador (a public-private partnership between the provincial government and Aliant). This new industry currently employs over 3,500 people – about one-third of them outside the St. John's region – and shows significant potential for further growth in all regions of our province. Within the past two years alone, major new call centres have been attracted to Corner Brook, Grand Falls-

Windsor, Carbonear and St. John's. The call centre industry currently generates over \$75 million in direct wages and salaries annually for the provincial economy.

##### **EXPORTS – A VITAL PART OF OUR ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**

Exporting is critical to Newfoundland and Labrador's economic performance and new job creation. The Liberal government will continue to focus its attention in this area of our economy. Exports have more than tripled since 1992 B reaching \$9.9 billion in 2002 B and creating new jobs in all sectors of our economy and in all regions of the province.

##### **RED TAPE REDUCTION TASK FORCE**

A Task Force comprising of experienced and respected entrepreneurs has been established this year to identify regulatory "red-tape" barriers to private sector job creation and business growth, especially for small businesses. The Task Force will make recommendations on strategic opportunities to reduce these barriers immediately and over the longer term strengthen the competitiveness and productivity of the economy without sacrificing legitimate policy objectives such as the protection of the environment or workplace health and safety.

## MAXIMIZING BENEFITS FROM ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

### DEVELOPMENT OF HEBRON/BEN NEVIS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will aggressively pursue development options to continue the momentum in our offshore petroleum industry.

**Action:** The Hebron/Ben Nevis field was discovered in 1981 and contains estimated resources of approximately 400-700 million barrels of oil. The proponents stated in February 2002 that the economic risks, the significant challenges of the offshore resource and the complex nature of the development resulted in a decision not to move forward with the project at that time. Since then, government has been monitoring the decision making process of the proponents in an effort to encourage the project's timely development and ensure that the momentum in our offshore petroleum industry continues. Government will continue to examine potential ways to encourage the development of this project sooner rather than later.

### DEVELOPING OUR NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will ensure timely development of our offshore and onshore natural gas potential.

**Action:** The development of this Province's natural gas resources is a logical progression from the already successful and growing oil industry. Not only will the Province receive fiscal and industrial benefits, we will also be generating a cleaner source of energy that could be used for export, domestic use or to advance industrial development.

The Liberal government has been very active in promoting the timely development of our natural gas resources through partnerships. We have partnered with NOIA and co-hosted a natural gas forum to highlight some of the opportunities and challenges associated with natural gas development and we have also completed, in conjunction with other stakeholders, extensive research and analysis on the Province's natural gas potential. This included an analysis of markets, alternative forms of transportation, resource potential and industrial and fiscal benefits.

The Liberal government will finalize a natural gas royalty regime, including consideration of incentives for early development. The government has completed extensive international research, analysis and stakeholder consultations in support of this commitment. Additionally, we have been strong participants in the Atlantic Energy Roundtable, a process to improve regulatory efficiencies in the offshore.

The Liberal government will continue to promote our natural gas potential through participation in international events and

venues, while, more recently, the successful resolution of the NL/NS Maritime boundary paved the way for renewed interest in the gas prone Laurentian Sub-Basin.

## DEVELOPING THE LOWER CHURCHILL

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government will pursue the development of the Lower Churchill River project with the federal government, other provincial governments and the aboriginal peoples of Labrador. This agreement will only be signed if it meets with the approval of the people of the province.

**Action:** This government continues its efforts to develop the Lower Churchill River and achieve the best possible deal that provides maximum benefits to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We believe an agreement can be negotiated to maximize benefits for our people and discussions will continue with all interested parties in an effort to develop the Lower Churchill in a timely manner. The government is currently engaged in talks with the federal government about any potential role they could play in making the project more beneficial for our province, while helping meet Canada's climate change commitments.

## PURSUING RENEWABLE ENERGY INITIATIVES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to pursuing renewable energy initiatives.

**Action:** The Liberal government is committed to the pursuit of renewable energy initiatives through its support for research and development, project demonstration, green power procurement and project development.

Today, the Province supplies in excess of 70% of its own electricity needs from renewable sources and exports over four times that amount, making us the largest exporter of renewable energy in Canada. During the past three years, renewable energy projects have included a 40 MW hydraulic project at Granite Canal, a 27 MW hydraulic generator at Grand Falls, a 15 MW cogeneration facility in Corner Brook and a 4 MW upgrade of the hydraulic facility in Bishop's Falls.

The Province will develop its renewable energy resources. In order to ensure that new technologies are given full consideration, wind energy proposals are being considered for a 25 MW grid connected wind demonstration project in St. Lawrence and a smaller scale project in the diesel supplied Ramea system. If these are successful, wind energy will be considered for future energy requirements.

## INTEGRATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND POWER

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will pursue its review of the feasibility of the integration of Newfoundland Power (NP) with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (NLH).

**Action:** The government will continue to study the cost of integrating Newfoundland Power with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro to create one publicly owned electrical utility in the province. Specifically, the government through its Electricity Policy Review will determine if it is in the best interest of the province and the consumer for NP and NLH to be integrated.

The people of the province have indicated that they want government to consider this option and government is committed to ensuring that a complete analysis on the viability of this initiative is done.

Such a purchase may result in structural efficiencies and, as a result, lower cost power for consumers. However it is important that the current service levels are maintained to ensure that integration does not result in a loss or decrease in services currently being provided to the people of the province.

## NEW MANDATE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HYDRO

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will broaden the mandate of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

**Action:** The government will re-mandate Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (NLH) to provide the crown corporation with the necessary flexibility to play a greater role in all matters of energy development, not just electricity. Specifically the government through its Electricity Policy Review will determine the role that NLH can play in such things as oil and gas development, wind power and the development of new energy technologies to be used in the province.

NLH can play a significant role in developing a local market for natural gas. Through the conversion of the Holyrood thermal plant to burn this much cleaner and environmentally friendly fuel, NLH may be the largest future consumer of natural gas in the province. Natural gas has the potential to reduce Holyrood fuel costs and significantly reduce emissions. Also, NLH may be in a position to provide gas distribution services. Other electric utilities in North America have expanded into the gas distribution industry which may provide opportunities for NLH as well.

## ATLANTIC ACCORD REVIEW

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to aggressively enforce the principal beneficiary provision of the Atlantic Accord.

**Action:** The Atlantic Accord is not working the way that it was intended as it relates to petroleum revenues. Newfoundland and Labrador was expected to be the principal beneficiary of the revenues generated by offshore petroleum development, but current analysis shows that this will not be the case. The government will continue to press the federal government to make the necessary adjustments to ensure that the intent of the Accord is realized.

## ELECTRICITY POLICY REVIEW

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will finalize its public consultation process this year and articulate the province's future electricity policy by the end of 2003.

**Action:** Government initiated an Electricity Policy Review in 1998 to examine the structure of the electricity industry, its regulation, the pricing of electricity, how electricity could contribute to the province's economic development, and future sources of electricity generation that may be available. Since that time, a public consultation process has been completed and public forums are currently being held throughout the province. Government will detail the complete policy by the end of this year.

## A COORDINATED APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

**Commitment:** Since climate change is a long term issue, the Liberal government will take the necessary steps to coordinate climate change initiatives, implement a new action plan, facilitate access to federal funding, support local industries in discussions on federal regulatory programs, provide advice to the public and provide the necessary monitoring and reporting structure.

**Action:** Climate change, while an issue of global concern, will impact the province over the long term. The Liberal Government has therefore committed to addressing this issue. There will be more opportunities and also challenges for government in the area of climate change in 2003-04 and beyond. To begin consideration of this long-term issue, several actions will be undertaken.

Government has released a discussion document and comments are now being received on the development of a provincial action plan on climate change. The Liberal Government will complete and release a climate control plan by the end of the year.

Given the approximately \$1 billion recently allocated by the federal government, a provincial committee has been established to pursue appropriate bilateral arrangements with the federal government.

The Liberal Government will also develop measures that apply to government's own operations. This will include initiatives that reduce energy consumption and waste generation thereby reducing greenhouse gas generation in government operations.

## **MINERAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM EXTENDED**

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government will continue the Mineral Incentive Program for another five years.

**Action:** This program has been a critical factor in attracting outside exploration companies to this province and in supporting our local headquartered junior companies. The program has resulted in new mineral finds that have attracted the attention of both local and outside companies with increased investment. The extension of the Mineral Incentive Program will ensure the continued growth of the exploration sector.

## **INCREASED GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will enhance the attractiveness of the province as a place to invest in mineral exploration by providing more updated geological information.

**Action:** The Government will develop a number of strategies to support the exploration sector by having all exploration assessment reports on a web site, increased geological studies in selected areas in which industry has expressed an interest, and working cooperatively with the Federal Government in an effort to attract new federal geoscience funds.

## **A NEW FOCUS ON TOURISM AND CULTURE**

### **NEW TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGY AND TOURISM MARKETING COUNCIL**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will implement a new Tourism Marketing Strategy through the newly created Tourism Marketing Council.

**Action:** The provincial marketing strategy, announced in 2003, will continue to focus on the Maritimes and Ontario as central markets. It also emphasizes the importance of the Province's activity markets such as hunting and fishing, adventure markets and the need for a stronger Internet presence in marketing the province as a whole.

The government has spearheaded the creation of an innovative, industry-led Tourism Marketing Council. The creation of this new Council is viewed as a very positive step for the

tourism industry in this province and will allow industry and government in a more cooperative manner to move tourism to the next level.

The mandate of the Council will be to help prepare strategic plans and annual marketing plans, and to monitor their implementation. The council will also assist the government with industry marketing partnership programs and report annually on the status of these programs.

## **TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will finalize its new province-wide tourism product development strategy in 2004.

**Action:** To make Newfoundland and Labrador a "top of mind" tourism destination, the Province must have more diverse market-ready products to bring to market and a continuously increasing market share in its target markets of Sightseeing/Touring, Outdoor Adventure, Meetings, Conventions and Incentive Travel, Winter Product, and Hunting and Fishing.

In 2003, the government, in consultation with industry partners, initiated the development of a new province-wide tourism product development strategy. This strategy, to be finalized in 2004, will help build quality tourism products and experiences for both non-resident and resident visitors.

## **CULTURAL POLICY PHASE II**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will commence and complete Phase II of the Cultural Policy Development Plan.

**Action:** The creation of Cultural Policy in 2002 represented Phase I of our Cultural Policy Development Plan. It will form the basis for the Strategic Cultural Plan. The government will now undertake Phase II of the plan setting out the goals, objectives and key actions, which flow from the guiding principles.

## **OPENING OF THE ROOMS AND THE WEST COAST EXHIBITION CENTRE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will open The Rooms in 2004 and the West Coast Exhibition Centre in 2005.

**Action:** The opening of these two associated facilities will provide the Province with international caliber cultural facilities capable of preserving and showcasing the culture, arts, and history of this Province. These facilities will also provide the opportunity for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to experience the culture and history of other national and international regions.

The Rooms will attract significant national and international exhibitions, researchers, and visitors from all parts of the world. Construction is on schedule and The Rooms is slated to open in June 2004. As construction of The Rooms is ongoing, Board



members and exhibit planners are also working to ensure that exhibits are in place on schedule.

The Corner Brook Exhibition Centre, slated to open in early 2005, will complement The Rooms in exhibiting the Province's art and heritage on the west coast. International and travelling exhibitions will be programmed for the Centre as part of The Rooms' enhanced outreach and programming capabilities. There will also be an archival space in the Centre designed to provide researchers with access to the resources of the Provincial Archives, both on-line and through use of microfilm copies. The Provincial Museum is providing an additional \$650,000 to be directed towards the museum exhibition, which will be housed at the Corner Brook Museum.

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURES AND ECO-TOURISM

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will protect and conserve our natural beauty and pristine environment through the development of quality Outdoor Adventure and Eco-Tourism industry. Particular attention will be paid to opportunities that have potential to extend tourism operating seasons.

**Action:** Outdoor Adventure and Eco-Tourism markets are among the world's fastest-growing tourism sectors. More and more, environmentally aware travelers are seeking relatively undisturbed

natural areas in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature and accompanying cultural features.

Many of our Outdoor Adventure and Eco-Tourism operations are small, owner-operated businesses which are highly seasonal, relatively new and located mainly in rural areas. Working with these operators on market-readiness initiatives, including interpretation, product quality and packaging, and helping to develop networks and cooperative partnerships, is key to helping bring more and better products to market.

The Liberal government will work collaboratively with our industry partners toward the development of high-quality, competitive tourism products which demonstrate long-term economic value, a dynamic professional work force and substantial benefits, especially to small businesses and people in rural areas.

The government will partner with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador to promote the strategic tourism product development strategy for outdoor adventure and eco-tourism in the province. We will provide the basis for formulating specific strategies and actions, with the objectives of: developing more market-ready products that match consumer needs; providing operators with the skills and expertise necessary to distribute these products in the market place; and, providing a quality experience to customers.



## **NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will develop innovative strategies for natural resource management through major research studies.

**Action:** In 2003, the government began research on a major long-term study of the impacts of the range expansion of the eastern coyote on the Gaff Topsails and Middle Ridge Caribou herds, an expanded study on moose-vehicle collisions and a big game inventory and classification program. Together, this research will enable Government to assess the population sizes and health of big game populations, develop innovative strategies for resource management in the Province and improve highway safety.

## **A DYNAMIC RECREATION POLICY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government in partnership with the stakeholders will create a 10-year recreation policy to develop a more dynamic and sustainable recreation environment and quality of life in our province.

**Action:** The need for a common recreation vision, policy and strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador has been recognized by the government, the Newfoundland and Labrador Parks and Recreation Association and other non-government agencies. A shared ten-year policy which provides a coherent set of overall directions and goals and an agreed-upon strategy of inter-related

actions to fulfill policy goals and targets in a systematic way will result in the building of a more dynamic and sustainable recreation environment and quality of life in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## **A NEW PROVINCIAL SPORT TRAINING FACILITY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will pursue partnerships for the innovative, cost-effective development of a Provincial Sport Training Facility.

**Action:** The development of a provincial sport training facility to serve athletes, coaches and sports organizations in the province is a priority. This project will allow the government to meet the training needs of the Provincial Sport Organizations and others displaced by the closure of the Torbay Provincial Training Centre.

## **IMPROVING LABOUR RELATIONS AND WORKPLACE SAFETY**

### **IMPROVING THE LABOUR RELATIONS CLIMATE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to invest time and capital to improve the labour relations climate to ensure that our province remains an attractive place for investment, business development and workers.

**Action:** A stable labour relations climate is critical to attracting business and providing an environment for economic growth. In the past two years, the province has witnessed a marked improvement in the labour relations climate. Through the collaborative efforts of business, labour and the government, the number of work stoppages has been steadily declining. During 2002, there were only five work stoppages, the lowest in five years and only one short of the record low of four stoppages in a single year. The 1,793 person-days lost as a result of work stoppages in 2002 is the lowest since 1964 and this trend is continuing into 2003. With only a few months left in 2003, the province has only experienced four work stoppages. This improvement can be attributed, in part, to the efforts of the government to increase stakeholder awareness of our dispute resolution services.

With the continued cooperation of the business and labour community, the government will continue to invest in initiatives that will ensure that labour relations continue to improve.

### **EXPANSION OF THE PREVENTIVE MEDIATION PROGRAM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will expand its Preventive Mediation program to more small and medium sized business in 2004.

**Action:** Over the past year the Liberal government has undertaken a promotion of its Preventive Mediation Program (PMP), which assists management and workers to work together to improve communications and cooperation at the workplace level, and to resolve workplace issues through joint problem solving. The PMP encourages a shift to a more positive labour relations environment and promotes responsible collective bargaining in the Province.

In an effort to meet the varying challenges associated with labour-management relations, the government will expand existing PMP services to more small and medium sized businesses in 2004. In addition, the government will be aggressively promoting the program to the public sector in order to deal with outstanding grievances prior to the next round of collective bargaining in this sector.

### **GRIEVANCE MEDIATION LEGISLATION**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will amend the *Labour Relations Act* and the *Public Service Collective Bargaining Act* to enshrine grievance mediation in collective bargaining.

**Action:** In 2002, the Liberal government initiated consultations with business and labour stakeholders, and the Labour Relations Board, on potential changes to collective bargaining legislation. The government will bring to the House of Assembly amendments to the *Labour Relations Act* and the *Public Service*

*Collective Bargaining Act* to enshrine grievance mediation in collective bargaining legislation. These changes will emphasize Government's focus and priority on encouraging employers and employees themselves to resolve workplace issues.

## **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LABOUR RELATIONS ARBITRATION SYSTEM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will improve and modify the arbitration system in the province by 2004.

**Action:** The government has set up a labour arbitration working group comprising business, labour, and government to review and modify the arbitration process in the province. The working group will make recommendations on ways to improve the arbitration process later this year. The government will implement the necessary changes in 2004 to make the province's labour relations arbitration system the most current in the country meeting the needs of all parties.

## **ANNUAL LABOUR STANDARDS FORUMS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will hold annual Labour Standard Forums to ensure that the labour standard legislation is relevant and current.

**Action:** To ensure that the province's Labour Standards legislation is relevant and continues to address the challenges of today's

workplaces, the Liberal Government has committed to holding an annual Labour Standards Forum with senior business and labour leaders. The second annual Labour Standards Forum is planned for November 2003.

## **EXPANDING INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC OHS STRATEGIES**

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government will expand its ability to address industry specific occupational health and safety strategies in the workplace.

**Action:** The Liberal government is expanding its capabilities to better reflect the current strategic direction and to better serve the workers and employers of the province. In 2004, expanded resources will allow the government to more effectively address workplace health and safety issues such as ergonomics and occupational disease and ensure proactive measures are developed and implemented to prevent injuries and illnesses from occurring. In addition, the government will expand in-house expertise in relation to industry specific hazards; improve liaison with industry stakeholders to identify current and emerging industry specific health and safety issues; and improve enforcement strategies that are appropriate and relevant for each industry sector. The sectors include: Mining, Forestry, Construction, Health Care, Manufacturing, Fishing, and Retail.

## WORKERS HEALTH AND SAFETY REFORMS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to improve the financial viability of the province's workers compensation system and support initiatives to reduce the number of workplace accidents.

**Action:** The government will continue to partner with employers and workers to enhance the workers compensation system in the province and implement a three-year provincial accident prevention strategy. Government has moved quickly to introduce changes designed to place increased emphasis on prevention of workplace accidents and injuries, to ensure that injured workers return to work safely, and to ensure a fair, affordable and sustainable workers compensation system. Through these actions and the contributions and cooperation of labour and business, there has already been a significant reduction in the number and duration of lost time accidents claims.

## YOUNG WORKERS HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will create initiatives to address workplace health and safety issues among young people.

**Action:** In 2004, the Liberal government, in collaboration with appropriate partners, will strengthen and expand initiatives to address workplace health and safety issues among young

workers. For example, the Safe Communities *Passport to Safety* pilot program, a national awareness program, supports and encourages the training required to eliminate needless injuries and preventable deaths among workers ages 14-24. Young workers will be able to qualify as a Passport to Safety holder by completing workplace health and safety awareness/education programs.

## ERGONOMICS STRATEGY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will develop and implement a soft tissue injury prevention strategy.

**Action:** The Liberal government is developing a soft tissue injury prevention strategy to address the major concerns related to ergonomics injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador workplaces. Two-thirds of all lost-time injuries are related to soft tissue disorders, and the costs associated with these injuries from both a social and financial perspective are high. While a number of regulatory options are being considered, the common denominator in this initiative is to assist employers and workers to recognize, evaluate and control ergonomics risks. All employers and workers should know the typical signs that indicate potential ergonomics problems and how to take proactive measures before serious problems arise. The government will continue to provide education and awareness seminars and will further consult with employer and employee stakeholders later this year.

## OFFSHORE HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will introduce changes to strengthen our offshore occupational health and safety regime.

**Action:** Newfoundland and Labrador, in partnership with the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, have commenced a consultation process on proposed amendments to the provinces' Atlantic Accord Implementation Acts to strengthen the offshore occupational health and safety regime. This process involves consultation meetings with various stakeholders including industry, labour and government. Once finalized, the amendments will ensure that workers in our offshore area are working under one of the most stringent, protective and modern offshore health and safety regimes in the world.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGES FACING SMALL BUSINESS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will assist small businesses to overcome problems associated with the implementation of health and safety and workers' compensation programs.

**Action:** Consistent with the Liberal government's strategy to identify industry sector initiatives, the government will assist the small business sector in overcoming some of the challenges they face in implementing sound health and safety and workers' compensation programs. This initiative taps into the resourcefulness demonstrated by the small business sector to provide self-learning tools (i.e. multi-media tools, brochures, on-line learning programs, checklists, etc.) for employers and employees.

# Planning for Success

## PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

In the early 1990's the Liberal government realized that we must put in place a strategic and focused plan to ensure our future. Some difficult decisions were taken in the past decade. The outcome of our commitment to sound and strategic planning is that we are now able to fully benefit from the growing economy.

The Liberal government has undertaken a number of major overarching planning initiatives that together have built the foundation for today. The most significant of the overarching plans are the Strategic Economic Plan, the Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth, and the Strategic Social Plan. Throughout the 1989-2003 period, Government's commitment to planning has been evident, through the development of the plans themselves and more importantly, the follow-through actions and reporting to the public. Government has also demonstrated flexibility in its planning, as evidenced by the responsiveness to changing environments, circumstances and situations.

These plans are built on a foundation of sound fiscal management. The Liberal government has made the decision to grow the economy by investing in its people. This means providing the services and programs to our people so that they and the province can prosper.

The Liberal government has incurred short-term deficits in order to provide appropriate services throughout the Province. Sound fiscal management has been reflected in an upgraded credit rating from Moody's Investors Service. The upgrade to an

"A" rating in 2002, and the current "A" rating we have with Standard & Poor's is a direct result of the efforts of government to maintain a responsible fiscal position. It also represents the first time in our history that Newfoundland and Labrador has an "A" rating with two major credit rating agencies. Maintaining solid financial goals and performance will be a key to maintaining our credit rating.

Government has managed its expenditures in a sound manner. With the exception of health care, Government spending has only increased about 5% since 1995-96 – average growth of less than 1% per year. However, like all provinces, Newfoundland and Labrador has invested substantially in the number one priority of the people – health care. Since 1995-96, health care spending has grown approximately 65% or more than 8% per year.

Government is accountable for its financial management of the province's resources. We have improved our financial accountability to the point that the financial statements and public accounts of the Province are among the most open, transparent and complete of all the jurisdictions in Canada. Sound and transparent financial management is crucial to the long-term prosperity of the Province and Government is committed to ensuring this is achieved.

The following are some of our initiatives that will continue our planning for success during the course of the next mandate.

## **SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT ELIMINATION OF THE ANNUAL DEFICIT**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to achieving an orderly reduction of the annual deficit over time with immediate emphasis on the elimination of the current account deficit.

**Action:** Government has developed a plan that results in the elimination of the deficit over a five-year period and protects social programs and services, while sustaining business and consumer confidence. The Liberal government is also committed to keeping the budget balanced into the future.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to enhance the budgetary accountability process.

**Action:** Government will continue to make significant progress in its implementation of accountability processes. It will make available on Government's web site documents that provide support and guidance for all public sector bodies in areas such as governance, roles and responsibilities, budget and finance, strategic planning and reporting.

Guidelines are in place for the preparation of departmental plans and annual reporting to the House of Assembly by departments and public bodies. Strategic plans have been or are

in final draft for all departments and in Spring 2003 departments and public bodies tabled annual reports in the House of Assembly.

As part of Government's ongoing initiatives to be open and accountable, in Budget 2003-04, Government for the first time in the Province's history provided information on not only the cash-based deficit for the Province, but also the total borrowing requirements and the consolidated accrual-based deficit. This allows users of the Province's financial statements to compare actual results in the Public Accounts to the Budget Documents for 2003-04.

Standard and Poors, commenting on this initiative, indicated:

*Moreover, the province is among the first to adopt budgetary reporting on a fully consolidated basis, a move that in Standard & Poor's view raises the level of transparency of the province's overall budgetary and reporting practices.*

Government will continue to improve the accountability process by introducing accountability legislation.



## PENSION FUNDING

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will work with employees to ensure the long term funding of the province's pension plans.

**Action:** Government will continue its partnership with labour to develop strategies to ensure the long term funding of the province's pension plans. Over the past 5 years, the Liberal government has implemented several measures to improve the financial status of the various government sponsored plans. Currently, government is making annual special payments of \$60 million to the Public Service Pension Plan, \$76 million to the Teachers' Pension Plan, and \$20 million to the Uniformed Services Pension Plan above and beyond the normal employer contributions.

## ENSURING FAIRNESS FOR CONSUMERS

### PETROLEUM PRODUCTS ACT IMPROVEMENTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will introduce amendments to the Petroleum Products Act to strengthen the role of the Petroleum Products Pricing Commissioner.

**Action:** These amendments would clarify and enhance the operations of the Office of the Commissioner of Petroleum Products Pricing. Over the past year some oil companies have announced the closure of service stations and have refused to tell the Commission or the affected towns of the locations. The proposed amendments would allow the Commissioner to advise communities of planned closures in advance so other parties can consider operating at the location.

### ENHANCED CONSUMER REGULATIONS AND PROTECTION

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to protect consumers and the public in areas such as personal privacy, commercial and financial services and automobile insurance.

**ENHANCED SECURITY FOR IDENTIFICATION  
DOCUMENTS**

Government agencies are collaborating with national and international agencies to enhance security features of Birth Certificates and Driver's Licences. A new Vital Statistics Act is being prepared, which will provide a greater level of personal privacy security.

**REGULATION OF THE SECURITIES INDUSTRY**

Canada is the only industrialized nation without a national securities regulator. Securities are regulated by the 10 provinces and three territories. Rules are often different in various jurisdictions often causing unnecessary duplicative and inefficiencies. The Liberal government is working with other jurisdictions to make our system more competitive in world capital markets.

**ON LINE COMPANIES REGISTRY**

The Liberal government is developing an online registration system for companies. This would greatly improve service to clients and make the registry accessible throughout the province, and reduce government's administrative costs.

**ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR THE FINANCIAL  
SERVICES INDUSTRY**

The Liberal government will develop an on line registration system for the insurance, real estate, mortgage broker and collection agency industries. This will greatly improve the process of licensing of individuals and companies in the financial service sector and reduce government's administrative costs.

**MEANINGFUL AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE  
REFORM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will implement changes to reduce the cost of mandatory automobile insurance. Legislation will be passed to mandate a 30% decrease in third party liability rates for all consumers of automobile insurance. Coverage for pain and suffering that is not permanent and serious will become optional at current pricing.

The Liberal government will also implement new regulatory procedures for insurance companies to determine how driver risk and driver rating is determined. For the first time in a private insurance system in Canada, discrimination based on age, sex and marital status will no longer be a factor in insurance pricing. Young drivers and those unfairly placed in facility association may see their premiums decrease by approximately 60%.

**Action:** The use of automobiles is a necessity for many the people of this province. The rising cost of mandatory automobile insurance is something that government must address.

The Liberal government has already taken the following measures to help address insurance rates, increase road safety and reduce the number of accidents:

- Changed rating territories to greatly reduce insurance rates on the Bonavista and Burin Peninsulas.
- Implemented a graduated driver licencing program.
- Increased penalties for impaired driving.
- Passed a law banning the use of hand-held cell phones while driving.
- Appointed a Consumer Advocate to represent consumers at Public Utilities Board (PUB) hearings.

Research and analysis of the insurance industry by the Liberal government has identified additional ways in which to address the cost and fairness of insurance. It is evident that something must be done to stop the increase in insurance premiums.

By legislating a reduction in liability premiums by 30%, providing optional coverage for pain and suffering, eliminating discrimination on the basis of age, sex and marital status and enforcing tougher regulation of the insurance industry, the Liberal government's automobile insurance reform proposal is one of the most comprehensive packages in the country.

## **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

### **NEW LEGAL AID FAMILY LAW IMPROVEMENTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will undertake a number of Legal Aid improvements in the area of family law.

**Action:** The Liberal government has identified a number of Legal Aid initiatives where enhanced services can be delivered in the area of Family Law. A number of these have been identified by the Status of Women Council in their Annual Report to Legal Aid and to Government. These include such items as: Duty Counsel for Family Courts, Appearance by Lawyers on Peace Bond Applications and the provision of Legal Aid in cases where there is a division of matrimonial property and paralegals to assist with interviews and preparation for Family Law cases.

Legal Aid is currently involved in an innovative project in Central Newfoundland providing representation in custody, access and support cases without involvement of the Courts. This initiative will be expanded to other parts of the Province in cooperation with the support application social worker program.

## EXPANSION OF COURT SECURITY SERVICES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will expand its court security system. This will provide greater levels of safety and secure access to the justice system.

**Action:** Beginning in 1994 the Office of the High Sheriff began providing court security and prisoner escort and transportation services to the Courts and to the people of this Province. Last year alone the office safely conducted 3,371 persons including 503 youth escorts. The presence of Deputy Sheriffs in Court Rooms has lowered the level of acrimony, diffused stressful situations of conflict and prevented them from occurring. Expansion of the Courts security program, which currently provides Deputy Sheriff's on a permanent basis only in the St. John's area, to all major judicial centres will greatly enhance and improve safe and secure access to our justice system for the benefit of our citizens. In addition to greatly improving the criminal and justice family law system in this province, it will allow police officers to dedicate themselves to other work.

## VIDEO CONFERENCING

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue with its Justice video conferencing initiative.

**Action:** The Supreme Court of Newfoundland has configured a new courtroom to accommodate video conferencing and other state of the art technology initiatives. Video conferencing can be used for: pre-trial conferences, settlement conferences, interviewing child witnesses, interviewing expert witnesses both within the Province and outside the Province, hearing applications and other related processes. This year the equipment necessary for set up of a video conferencing facility for another courtroom and a child witness room will complete the project, resulting in significant savings for the court and its clients.

## EXPANSION OF UNIFIED FAMILY COURTS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

**Commitment:** The Liberal government in partnership with the federal government will expand the Unified Family Courts in the province.

**Action:** The Liberal government will partner with the federal government to implement the child centered Family Justice Strategy. A key element of this initiative would involve the

creation of new Unified Family Court positions at the Superior Court level by the elevation of a number of Provincial Court Judges and the creation of two new positions.

The government is currently engaged in discussions with the Provincial and Supreme Courts and with the federal government regarding Newfoundland and Labrador's participation in this initiative by creating four new Unified Family Courts in this Province. In addition to the creation of new Unified Family Court Judge positions, this proposal would also involve enhanced related ancillary services; including, intake services, education to parents on separation and divorce, counseling of parents and children, mediation of legal issues in contention, home assessment and interview services and financial services to ensure family child support.

## **ENHANCEMENT OF SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM AND LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will enhance our support enforcement system and ensure the necessary legislative amendments.

**Action:** The Support Enforcement Program is part of Government's commitment to strengthening family services. The office, located in Corner Brook, was established in 1990. It helps individuals who are entitled to receive financial support payments

from parents required to pay pursuant to a Court Order or Agreement. Enhancements to the computer system will include provisions for Electronic Transfer of Funds and will also allow for direct interface with other agencies such as the Sheriff's Office. The new application will replace the current costly mainframe application. Changes to the computer system will be augmented by legislative amendments intended to better enable the Director of Support Enforcement to enforce court ordered child and spousal support orders. These amendments include driver's licence suspension or revocation, garnishment of joint bank accounts, garnishment of lottery proceeds, regulatory changes to allow service of garnishments by facsimile or ordinary mail and the addition of an offence section.

## **A STRATEGIC WOMEN'S AGENDA**

**Commitment:** It is a priority of the Liberal government to achieve social and economic equality for all women in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is achieved by the identification of issues and the development of policies, programs and legislation that advance the goals of fairness and equality. The Liberal government is committed to government wide strategic women's agenda and will undertake the following actions over the next four years.

## **EQUITABLE ACCESS IN RESOURCE-BASED SECTORS**

**Action:** The Liberal government will work to ensure women equitable access to well paying jobs in resource-based sectors. A major effort over the next year will be to work with major project proponents in both developing women's employment plans and ensuring adequate and timely monitoring reports are developed and submitted so that government can track progress and adjustments can be made as required.

## **VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

**Action:** The Liberal government will build on strengths and partnerships developed through the Violence Prevention Initiative.

## **WOMEN'S CENTRES**

**Action:** The Liberal government will work with Women's Centres to ensure that women throughout the province are receiving access to the services they need in the most efficient way possible.

## **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN ON AGENCIES, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

**Action:** The Liberal government will increase the number of women on agencies, boards and commissions.

## **EQUITY WORKING GROUP FOR THE LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT**

**Action:** The Liberal government supports the establishment of a Federal-Provincial Equity Working Group for the Labour Market Development Agreement.

## **LONG-TERM HOUSING**

**Action:** The Liberal government will provide support for women and children who have suffered abuse to find long-term housing through the development of an integrated housing strategy to address the long-term housing needs of women and children who have been victims of violence. The strategy will focus on developing supportive policies and improving interdepartmental coordination and collaboration with community organizations and other levels of government.

## **ENHANCING THE WORK OF THE PROVINCIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Action:** The Liberal government will sustain and enhance the work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW) by increased funding for the council. The PACSW is important to the advancement of the social, economic and legal

status of women in the province and helping government develop fully informed policies that are responsive to the needs of women and their families.

## **ELIMINATION OF HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Action:** The Liberal government will promote the elimination of harassment in the workplace: (i) by way of example as an employer; (ii) through the provision of supportive services such as information and training for employers; (iii) by raising public awareness on this issue; and (iv) by providing a legislative framework requiring employers to have respectful workplace policies to prevent harassment and address complaints.

## **GENDER INCLUSIVE ANALYSIS**

**Action:** The Liberal government will continue its commitment to gender-inclusive analysis, ensuring that all policy, program and legislative development and analysis consider gender.

## **DEMOCRATIC REFORM STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue its aggressive agenda to strengthen our democratic institutions.

**Action:** Over the past two years, the Liberal government has introduced a long list of reforms to strengthen the voice of the people and make Government more accountable. Bold initiatives were actioned including as: the appointments of a Citizen's Representative, Child and Youth Advocate, Information and Privacy Commissioner and Petroleum Pricing Commissioner; passage of a new Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act; requirement that departments and agencies file annual reports; implementation of a Strategic Social Plan, Social Audit and Community Accounts; the holding of cabinet meetings in various areas of the Province; establishment a Royal Commission to examine our place in Canada; reformed budget process; and televising the proceedings of the House of Assembly.

The Liberal government is committed to further reform:

- Government recently established by statute an Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission to make recommendations concerning the division of the province into electoral districts. This Commission is scheduled to report its findings by the end of the year. Government will make the report public and present it to the next sitting of the House of Assembly for full debate.
- Reduce the size of the cabinet to not more than one third of the size of the House of Assembly.

- Increase the number of opportunities for the public to comment on significant new legislation before introduction into the House of Assembly.
- Provide for a registry of consultants and lobbyists that interact with government on behalf of their clients.

## ELECTIONS ACT REFORM

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will bring about a number of needed election reform initiatives by introducing amendments to the *Elections Act, 1991*.

**Action:** The Liberal government will enact the following democratic reforms: legislation will be introduced to tighten the rules pertaining to campaign financing in advance of the next general election; legislation will be introduced concerning limits on campaign contributions to a party or candidate during an election campaign; legislation will be introduced concerning third party spending if the third party is acting independently of a registered party or candidate; and rules will be more transparent with respect to the amounts which individuals and parties can spend during an election.

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ACT REFORM – FIXED TERMS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will amend the House of Assembly Act to provide for fixed term elections every four years.

**Action:** The Liberal government will amend the House of Assembly Act, which currently states that “the House of Assembly shall continue for no longer than 5 years from the date fixed for the return of the writs at a general election of its members”. The fact that there is continuing uncertainty about election dates has meant that time and energy could better be spent on Government’s work agenda. The Liberal government will amend the Act to provide that provincial elections will be held on a set date every four years.



## **MODERNIZING TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVING OUR PROVINCIAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM.**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to improving the road system in the province.

**Action:** Since 1999, the government has spent \$108.6 million annually on roads in our province. This does not include funds spent on the Trans Labrador Highway.

In recognizing that there are still substantial needs for road upgrades and repaving, government will increase the funding level for road improvements over the next four years.

The increase in funding will ensure that our road system is safe, efficient and reliable, and that it contributes to the economic growth of the province.

### **VESSEL REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will maintain an aggressive new phased-in vessel replacement program.

**Action:** The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched an aggressive, new vessel replacement plan in 2003.

The first part of the program is to complete the refit of the Hull 100. This ice-strengthened vessel is currently at Clarenville Drydock receiving the final phase of its refit. Final upgrades to the Hull 100 are expected to be completed in 2003. The Hull 100 will replace one of the older vessels in the fleet.

The government is currently seeking requesting proposals for phase one of the vessel replacement program to replace the MV Hamilton Sound as a swing vessel for Bell Island, Fogo Island, and various other islands along the northeast coast.

The replacement program plans for the replacement of the Green Bay Transport in 2004-05, which operates on the St. Brendan's to Burnside crossing. Government will issue a call for expressions of interest followed by a request for proposals to find a suitable replacement vessel for the Green Bay Transport.

Replacement of the Sound of Islay is planned for in 2005-06. The Sound of Islay is currently the second of the department's two swing vessels.

### **INTRA-PROVINCIAL FERRY SERVICES RATE FREEZE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will maintain the rate freeze in effect for the intra-provincial ferry services for the next four years.

**Action:** The government in 1999 announced a rate freeze on all intra-provincial ferry services in the province. This freeze will continue for the term of the new mandate of the government.

## **INNOVATIVE ROAD WEATHER INFORMATION SYSTEM**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will pursue discussions with the federal government to partner in an innovative road weather information system.

**Action:** The Road Weather Information System (RWIS) are automated weather reporting stations with special sensors embedded in and below the road and on nearby towers. These systems collect data on weather conditions at and near the road surface, which can assist weather forecasters in predicting icing conditions. The provincial government will be negotiating with Transport Canada under the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) component of the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Agreement (SHIP) for funding for RWIS pilot projects. RWIS will provide the following benefits: increased safety; cost savings in deicing materials consumption; due diligence, demonstrating governments continued commitment to increased winter safety; and increased environmental protection.

## **FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT WITH TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Commitment:** The Liberal government commits to actively engaging the federal government to make transportation infrastructure networks with in Newfoundland and Labrador a high priority.

### **Action:**

#### ***HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE***

The building and maintaining of a safe and reliable public infrastructure program is key to ensuring the prosperity and continued development of the province. The provincial network of highways (national and regional road systems) affects the provinces tourism industry, economic development and social well being of its people. Maintaining this road network is critical to overall delivery of services to the province.

The government will continue to use every opportunity to promote the need.

The government will continue to pursue new funding arrangements with the federal government for upgrades to the Trans Canada Highway and our regional trunk roads.

The government will continue to request the designation of the TLH as part of the National Highway system or alternatively provide more flexibility in cost shared agreements.

#### **AIR SERVICES**

The government will continue to press the federal government through various provincial/territorial committees to ensure that this province has a viable air transportation network to, from and within Newfoundland and Labrador. The recently released inter-provincial study on the Viability of Smaller Canadian Airports is being utilized to lobby the federal government for assistance for these smaller airports.

#### **GULF FERRY SERVICES**

The government will partner with the federal government on improving the Gulf ferry service, which is essential to strengthening the province's economy

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect the gulf service to be a continuation of the Trans Canada Highway, therefore the government will continue to promote to the federal government the significance of the Gulf ferry service, the vital role it plays in the economic and social well being of the province as well as the federal government's constitutional obligation relating to the service. This obligation requires that a quality and affordable Gulf ferry service be provided, without interruption, at a level able to meet demand.

# **A Strong Rural Agenda**

## COMMITTED TO RURAL NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

The Liberal government's aggressive agenda for economic growth and job creation in rural Newfoundland and Labrador is working. Our plan focuses on economic diversification, entrepreneurship and small business development. This rural agenda is built on a unique partnership with twenty regional economic development board ensuring that the plans and priorities of people and communities are realized.

The fundamental goal of the Liberal government is to provide the opportunities, programs and services so that all citizens, regardless of where they live, are educated, healthy, self-reliant and prosperous. The Liberal government believes people should be able to live in vibrant, supportive communities within sustainable regions.

Our province has experienced tremendous economic growth over the past several years and this is translating into record high levels of employment for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador is both contributing to and benefiting from this growth. In fact of the 26,900 new jobs created in our province in the last several years, almost 60 per cent were created in communities outside the St. John's area. These gains are a result of the innovation, ingenuity, dedication and hard work of people in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The government is also committed to improving the social well being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The government's Strategic Social Plan accepts the challenges that exist in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and is developing long term, innovative evidence-based solutions.

— The Liberal government will continue to develop specific programs, policies and initiatives that support rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of these plans can also be found throughout this platform document such as initiatives to increase educational opportunities, improve health care services and diversify resource based sectors in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

## SHARING IN THE PROVINCE'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**Commitment:** The Liberal Government is committed to a strategic plan that ensures all regions of the province share fully in our economic recovery.

**Action:** The government will facilitate the continued growth of job opportunities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador by ensuring strategies are developed to attract investment in Newfoundland and Labrador. Government's Renewal Strategy for Jobs and Growth is focused on a rural agenda that responds directly to the challenges and opportunities facing rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The government's overall approach is to ensure all regions of the province share fully in our economic recovery.

## RURAL SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will continue to emphasize small business development as an engine of economic growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Action:** Small business is a vital infrastructure in rural communities, facilitating economic development and sustaining many communities. Almost 95 per cent of all businesses in the province are small businesses accounting for over one-third of all employment. The government's small business development agenda will stimulate and grow the small business sector in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

## ATTRACTING INVESTMENT

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will create greater opportunities for investments to be made in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Part of the success of economic development and job creation depends on the ability of this province to attract investment opportunities and compete globally. The government will develop and maintain innovative investment tools that attract investors to rural parts of the province.

**Action:** An enhanced EDGE program with additional benefits for starting up or expanding in rural areas will continue to see that Newfoundland and Labrador remains the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada for encouraging new business investment.

**Action:** New corporate tax incentives to encourage small business startups and reinvestment in existing businesses, with enhanced incentives for businesses located in rural areas.

**Action:** New venture capital initiatives to encourage private investment in new or expanding small businesses, with enhanced incentives for entrepreneurs who invest in rural areas.

**Action:** The establishment of two programs - Small Business Seed Capital Equity Program and Small Business and Market Development Program will assist small businesses to take advantage of new growth opportunities.

**Action:** Establishment of the Business Retention and Expansion Program, a community based initiative, reduces barriers to business survival and growth.

**Action:** Expansion of the Collective Enterprise Development Program, in partnership with the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Cooperatives, will provide loans from \$500 to \$5,000 to small micro-businesses and self-employed entrepreneurs.

**Action:** The creation of federal-provincial-community business service centres in each of the 20 economic zones provides more accessible and streamlined support services to the small the business sector in all areas of the province.

**Action:** The creation of the Small Business Advisory Council provides ongoing advice on appropriate measures government should consider to help attract more investment in rural Newfoundland and Labrador helping to stimulate and grow the small business sector.

## COMMITTED TO REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government has established twenty Regional Economic Development Boards as strategic partners to create sustainable, long term business and employment opportunities. The government is committed to the continuation of these boards as the core institutional mechanisms to ensure all regions share in our economic progress.

**Action:** Government's partnership with the twenty economic development boards is helping to ensure that all regions in the province share in our economic progress and that the overall economy develops on a more regional basis. Regional economic development boards and industry associations are key partners in identifying and capturing new economic opportunities in all parts of the province.

The government commits to continue its support for the valuable work of the Regional Economic Development Boards.

## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will undertake initiatives to ensure the sustainability of rural Newfoundland and Labrador by strengthening local governments.

**Action:** The government will work with local governments and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities to improve the financial viability of local governments through increased self-reliance, competency and accountability. The government will also increase regional cooperation by enhancing the role of municipalities so that they can provide more effective services that encouraging joint economic and social development planning.

## COMMUNITY ACCOUNTS

**Commitment:** The Liberal government is committed to providing Community Accounts throughout the province so that evidence based decisions are made.

**Action:** Community Accounts are a web-based system that will provide comparable data and social and economic indicators for over 400 communities, 80 local areas, 20 economic zones health and education administrative areas and the province as a whole. This system will provide a vast amount of data to decision-makers ensuring that decisions impacting the economic and social well being of all citizens are well based.



# A Pathway to Renewal

## **STRENGTHENING OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CANADA LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR PROSPERITY AND SELF-RELIANCE**

**Commitment:** Consistent with current priorities and the recommendations of Royal Commission, the Liberal government will revitalize relations with the Government of Canada, strengthen the existing effective working relations with provinces and territories through the newly established Council of the Federation, further enhance our ties with the Atlantic Provinces through the Council of Atlantic Premiers (CAP), and cultivate useful ties in the United States through the New England Governors' – Eastern Canadian Premiers' Conference.

**Action:** The Liberal government looks forward to working with the new Prime Minister and is developing a detailed strategy that builds on the work of the Royal Commission, the Fisheries White Paper, and the all-party committee report. This strategy will establish a new way of dealing with the federal government incorporating the Royal Commission recommendations and developing the mechanisms for the implementation and execution of the strategy.

The Liberal government recognized the need to address in specific terms the growing dissatisfaction that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel about our place in Canada. At the same time many provinces and territories have expressed dissatisfaction with the way intergovernmental relations were being conducted. In recent years, the federal government has been seen by provinces as insensitive to provincial needs, acting unilaterally and intruding into areas of provincial jurisdiction. The Liberal government is developing a strategic plan to address these profound and fundamental problems.

The next months present an opportune time for changes in the intergovernmental environment in Canada. There is a growing consensus among provincial governments on the need for reform of the federation and a more collaborative form of federalism, as evidenced by the Premiers' agreement at their Annual Conference this summer, on a plan to revitalize the Canadian Federation and build a new era of constructive and cooperative federalism. The government of Newfoundland and Labrador played a significant role in developing the plan to revitalize the federation by presenting a code of conduct to guide relations between provinces, territories and the federal government. The Royal Commission on also has assisted the work of the Liberal government as it develops a meaningful and beneficial relationship with the federal government.

The government will set out a pathway to renewal, the fundamental component of which is a new partnership with the Government of Canada within a framework of collaborative federalism and characterized by cooperation, mutual understanding, respect and flexibility. The creation of this new partnership and pathway to renewal is based on a comprehensive set of issues requiring specific actions on the part of both governments if the Province is to achieve prosperity and self-reliance.

The Province has recently received correspondence from the Prime Minister indicating the federal government's desire to work more cooperatively with the province. The federal government has also indicated there is a basis for discussion between the two governments on issues in the Royal Commission Report.

In the spirit of a new era of partnership, the provincial government and the federal government met in August to discuss fisheries conservation, management and adjustment measures. These talks have laid the groundwork for a renewed and strengthened relationship between the two governments, consistent with the spirit and approach of the Royal Commission. Action on one of the major recommendations of the Royal Commission report, to immediately establish a joint federal/provincial Action Team to develop a comprehensive plan for stock rebuilding, has already begun.

## INCREASED UNDERSTANDING

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will increase the Province's visibility within the federal government enhancing the federal government's understanding of our critical issues and develop personal working relationships

**Action:** The government will seek to establish a more formalized relationship with the federal government. This would involve ministerial level presentations to federal ministers and deputy ministers on critical issues highlighting historical and present-day context; semi-annual meetings between the Premier and the Prime Minister on bilateral issues; quarterly meetings between the our provinces intergovernmental minister and the federal counterpart; quarterly meetings with Newfoundland and Labrador's regional minister in the federal Cabinet; and regularly scheduled meetings between the provincial government and Newfoundland and Labrador federal representatives to provide an overview of issues of mutual concern.

## STRENGTHENING INTERPROVINCIAL ALLIANCES

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will engage in a strategic effort to strengthen alliances with other provinces, to heighten awareness, sensitivity and understanding of our issues.

**Action:** The government has been building partnership with other provinces over the last two years. These partnerships are critical if we are to achieve several of our objectives on the national scene. The government will continue to engage in open and frequent dialogues with other provinces to influence attitudes and build trustful relationships.

## ADVANCING THE AGENDA

**Commitment:** The Liberal government will identify and advance several strategic and critical initiatives during the course of its next mandate. These are some of the ongoing initiatives that will be part of the renewed framework for better federal and provincial relations.

### **Action:**

#### *Equalization*

The federal transfers do not enable the Province to provide reasonably comparable levels of service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. The renewal of the equalization program is only months away. This is a critical period of time and the government will continue to aggressively pursue changes to strengthen the program by: a return to a 10-province standard; inclusion of a population floor including some accommodation for prior year losses (census forgiveness); and permanent enshrinement of the "generic solution" to insure a level of protection from Equalization decline due to offshore oil revenue.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Current federal funding for key transportation and communications infrastructure do not fully support project and program needs. It is crucial that development of critical transportation, communication and related infrastructure in Newfoundland and Labrador be viewed through the broad lens of general economic development. Therefore, high priority will be given to quickly establishing a strategy which would set out provincial economic and infrastructure priorities for consistent and continuous promotion to the federal government.

### **COST SHARED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **AGREEMENTS**

Federal-provincial economic development agreements have ended and many of the groups historically funded under these agreements are beginning to be impacted. The provincial government will develop a joint approach to economic development programs. In the event that jointly funded programs cannot be arranged, at a minimum, there is a need for joint planning between both levels of government to achieve maximum benefit to the province.

#### *THE FISHERY*

The rebuilding of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery through stock recovery, joint management and addressing foreign overfishing requires a collaborative and cooperative approach by both orders of government. On August 12, 2003, the provincial and federal government met to identify cooperative measures to address the closure of the Gulf and Northern cod fisheries and its impact on individuals, businesses, and communities. One of the initiatives identified and agreed upon was the formation, on a priority basis, of an action team to rebuild cod stocks.

#### *ATLANTIC ACCORD*

While Newfoundland and Labrador is intended to be the principal beneficiary of the arrangements of the Atlantic Accord, we are not. Resolving this issue is a high priority, as the peak revenue years, between 2006-2012, present a short period in which the Province will be able to benefit from any change to the Atlantic Accord. The government will continue to demand the necessary adjustments to ensure that the intent of the Accord is realized.

#### *LOWER CHURCHILL POWER DEVELOPMENT*

The Lower Churchill Power development is a project of major national interest, both in terms of energy supply and a means for Canada to meet some of its Kyoto Accord commitments. The government will continue to pursue this project with other provincial governments, the federal government and the aboriginal people as partners. The government will continue to lobby the federal government to ensure federal climate change policy recognizes the role of new hydro developments.

# Liberal

*Take A Closer Look*