



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Speech FROM THE Throne

March 2, 2026

Delivered at the Opening of the First Session
of the Fifty-First General Assembly
of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador
by Her Honour

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INTRODUCTION

Speaker, Honourable Members of the House of Assembly, and Invited Guests.

As the representative of His Majesty the King, I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the First Session of the Fifty-First General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In opening this session, we respectfully acknowledge the province of Newfoundland and Labrador as the ancestral homelands of many diverse populations of Indigenous people who have contributed to 9,000 years of history including the Beothuk on the Island of Newfoundland. Today, this province is home to diverse populations of Indigenous and other people. We also acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit.

Today, we also pause to stand with the Newfoundland and Labrador families whose lives have been forever changed by disaster. This includes those evacuated during the Kingston Wildfire in Conception Bay North, the fires in Adam's Cove, Chance Harbour, Musgrave Harbour, Paddy's Pond, Martin Lake, Holyrood, Lethbridge, and Badger; the more recent flooding in Badger; and the many other individuals and communities affected during the 2025 wildfire season. We recognize the loss, disruption, and uncertainty these events have caused.

Behind every headline are real people. Families who faced fear, uncertainty, and loss. And today, we hold them in our hearts.

If there is one truth that defines this province, it is this: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians take care of one another.

Over the past year, we have seen that truth again and again in neighbours helping neighbours, families opening their doors, and communities lifting each other up when it mattered most.

In those difficult moments, we also saw extraordinary courage. We want to express our deepest gratitude to the first responders and volunteers who stepped forward without hesitation, putting themselves in harm's way to protect others.

In times of crisis, we are reminded of who we are. We saw the very best of Newfoundland and Labrador - in compassion, in resilience, and in the quiet strength of people standing together.

And that spirit - that deep care for one another - is something the world could learn from.

EXPRESSION OF THE MANDATE

Today, as we open this 51st General Assembly, let me begin by articulating a principle that we believe should unite all of us.

No matter where you live.

Where you come from.

Or who you voted for...

...every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian deserves to feel represented and respected in this place.

Members of the House of Assembly - as you take your seats and begin fulfilling the solemn responsibilities entrusted to the members of this chamber - we encourage you to remember that the seats you hold do not ultimately belong to you. They belong to the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who sent you here.

The Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who - in any given electoral district - may not have voted for the victorious candidate but who, in exercising their democratic rights, nonetheless deserve to be assured that their voices and views will be respected in the deliberations that lie ahead.

That does not mean you will all agree. Or that you should all agree. The legislation that you will scrutinize in this chamber will impact people across our province. The issues that you will debate will be serious. Debate will often mean that not everyone will be satisfied.

But in a time when democracy seems imperilled elsewhere, all of us are made stronger by our willingness to have those debates freely, frankly, and respectfully.

Our government was elected on a solemn promise to be a government that will serve **“For All of Us.”**

Let us pause to consider the importance of what that phrase truly means.

All of Us means we are all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

All of Us means that regardless of whether you are Indigenous, whether your family has been here for ten generations, or whether you have just arrived, you deserve to live an affordable life - with access to health care and other services - and to live free of fear from violence and crime.

All of Us means all generations are respected in this House. Whether it is our seniors who deserve to live with dignity and have access to necessary services they need close to home. Or our students who deserve affordable access to the education and training they need to build their future right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. And it means that vulnerable families have the support they need to ensure no child goes hungry.

And **All of Us** also means a province where you are afforded respect regardless of where you live. Where families who live in Labrador, the South Coast, Central Newfoundland, the West Coast, the Port au Port Peninsula, the Great Northern Peninsula, Bonavista Bay, Trinity Bay, or Placentia Bay feel their voices are heard and respected the same way as those who live on the Eastern Avalon. Whether we are talking about our roads, public services, or public safety, a different postal code should not consign anyone to a life of lower standards.

All of Us means that the power of your voice should not depend on the size of your bank account or who you know. After all, this chamber is the place where all voices are heard and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are represented.

All of Us means a place where there are equitable opportunities for men, women and gender diverse individuals. Last year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Newfoundland and Labrador. Let us live up to the example of Armine Gosling, Fannie McNeil, and all the trailblazers who fought to ensure a place for women in our public life.

And **All of Us** means that regardless of the colour of your skin, whether you have a disability, the language you speak, who you love, or how you pray, you will be respected and welcomed here. **All of Us** means that our government embraces and celebrates all people for the rich diversity, experiences and perspectives they bring to our province. And let all of us commit to continuing the work to ensure there is never a place for racism, antisemitism, or any other form of hatred in our province.

At the same time, let us understand what **All of Us** does **not** mean.

It does not mean that any special interest - from inside or outside of our province - gets to veto or overrule the clear commitments that our government was elected on. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians voted for change, and they are right to expect their government to follow through on that promise.

Nor does **All of Us** mean that the government can be all things to all people. No government can be. All voices deserve to be heard. But when the time comes to make a difficult decision, our government will be prepared to act.

ACTION TO DATE

Since being sworn into office, our government has been supported by a strong and dedicated caucus, united by a shared commitment to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with integrity, humility, and purpose. That collective sense of duty is reflected in the Cabinet we have assembled - a team drawn from every region of this province and grounded in a deep respect for the responsibility entrusted to us by the people.

This Cabinet reflects a simple principle: that public service is a privilege, and that every decision must be grounded in a clear question - will this help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Ministers have been directed to focus on results, not rhetoric. They have been tasked with working collaboratively, acting with integrity, transparency and accountability, and delivering on the commitments that earned the trust of the people of this province.

At the centre of this work is a renewed focus on what matters most: strengthening health care, easing the cost of living, and building safer, more resilient communities.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is focused on delivering reliable, safe, and modern public infrastructure that connects people, strengthens communities, and supports economic growth in every region of our province. From roads and bridges to public buildings and essential transportation links, this work is about ensuring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can move safely, stay connected, and seize opportunity wherever they live.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is restoring discipline and transparency to the province's finances, guided by a renewed commitment to responsible stewardship and respect for taxpayers. The Minister has also been entrusted with responsibility for seniors - ensuring that the voices and needs of older Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are at the heart of government decision-making. Our government is working to strengthen supports, improve access to services, and help seniors live safely, independently, and with dignity.

The Minister of Health and Community Services has been entrusted with advancing meaningful improvements to health care access and outcomes, while also serving as Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equality, Minister responsible for Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Minister responsible for Labrador Affairs. The Minister will ensure that equity, dignity, and safety are reflected in the policies and services that shape people's lives, and that my government continues to work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Labradorians across this province.

The Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General is advancing safer communities through a justice system grounded in fairness, accountability, and public confidence.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is focused on preparing the next generation - strengthening learning outcomes and aligning education and skills development with the opportunities of tomorrow.

The Minister of Energy and Mines is focused on ensuring that the province's natural resources are developed responsibly, and in a way that maximizes benefits for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, charged with a new stand-alone mandate, will deliver focused support to vital industries for the province, ensuring its sustainability and long-term strength for the communities that depend upon it.

The Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being is advancing a whole-of-government approach to housing, poverty reduction, and support for vulnerable residents - guided by the belief that opportunity should be within reach for all.

The Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands has been given an expanded mandate that includes strengthening emergency preparedness and resilience - recognizing that responsible stewardship of our land and resources must also include protecting communities in times of crisis.

The Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development is leading efforts to attract investment, promote rural development, support immigration, and create new opportunities for people and communities across Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs is working with local leaders to strengthen the communities that form the backbone of this province, ensuring that residents in every region feel heard, respected, and supported. In addition, as Minister of Environment,

Conservation and Climate Change, he will focus on strengthening climate resilience in our communities, protecting biodiversity, improving waste reduction and recycling, and ensuring that environmental stewardship remains a shared responsibility - one that honours our connection to the land and secures a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come.

The Minister of Government Services and Minister of Labour will advance more modern and responsive public services while supporting workers and ensuring safe, fair workplaces. In partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, this work includes accelerating digital government, improving cybersecurity, and delivering accessible, and efficient services for residents and businesses across Newfoundland and Labrador.

And the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation is supporting the industries that celebrate our identity, preserve our heritage, keep people active, and share the Newfoundland and Labrador story with the world.

Together, they will deliver results that people can see and feel in their daily lives.

There will always be more demands than there are resources. In this time of global challenge and risk, this challenge is particularly acute.

It has never been more important to have clear priorities, and from the day our government was sworn into office, we have been clear with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador about where our focus will lie:

Better health care

Lower taxes

And safer communities

The early days of our government have included early action.

When it comes to better health care, we have renewed and refreshed the leadership of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, better positioning us for the transformation needed. We have already announced plans to proceed with a new urgent care centre in Conception Bay South, increasing access to health care for residents. We have also raised our voices with our federal counterparts, advocating for a fair and equitable national pharmacare program.

Our government has taken early steps in advance of the spring budget to restore transparency and discipline to our public finances.

In December, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians finally received a true picture of the province's fiscal situation, including the deficit we face. This news was sobering. That is why our government has reprioritized infrastructure spending. Newfoundland and Labrador can no longer afford to announce projects without a plan for how to pay for them.

When the Minister of Finance tables his budget, there will be no mistaking the fiscal challenges that we collectively face. Our government will first and foremost ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can hold on to more of their own money to help balance their household budgets.

Our government has been clear it will not allow Memorial University to balance its books on the backs of students. Government will freeze tuition until it is confident the university is addressing its financial challenges.

When it comes to safer communities, our government took immediate steps to address an important safety risk in rural Newfoundland and Labrador - the safety of our roads. This

winter's extreme weather is a constant reminder of why the restoration of 24-hour snow clearing was, and is, the right thing to do.

Our government is also focused on recovery for the Conception Bay North area following the 2025 wildfires. The Cabinet Committee on Conception Bay North Response and Recovery has visited the area and met with residents to understand their needs and will continue to provide ongoing support.

Our government has also initiated a comprehensive review of the courts system to address concerns and improve access to justice and better serve Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In the coming session of the legislature, you can expect our government to move with urgency and purpose on delivering its agenda to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This will start with a 2026 budget through which our government will prioritize lowering taxes and reducing the cost of living for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

You can expect meaningful action that will include a permanent repeal of the sugar tax that unfairly punished lower-income families.

Our government will ensure that taxation on gasoline and diesel will not increase next year, by finally providing certainty on the permanent reduction of the gas tax.

Our government promised action to increase the basic personal exemption - or, in other words, increasing the amount of money every Newfoundlander and Labradorian can make before they start paying provincial income taxes. This is a tax cut that benefits lower-income families most of all, and you can expect it to be a key feature of the legislative session.

Seniors and lower-income families will see increased supports to ensure more people get more help with the cost of living.

You can also expect our government to deliver meaningful early action to build a more accessible, reliable, and affordable health care system for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Our government is also committed to ending the cycle of rural emergency department closures and diversions by recruiting and retaining more physicians, nurse practitioners, and nurses.

We are working with the Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland and Labrador to eliminate outside agency nursing with a home-grown solution that will see more nurses from within the province working in our communities. We will increase access to nurse practitioners and make sure that anyone can see a nurse practitioner for free, with no strings attached. When people need health care, they will not have to worry about how they are getting there, nor how much it costs. The people of our province deserve real access to health care – not just a place on a waiting list.

We are taking action to reduce wait times and improve access to care across Newfoundland and Labrador - from emergency departments to mental health services. This includes expanding team-based care, improving patient flow, and investing in frontline supports so people can get the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Our government will also expand mobile crisis response teams to ensure people experiencing a mental health crisis can receive rapid, compassionate support in their communities - helping reduce pressure on emergency rooms while connecting individuals and families to the care they need sooner.

Our government will listen to doctors, nurses, and front-line health care professionals – the people who deliver health care every day - to determine how systemic change can best happen, by working with the professionals who work in the health care system every single day. Most importantly, we will focus our health care efforts on the people receiving and delivering health care, not on the bricks and mortar buildings in which it is delivered.

Our government will deliver on our commitment to safer communities. Our government will take early action to support our brave first responders by doubling the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers.

Reliable cellular service is essential for safety, economic opportunity, and daily life. Yet too many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians still live and travel in areas where they cannot make a call in an emergency. That is not acceptable. My government is committed to closing critical cellular coverage gaps across Newfoundland and Labrador, with a focus on rural communities and major highway corridors where safety risks are greatest.

We will work with telecommunications providers and the Government of Canada to accelerate infrastructure investments and expand reliable service to underserved regions. No one should be placed at risk because of their postal code. Improving connectivity is about safety, fairness, and ensuring every region of this province can participate fully in a modern economy.

Working with provincial and national policing leaders, we will increase the number of RNC and RCMP personnel in the province in order to give our communities the safety, security, and peace of mind they deserve.

As it delivers on its priorities, our government will also take steps to empower and protect the most vulnerable among us.

Our government will introduce legislation to create an independent, dedicated Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. This advocate will do more than be a powerful voice for speaking the truth. They will also have strong investigatory powers to uncover the truth. People with disabilities deserve a champion, and with this new independent office they will have one.

At the same time, our government will strengthen the role of the Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors' Advocate by providing broad investigative powers. Seniors deserve the peace of mind that their government is on their side, and with an empowered advocate they will have it.

Our government will also take meaningful action to reduce the red-tape burden that leaves too many organizations spending too much time focused on paperwork and not enough time focused on the people they serve.

We will also make improvements to the Crown lands application process that will increase accessibility and simplify the process for the people of our province to secure legal title to their homes and properties.

Our government will work with municipal partners on a long-term plan to build more reliable infrastructure, including roads, water and sewer. It's time for our planning to align investments with the greatest needs - and to sustain that commitment over the long term.

Our government will also work with municipalities to identify and address vulnerabilities such as storm damage, forest fires, flooding, and emergency preparedness plans for dealing with the increasing number of extreme events - which the past months have told us are more likely than ever.

In education, our government will focus on improving literacy and math proficiency while also enhancing science and computer skills for jobs in the future. We will expand skilled

trades programs and create clear apprenticeship pathways in high schools, preparing students for high-demand careers that are essential today and into the future.

Our government will move forward with a real plan to help families. This will include a comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Prevention Strategy, one which considers the broader social determinants of health. Our goal is to make our province's poverty rates the lowest in the country. As a necessary first step, our government will expand eligibility for the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit to ensure the families of 3,000 more children get the additional support they need.

Our government has appointed a dedicated Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Our government has already begun advocacy with the federal government to initiate long-term reforms to the fishery, including a long-overdue change to open the crab season earlier. Joint management of the fisheries remains our ultimate goal.

In farming and agrifoods, our government will launch a long-term agriculture strategy. This will focus on removing barriers for new farmers, increasing food production, indoor growing, and lengthening the growing season. We will open more Crown lands for farming and we will support food producers who want to invest in processing facilities, navigate red-tape, and market their products.

Of course, we also know that our economy is about far more than our resources. It is about our people. Millions of people have travelled to Newfoundland and Labrador to experience the arts, culture, hospitality, and natural beauty that make our province a place like no other. This is why our government will work with tourism partners on a new strategy that focuses on authentic, local experiences, season extension, better infrastructure, as well as encouraging people to “vacation at home” and adopt active lifestyles. We will also expand

our province as a hub for regional and national connections, as well as a year-round site for flights to Europe.

Our government's plan for all of us will be a plan for more jobs and investment in Newfoundland and Labrador. As the global trade environment is rapidly evolving and the risk of a global economic slowdown rises, our province cannot proceed with business as usual.

Our government is focused on ensuring access to global markets for all sectors of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy.

That is why our government will spend less time chasing the headlines and more time getting down to basics. Newfoundland and Labrador has both the resources that the world needs, and the skilled workers that the future requires.

That is why, after a hiatus, Newfoundland and Labrador is back in the oil business.

This will start with a focus on Bay du Nord, which has the potential to kick-start the entire energy sector in the North Atlantic. At a time when global energy security is paramount, Newfoundland and Labrador has the critical energy supplies of the future, including our offshore oil and gas.

On this, you can expect our government to govern under two flags.

The first flag will be a Canadian flag. Canada can, should, and must do everything in its power to create an investment climate that provides the certainty for development of these resources in order for our country to grow as an energy superpower.

And inside of Canada, under a Newfoundland and Labrador flag, our government will remind our friends across the country of the significant oil and gas potential that exists right here on the eastern frontier.

Our government's commitment to resource development will also extend to mines and minerals. Our province has a long mining heritage, and with untapped reserves of the critical minerals the world needs we are capable of so much more. Our government will knock down regulatory burdens to mining development and make our province a global leader in attracting international mining investment.

When it comes to our workers, let us put it plainly. Newfoundland and Labrador has a lot of workers - talented workers and skilled workers. For too long, too many workers have needed to leave home to find opportunities in other provinces and other places. To any expatriate Newfoundlander or Labradorian thinking about returning, there has never been a better time to come home.

In the coming months, you can expect our government to launch an aggressive strategy to attract new industrial investment. This will include federal defence spending.

Newfoundland and Labrador is built for defence. Some advantages are structural, others are natural, and some are forged with grit and determination through history.

Our province has a rich and proud military history, defined by remarkable contributions from past generations and those who serve today that continue to shape our province and our country.

Newfoundland and Labrador holds a strategic position on the eastern frontier of North America - a gateway at the intersection of Arctic, Atlantic, and North American defence

domains. We bring world-leading marine and offshore expertise, a highly skilled workforce, dual-use technologies and growing innovation capacity, along with strategic infrastructure across the province.

Newfoundland and Labrador is ready to play a bigger role in building a stronger national defence sector.

And the skilled workers of this province are ready to help build that future - supporting Canada's security while creating opportunity here at home.

As Newfoundland and Labrador's economy grows, we will also do our part to ensure all of us, in every part of the province, share in this prosperity.

We will also ensure that our regional economic development funding will be regionally led. Our government believes you cannot build up rural economies by governing only from St. John's.

Labradorians take great pride in the regional uniqueness of the Big Land. Labrador contributes enormous sums to our prosperity and wealth, despite this Labradorians have felt left behind.

We will ensure that sufficient medical flights are available for residents of remote communities and make sure Labradorians can access emergency air medical transport when needed. We will also increase access to mental-health supports and services across Labrador. Our government will also invest in reducing the cost of air travel to, from, and within Labrador. We will also push for federal funding to upgrade Labrador airstrips.

Our government will also continue to partner with Indigenous Peoples. As part of our update to the K-12 curriculum, we will ensure it contains appropriate content on Indigenous

histories, cultures, stories, and languages. We will provide opportunities to Indigenous children and youth to learn and champion traditional language, craft, and skills so they can share their heritage with non-Indigenous children and youth throughout the province.

To help communities across our province, our government will also introduce local-benefits legislation to keep more money in our economy. Our resources must always be developed primarily for the benefit of our province and our people.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are ready to contribute. We are ready to build. And we are ready to work with, trade with, and partner with others. But there can be no rubber stamps in our government. When it comes to the generational opportunities in front of us, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must be the primary beneficiaries of our own resources. That will never be handed to us by outsiders. We have to demand it.

This includes the Churchill River. Today, as we deliver this speech, an Independent Review Committee empowered under Part II of the **Public Inquiries Act** is examining the existing MOU signed by the previous government with the Government of Quebec. Our government will not prejudge the conclusions of that independent review. But coming out of that process, our government will be ready to act on what we learn.

When we get this right, not only will our province develop a once-in-a-lifetime resource, but we will also do so with the earned wisdom of hard history and the peace of mind of good government built around trust, transparency, and full facts. All of our resources must be developed with an eye to more local jobs, more local benefits, and more local revenue - always putting Newfoundland and Labrador first. That is how we protect what we have. And that is how we build something better.

CONCLUSION

Members of the House of Assembly, the thread that connects this agenda is that we must always remain laser-focused on what matters most: better health care, lower taxes, and safer communities.

Delivering on these commitments will, in part, depend on executing a vigorous economic development agenda that ensures the resources of our province are developed by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The challenges in front of us are serious, and the opportunities are immense. Success is not automatic or guaranteed.

The business of this chamber does more than guide the direction of government. It steers the very future of our province.

As you engage in this sacred trust, and engage in rigorous and respectful debate, we expect you to ask the most important question:

Will this help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Will this help **All of Us**?

Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly: estimates of expenditure will be laid before you in due course, and you will be asked to grant supply to His Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence the work of the First Session of the Fifty-First General Assembly.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

