



BUDGET SPEECH 2011

***Standing Strong:
For Prosperity. For Our Future.
For Newfoundland and Labrador.***



**Delivered by
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Minister of Finance and
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**At The
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Economic Performance 2010.....2

Fiscal Review of 2010-11.....4

2011 Economic Outlook.....6

Beyond 2011.....7

Fiscal Forecast for 2011-128

Standing Strong 12

 STANDING STRONG ON ENERGY 12

 STANDING STRONG ON INFRASTRUCTURE 12

 STANDING STRONG ON INNOVATION 14

 STANDING STRONG ON CHILD CARE 18

 STANDING STRONG ON EDUCATION 19

 STANDING STRONG ON POVERTY REDUCTION 22

 STANDING STRONG ON LABRADOR 26

 STANDING STRONG ON HEALTH CARE 29

 STANDING STRONG ON SAFETY 35

 STANDING STRONG ON COOPERATION..... 38

Conclusion 42

Introduction

Our province has never been stronger than it is today.

Our prospects have never been brighter than they are for tomorrow.

Our priorities have never mattered more than they do right now.

This is Newfoundland and Labrador's time to grow.

As this year's Speech from the Throne states clearly, "To make growth happen, individuals, businesses and communities must rise to the challenge and seize the opportunities before them. Through a partnership of collective effort and individual responsibility, we as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can achieve goals others think impossible. Each of us has the power to master our own destiny, and each of us has the responsibility to use it."

The government, too, has a role to play in creating "conditions conducive to growth: a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility, a solid foundation of reliable infrastructure, competitive taxation, minimal red tape and progressive public services, including a range of instruments and initiatives to help businesses grow and individuals prepare for opportunities."

That defines our vision moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

Still, there are those who would have us second-guess the path we're on. There are those who would have us retreat from challenge, recoil from opportunity, fall back to the old ways of thinking that were leading us nowhere but down. But we will not be deterred.

Mr. Speaker, through the choices we are making, as demonstrated in our eighth budget, we are not falling back, but standing strong.

Standing strong for prosperity.

Standing strong for our future.

Standing strong for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Not with **old** ways of thinking, but with **bold** ways of thinking.

Not by **half** measures, but by reaching the **full** measure of our potential for the greater benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Economic Performance 2010

Mr. Speaker, this time last year, we were cautiously optimistic that 2010 would be a good year, but there was still considerable risk that global growth could stumble back into recession. The world was still in a period of economic uncertainty. As 2010 unfolded, the world economy did rebound from the recession and all major economies showed positive growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The recovery, however, has been uneven, with strong growth in emerging economies like India and China and slower growth in many advanced economies such as the United States and Europe. Canada escaped the severest effects of the recession and, in 2010, experienced a solid economic recovery. Because Newfoundland and Labrador produces commodities the world wants and needs, our economy fared very well in 2010.

Economic growth was very strong in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2010. Real GDP is estimated to have grown by 5.6%, fuelled by strong investment growth and a rebound in exports. Real GDP growth in Newfoundland and Labrador last year was the highest among all provinces in the country.

Investment grew by 32% to over \$6.5 billion in 2010, due in large part to the development of major projects, but also aided by public sector infrastructure spending. Work on several major projects progressed, including Vale's nickel processing facility in Long Harbour, the Hebron oil project, and expansions at White Rose and Hibernia. A decision to renew iron ore expansion plans at IOC was also taken.

Exports received a significant boost from the recovery in global commodity markets. Real exports are estimated to have increased by 4% due to a significant increase in mineral output, particularly iron ore and higher oil production. The value of mineral shipments increased by about 90%, mainly due to higher production and prices for iron ore. Offshore oil production totalled 100.7 million barrels, an increase of 3.1% relative to 2009.

Tourism performance continued to be strong, with the number of tourists visiting the province growing by more than 7% to a record 518,500. The convention business continues to grow.

Employment grew by 3.3% to reach 219,400, recouping all the losses experienced during the 2009 recession – a remarkable feat. Mr. Speaker, this performance marked the quickest recovery in employment from a recession since at least the 1970s. Moreover, employment growth in the province was the highest among all provinces in the country and more than double the national rate of growth.

Retail sales grew by 3.7% to \$7.4 billion buoyed by income growth and solid consumer confidence. Other areas of the domestic economy were also quite strong last year. Housing starts increased by 18% to 3,606 units in 2010, the highest level in 30 years. The strength in the economy and continued optimism about future prospects contributed to net in-migration and a further increase in the province's population, which stood at 509,739 as of July 1, 2010. This is an

increase of 0.3% compared with July 1, 2009. This marked the second consecutive year of population gains after 16 years of decline.

Investment builds new capacity and produces new opportunities to create wealth. It provides businesses and workers new avenues by which to pursue new opportunities and realize their potential. Mr. Speaker, it was with great pleasure that an agreement to develop the Muskrat Falls portion of the Lower Churchill River hydroelectric development was announced late last year. This development has enhanced an already robust investment landscape for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, with benefits for years to come. Mr. Speaker, this government continues to believe we cannot ever be complacent and that we must continue to seize every reasonable opportunity we can to advance economic prosperity. We are shaping our own destiny, boldly forging a new path to prosperity today, while securing a prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.

Fiscal Review of 2010-11

Mr. Speaker, for the fiscal years from 2005-06 to 2008-09, this province recorded four consecutive surpluses, totalling over \$4.1 billion. In 2009-10, the global economy was in the midst of the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Despite this, Newfoundland and Labrador was able to record a very modest deficit of less than \$33 million for that year.

A year ago in Budget 2010, we forecast a deficit of \$194 million for the year ended March 31, 2011. At the time of the release of our Fall Update, oil prices were below our forecast, but oil production was well above what had been expected. The net result was an increase in **oil royalties**. As a result of the economic growth happening in this province and the recovery occurring outside the province, we were also seeing increases in other revenues. Subsequently, Mr. Speaker, in our Fall Update, government forecast a small surplus of \$12.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, oil prices have continued to increase, and it comes as no surprise that our fiscal performance has been positively impacted. Other **commodity prices** have also increased, and that is providing a boost to mining tax. Recent updates from the federal government, which administers and collects about 75% of provincial tax revenues on our behalf, indicate further improvements in sales tax and personal and corporate income taxes.

I am pleased to report to this House that when we close the books on 2010-11, we expect to record a **surplus** of \$485 million. This will be the fifth surplus in six years. The cumulative value of these surpluses is almost \$4.6 billion and we also expect Net Debt to decline in 2010-11.

Statement of Operations 2010-11			
(\$ millions)			
	Budget	Revised	Variance
Fiscal Revenue	6,584.5	7,283.1	698.6
Net Income of Government Business Enterprises	206.9	201.2	(5.7)
Revenue	6,791.4	7,484.3	692.9
Net Expenses:			
Program Expenses	6,176.6	6,175.6	1.0
Debt Servicing Expenses	809.1	823.4	(14.3)
Total Net Expenses	6,985.7	6,999.0	(13.3)
Surplus/(Deficit)	(194.3)	485.3	679.6

2011 Economic Outlook

Mr. Speaker, while uncertainty persists within the global economy, recovery is expected to continue in 2011. This global growth augurs well for our own economy. Newfoundland and Labrador can expect another solid year of economic growth and prosperity.

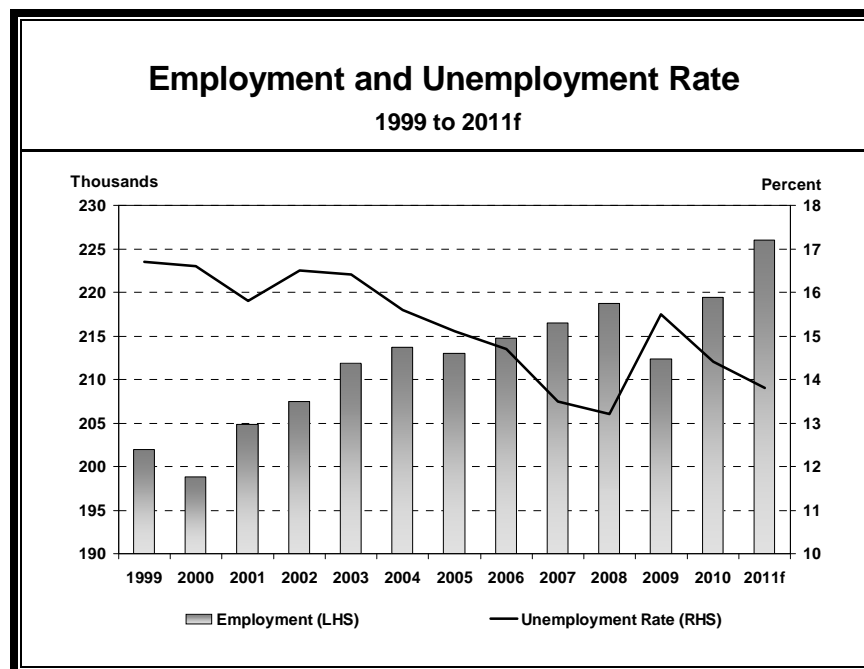
Economic growth is expected to be 3% in 2011, fuelled by investment in major projects and mineral production. Capital investment in the province is expected to increase by 27.2% this year to an unprecedented \$8.3 billion. Of this, \$2.7 billion is expected to be spent in the mining and oil and gas industries. Peak activity is expected to occur at the Vale nickel processing plant with over US\$800 million in expenditures planned for this year. Development of the Hebron oil field will continue to advance and the Lower Churchill Project will continue towards achieving project sanction for construction.

Main Economic Indicators					
(Percentage Change)					
	<u>2010e</u>	<u>2011f</u>	<u>2012f</u>	<u>2013f</u>	<u>2014f</u>
Real Gross Domestic Product	5.6	3.0	0.2	1.8	-0.2
Personal Income	4.2	5.5	5.7	5.4	3.9
Retail Sales	3.7	4.2	4.9	5.3	3.8
Housing Starts (number)	3,606	3,294	3,017	3,043	3,063
Consumer Price Index	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.3
Employment	3.3	3.0	2.0	1.6	0.7
Unemployment Rate (percent)	14.4	13.8	13.4	13.1	13.2

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is expected to be among the leaders in Canada in GDP growth again in 2011.

Employment is expected to grow by 3% to an average of 226,000. This, Mr. Speaker, will be the highest level of employment ever recorded in this province. Personal income and disposable income are expected to grow by 5.5% and 5.4% respectively, both aided by wage gains and employment growth. Retail sales are expected to increase by 4.2%. Population is expected to increase 0.3% due to positive net migration.

Mr. Speaker, in short, as the global economy continues to recover, the momentum in the provincial economy continues to build.



Beyond 2011

Mr. Speaker, as we look beyond 2011, the economic outlook remains positive as well. Business and consumer confidence are strong. While GDP growth will depend on major project timelines and natural resource production, other indicators such as employment and income are expected to record steady

growth. Sustained high levels of capital investment will support these gains. In fact, construction employment related to major projects, including spin-offs, is expected to increase by about 3,000 to 9,700 person years in 2011 and by a further 2,100 to 11,800 in 2012. Increased employment and income will bolster consumer spending. Continued economic growth and optimism about the development of major projects is expected to lead to further net in-migration and an increase in the population.

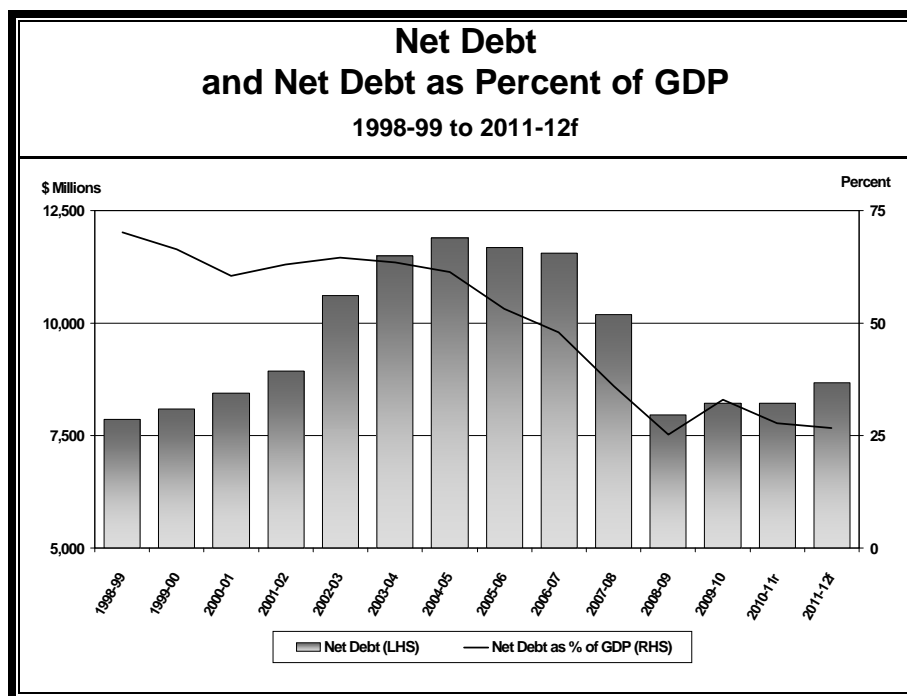
Mr. Speaker, there has never been a better time to make this province home.

Fiscal Forecast for 2011-12

The economies of developed nations are still struggling to gain traction. Our country is still feeling the effects of the global recession, and it is impacting fiscally in an adverse way. Most governments in our country are forecasting deficits for the coming year. Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador will fare better than most. I am pleased to report that we are forecasting another **surplus** again this year – the sixth in the last seven years – a surplus of \$59 million for 2011-12.

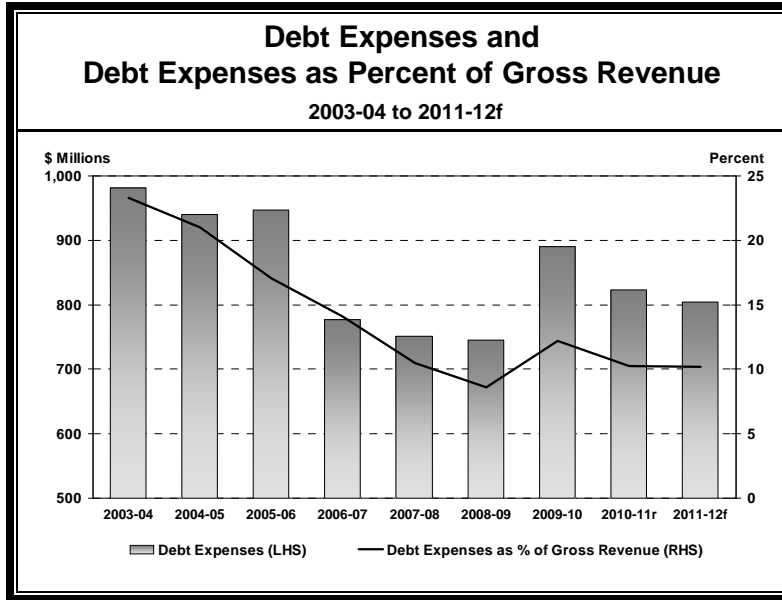
Statement of Operations 2011-12		
(\$ millions)		
	2010-11 Revised	2011-12 Estimate
Fiscal Revenue	7,283.1	7,123.6
Net Income of Government Business Enterprises	201.2	219.2
Revenue	7,484.3	7,342.8
Net Expenses:		
Program Expenses	6,175.6	6,479.3
Debt Servicing Expenses	823.4	804.4
Total Net Expenses	6,999.0	7,283.7
Surplus	485.3	59.1

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, since 2004, we have made substantial financial progress. **Net Debt** has decreased from a high of almost \$12 billion to a projected \$8.2 billion at the end of 2010-11, a decline of 31%. One of the primary fiscal indicators used by financial markets and bond rating agencies to measure the ability of a government to support debt is the percentage of Net Debt to GDP: the lower the percentage, the greater the ability to support debt. Net Debt as a percentage of GDP will have improved from a high of 70.2% to 26.7% at March 31, 2012, a very significant improvement.

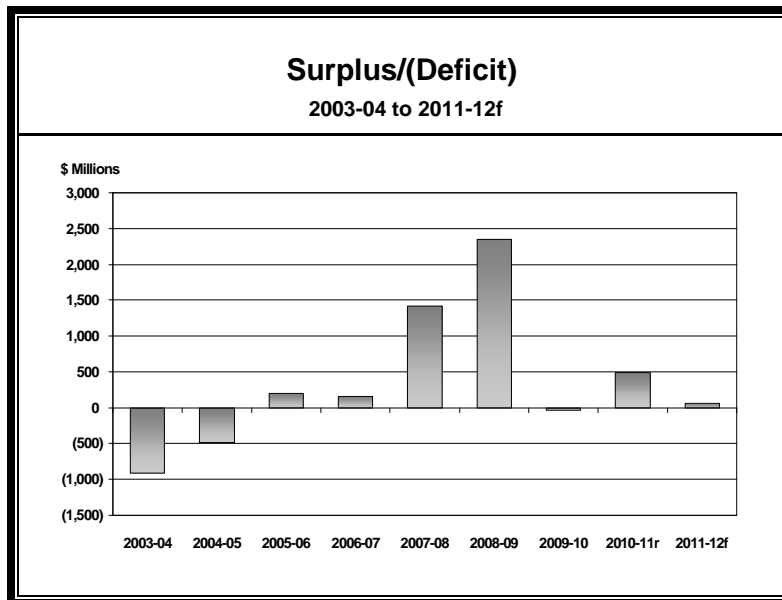


Another key measure of fiscal performance is the percentage of revenue which is consumed to service the debt. In 2004, debt expenses consumed over 23% of our revenues. Budget 2011 forecasts debt expenses to be 10.2% of revenues, a significant improvement over that period of time.

Mr. Speaker, when we were elected to office in October, 2003, there was much work to be done after years of neglect. There had been little new infrastructure, and the infrastructure already in place was in decay. Routine maintenance was



often deferred. Our existing social programs were underfunded. We had to make the necessary investments to ensure that we remained the best place in the world to live, to work, to raise a family, and to retire with dignity.



We have responded since being elected to office with expenditure levels that support a high level of programs and services, and we stimulated the economy

during the recession. Always, however, we were committed to spending within our means. During my consultations with the people of the province prior to this Budget, I was clear that, while strong expenditure growth was necessary during the catch-up and stimulus periods, more moderate expenditures are required in the future. Our net program expenses will grow by less than 5% in 2011-12, with much of this growth relating to wage increases previously negotiated.

The Budget Outlook				
(\$ millions)				
	2011-12f	2012-13f	2013-14f	2014-15f
Revenue	7,342.8	6,915.9	7,255.3	7,575.4
Net Expenses:				
Program Expenses	6,479.3	6,584.8	6,700.6	6,634.7
Debt Servicing Expenses	804.4	827.5	864.6	893.7
Total Net Expenses	7,283.7	7,412.3	7,565.2	7,528.4
Surplus / (Deficit)	59.1	(496.4)	(309.9)	47.0

Mr. Speaker, our accomplishments in improving the fiscal health of the province have been validated in the financial markets. While we have not borrowed in the markets since 2007, our bonds are trading in secondary markets at rates that are at historic levels compared to the federal government and other provinces.

Just over a month ago, Standard & Poor's Rating Services raised the **credit rating** assigned to the province from 'A' to 'A+'. This is the highest rating that Standard & Poor's has ever given to Newfoundland and Labrador, and it will reflect favourably for any future borrowing requirements. In upgrading our rating they said the Province "has a strong liquidity position, reflecting its past operating surpluses and prudent spending practices."

Standing Strong

STANDING STRONG ON ENERGY

Mr. Speaker, looking forward, our province's energy corporation, Nalcor, has an obligation to identify the lowest-cost option for meeting our province's energy needs. Nalcor identified the **Muskrat Falls** hydroelectricity development project as the best choice moving forward. Not only is Muskrat Falls the lowest-cost opportunity to supply the power Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are going to require: it is also a powerful means of attracting new industrial growth to Labrador where opportunities abound.

As the Muskrat Falls project continues to advance through the approval process, we will invest \$348 million in **Nalcor** to support energy development in 2011-12, most of which will be employed for the Lower Churchill project. After Muskrat Falls will come the Gull Island development and, by 2041, the return of the Upper Churchill to the control of Newfoundland and Labrador.

STANDING STRONG ON INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Speaker, energy continues to be a major driver of economic growth and revenue growth in our province. Our detractors have said the benefits are enjoyed by only a few Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They are wrong. In many ways, including a multi-year **infrastructure strategy** currently valued in excess of \$5 billion, we have reinvested those revenues in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, laying a solid foundation for investment attraction and new economic growth. We have invested in securing the *foundation* of regions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador because we believe in the *future* of regions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2011-12, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will invest \$216.4 million in **roads and bridges** for a total federal-provincial investment this year of \$251.6 million. Initiatives will include:

- Funding to repair roads damaged by Hurricane Igor, a portion of which is recoverable from the Federal Disaster Financial Assistance Program;
- Funding for new projects under the Provincial Roads Program throughout the province, including \$2 million for brush cutting;
- Funding for various road and bridge projects along the Trans-Canada Highway;
- Funding to continue construction of the Team Gushue Highway and the CBS By-Pass from Kelligrews to Seal Cove;
- Funding to continue work to replace the Sir Ambrose Shea Lift Bridge in Placentia;
- Funding to replace the Kenmount Road overpass; and,
- Funding to complete the Torbay By-Pass.

We will invest \$38.7 million in **public buildings**, which includes \$1 million for energy efficiency improvements in public buildings, supplemented by an additional \$2 million from the Newfoundland and Labrador Green Fund.

We will invest \$56.4 million in **marine infrastructure**, including:

- \$39.3 million to continue the vessel replacement strategy;
- \$12.1 million for ferry vessel refits; and,
- \$5 million for maintenance and upgrades to wharves at ferry terminals.

Added to this will be significant new infrastructure investments in municipal affairs, education, health and community services, fisheries and aquaculture, environment and conservation, justice, heritage and housing.

In total this year, we are investing more than **\$1 billion in infrastructure** projects throughout our province, fuelling economic activity, laying a solid foundation for future growth and generating an estimated 7,680 person-years of employment.

STANDING STRONG ON INNOVATION

Mr. Speaker, reliable infrastructure is indispensable to prospective investors looking to create jobs and wealth, but infrastructure is just the start. Investors are also looking for resources they can access, skilled workers they can hire and a government that thinks ahead of the curve. It is not by accident that in Newfoundland and Labrador today, they are finding all three.

In 2006, we launched our province's **Innovation Strategy**, a new approach to development based on a new way of thinking. Through innovation, we are learning to put our resource wealth, our strategic advantages and our people's ingenuity to use in inventive ways that enable us to compete successfully with the best in the world. Innovation has enabled Newfoundland and Labrador to become a major player in ocean technology, genetics research, aerospace technology, software development, communications technology, deep-sea robotics, energy production and other fields.

- We are renewing our commitment to the Innovation Strategy this year with a \$3 million investment to expand the Commercialization and Innovation Enhancement Programs.
- We are providing a further \$8 million to help address gaps in broadband availability in under-serviced areas and to further develop an advanced internal telecommunications network.
- We are investing \$3 million a year for the next three years in the Aerospace and Defence Development Fund in support of a sector that currently employs some 1,500 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and generates \$150 million a year in revenue.

- We are continuing our commitment to the province's Research & Development Corporation with \$19 million available to strengthen R&D activities in the province through targeted investments.

We are also investing:

- \$71 million for various **tax credits and incentives** to stimulate business growth;
- \$29 million for the Business Attraction Fund;
- \$12.8 million for the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Fund;
- \$6.1 million for the Ocean Technology Sector Strategy;
- \$5 million for the Regional/Sectoral Diversification Fund;
- \$2 million for the Oil and Gas Manufacturing and Services Export Development Fund;
- \$1.7 million for the Air Access Strategy; and,
- \$1 million for the Business and Market Development Program.

Mr. Speaker, I am also delighted to announce that the **Payroll Tax** is being decreased this year. Retroactive to January 1, 2011, the payroll tax exemption threshold has been raised from \$1 million to \$1.2 million, removing an additional 90 businesses from the tax rolls and reducing the tax burden for 845 others. This measure will put \$2.3 million back in the hands of our province's employers.

Mr. Speaker, innovative thinking is transforming many of our province's traditional industries, and we are making investments this year to reinforce that approach to growth.

In the **mining** sector:

- We are continuing to invest \$2.9 million in the Mineral Incentive Program to provide prospector grants and junior exploration assistance; and,
- We are investing \$1.2 million to support geoscience data collection, storage and distribution.

In the **forestry** sector, we are investing \$1.1 million over three years in the Forest Research and Innovation Fund to foster innovation and identify new opportunities for growth.

In **agriculture**:

- We are investing \$250,000 to begin implementing our new five-year Agriculture and Agrifoods Action Plan entitled “Our Farms, Our Food, Our Future”;
- This will include \$150,000 for the development of new entrants initiatives and \$100,000 to assist new entrants with legal land survey costs; and,
- In addition, we are investing \$500,000 in equipment for our Animal Health Laboratory to provide greater food safety and milk quality testing capabilities.

In **aquaculture**:

- We are investing \$344,000 to improve biosecurity;
- We are investing \$300,000 to improve waste water treatment on the Connaigre Peninsula;
- We are investing \$535,000 to complete the construction of the Centre for Aquaculture Health and Development;
- We are investing more than \$9 million for wharf infrastructure including provincial funding of \$6.3 million to complete wharves at Pool’s Cove and Hermitage and construction of new wharves at Belleoram and Harbour Breton, and \$2.8 million funded through Transport Canada’s Port Divestiture program to upgrade wharves at St. Alban’s and Milltown;
- We are investing an additional \$4.7 million in the Aquaculture Capital Equity Investment Program, for a total investment this year of \$8 million; and,
- We are investing \$100,000 for the clean-up of abandoned aquaculture sites.

In the **fisheries** sector:

- We are investing \$300,000 as part of a three-year investment in the Coastal and Oceans Management Program that identifies sustainable ocean resource practices;
- We are investing \$6.6 million over three years in the Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program for fishing industry research and development, leveraging additional investments from the fishing industry and other sources during that period;
- We are investing \$100,000 to address seafood trade concerns, particularly tariffs;
- We are also extending the Fishing Industry Workforce Adjustment Program for another three years with a total investment of \$3.1 million; and,
- We are investing \$150,000 for the demolition and site restoration of abandoned fisheries infrastructure.

A total of \$200,000 has been allocated for **sealing industry** advocacy and development in Budget 2011. This represents an increase of \$100,000 over previous years. This funding will help address new opportunities in the sealing industry in the global marketplace as the provincial government supports the development of new seal products and new international markets in countries such as China and Russia.

By far most of these initiatives are based in our rural communities. Opportunities for innovation and growth in rural Newfoundland and Labrador are boundless, and that is why our Premier and our government are hard at work harnessing the energy and ingenuity to bring these opportunities to fruition so our communities can continue to grow.

STANDING STRONG ON CHILD CARE

Mr. Speaker, initiatives like these are opening doors for investors to expand their operations and create jobs. Now, let me focus on some of the things we are doing to prepare our people to take those jobs and bring home the benefits.

A major barrier to employment many face is the lack of access to child care. For our Premier, this is a priority. Budget 2011 continues to advance the family-friendly policies established during our tenure in office. Building on the Early Learning and Child Care Capacity Initiative we announced in 2006, we are introducing this year a **two-year pilot project focused on the development of child care spaces** in family homes throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We will increase from \$2,500 to \$5,000 the start-up grant to become a regulated family child care provider, and we will provide start-up grants of \$7,500 for homes that care exclusively for children up to the age of two. This initiative also provides for an ongoing stimulus grant to infant care homes of \$200 a month per infant space, in recognition of the higher cost of operation in terms of staff ratios. This approach will help keep rates attainable for parents requiring infant care – the very type of care that, right now, is in the shortest supply. It will be of particular benefit for families in rural and under-serviced areas: the initiative will encourage the development of regulated home-based child care in these areas because they are feasible on a small scale. This pilot project has the capacity to support the creation of up to 400 child care spaces over two years, in addition to those created by our other initiatives.

I am also pleased to announce today that we are introducing a provincial **child care tax credit**. Currently, a parent may deduct eligible child care expenses from income. Effective for the 2011 tax year, we will provide additional tax relief: a new, non-refundable tax credit for eligible child care expenses. Under this initiative, a person with eligible expenses of \$7,000 would save an additional \$539 in provincial income tax. This initiative will return about \$3 million to almost 12,000 families across the province.

STANDING STRONG ON EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker, complementing our child care initiatives is our **Early Childhood Learning Strategy**, entitled “Learning from the Start”. With a commitment of \$4.8 million over three years including an initial commitment of \$1.3 million, we will move forward this year with a range of initiatives for children up to the age of three, focusing on social and early learning development opportunities to give these children a head start well before they enter the K-12 school system.

We are also prepared to do more at the K-12 level, building on the enormous investments we have made to date. To ensure our children benefit fully from advances in educational technology and programs, we are introducing our 21st Century Learning Strategy. We are providing an investment of approximately \$11 million in 2011-12, on top of the \$5.4 million we have already invested, to provide **computers and interactive whiteboards** for our classrooms.

Complementing our investments in technology and programs will be significant investments in **K-12 infrastructure**, with new and ongoing projects this year valued at \$94.5 million. As a result, we will see a number of much-needed projects move forward, including:

- Planning for the extension and redevelopment of Roncalli Elementary in St. John’s;
- Planning for the extension and renovation of the former Regina High School to create a new intermediate school in Corner Brook;
- Planning for the extension and renovation of Holy Spirit High in Conception Bay South;
- Planning for the extension and renovation of Gander Academy;
- Planning for the refurbishment of Holy Heart Regional High in St. John’s;
- Planning work to provide new capacity to address growing enrolment in the Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s area, and in the area of Torbay, Flatrock, Pouch Cove and Bauline; and,

- Planning to address capacity issues at schools in the rapidly growing Conception Bay South area.

Mr. Speaker, when you tally up all the funding for construction of new facilities, extensions and major renovations to existing facilities, and repair and maintenance projects from our first budget in 2004 to our eighth budget this year, our government's total investment in K-12 infrastructure has now surpassed half a billion dollars, and every single dollar represents new opportunities for our children.

A K-12 education in Newfoundland and Labrador provides a solid foundation for young people seeking a future of self-reliance, and many will build on this foundation with a post-secondary education. Every year since we have been in government, to make a post-secondary education more accessible, we have frozen tuition fees at Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. To enable the freeze to happen in 2005, we provided funding increases to our public post-secondary institutions to offset the revenues they would not be getting through fee increases. When the freeze was extended for a second year, we once again provided the amount of the initial offset plus a second offset to keep fees from rising. As we continued the tuition fee freeze in subsequent years, government provided incremental funding year over year to offset the lost tuition revenue. Today, as a result of those investments, our tuition fees are the most attractive in the country, and students are coming here from across Canada to join our own students who are staying at home to study. The benefits to Newfoundland and Labrador are enormous. This year we are once again providing an additional \$6.4 million in order to continue for a seventh year the **freeze on tuition fees at Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic**, bringing the cumulative investment over the last seven years to \$138.8 million.

In addition to the freeze on tuition fees, we are continuing to provide upfront, needs-based grants under one of the most progressive student aid programs in the country.

We are also investing significant amounts in **post-secondary infrastructure**.

- To maintain and modernize Memorial's buildings, we are investing an additional \$19.8 million over the next three years for maintenance projects, bringing the three-year total to \$36 million.
- To upgrade Memorial's laboratories, we are investing an additional \$7.7 million over the next two years, bringing the total invested in labs since 2009 to \$13.5 million.
- To upgrade and renew College of the North Atlantic's infrastructure, we are investing an additional \$3.2 million over the next three years for maintenance projects.
- To modernize the College's labs and shops in order to provide the kind of training required by today's industrial employers, we are investing an additional \$7 million over the next three years. This is in addition to the \$2 million we have already allocated for the next two years through our Skills Task Force commitments.

Classroom, shop and lab training is often not enough to qualify for a skilled trade. Many graduates also need apprenticeships. The supply of apprenticeships has not kept pace with the demand, especially for traditionally under-represented groups, such as women, Aboriginals and persons with disabilities. We will address that deficiency by allocating \$15.4 million over the next three years to provide additional incentives to employers to hire apprentices, particularly those from under-represented groups. The details of our **Apprenticeship**

Employment Rebate will be announced in the coming weeks. The program will complement the recently announced increases under the Wage Subsidy Program and other initiatives announced to date to help apprentices move through their training program and achieve journey person status in a timely manner.

We are determined to advance opportunities for **persons with disabilities**. This year, we will increase funding for supported employment initiatives; plus, we are allocating \$400,000 this year in interim funding to implement the first stages of our Provincial Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

STANDING STRONG ON POVERTY REDUCTION

Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest barriers to opportunity is poverty. The circumstances that place some people in poverty can make it difficult for them to escape it. Determined to reduce poverty in our province, we moved forward in 2006 to introduce Newfoundland and Labrador's first Poverty Reduction Strategy, a multi-year, multi-faceted initiative designed to address many of the challenges people face. Up to last year, our total investment in poverty reduction initiatives since 2006 was \$482.7 million. This year, we are doing even more.

Our new initiatives this year will focus primarily on four areas:

- Improving access to key health services;
- Enhancing housing and community supports;
- Ensuring a better-educated population; and,
- Enhancing our social safety net.

Among the greatest expenses for adults with low incomes is dental care. With an investment this year of \$1.5 million annualizing to \$6.1 million in subsequent years, we will introduce an **Adult Dental Program**, providing diagnostic and

therapeutic dental services once every three years to adults 18 and over who have low incomes or are in receipt of income support. This initiative will provide many in our province with unprecedented access to dental services. This complements our significant investments in the dental care program, which focuses on children, and brings our total investment in dental care this year to over \$10 million.

Among the most significant challenges an individual or family may face in attempting to move from poverty to self-reliance is the shortage of affordable places to live. The situation was far worse when we entered office. Recognizing the problem, we set to work developing a strategy to address the need and, in 2009, became only the third jurisdiction in the country to adopt a provincial **social housing plan**.

- We tripled Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's modernization and renovation fund to \$12 million, the first increase in 25 years;
- We increased the rent supplement program from \$4 million to \$6 million, the first increase in 25 years, and dedicated 80 supplements to help persons with complex needs in partnership with the Stella Burry Corporation and the Canadian Mental Health Association;
- We increased funding for the Housing Corporation's heat subsidy program from \$6.9 million to \$9.4 million;
- We doubled the operational grants for its eight community centres to \$150,000;
- We doubled our contribution to the Provincial Home Repair Program, raising the total to \$12 million;
- We introduced the first-ever residential energy efficiency two-year pilot program, enabling participants to reduce their costs by 35% and save nearly \$800 a year;
- We introduced the first-ever Homelessness Fund in 2009 with an investment of \$1 million;

- We created nearly 900 new affordable housing units throughout the province over the past six years and, in partnership with the private sector, the non-profit sector and supportive living advocates, we are providing these units primarily for seniors, persons with disabilities, families and persons with complex needs.

We are prepared to do more. To address the problem of homelessness, we are moving forward this year to expand the **Supportive Living Community Partnership Program**, doubling its funding from \$2.4 million to \$4.8 million to enable community-based organizations to help people who are vulnerable to homelessness, including many with complex needs such as addictions, criminal records and mental illness.

To provide financial help to low-income families currently waitlisted for housing units, we are once again expanding the Housing Corporation's **Rent Supplement Program** from \$6 million in 2010-11 to \$7 million in 2011-12 and \$8 million the following year. By next year, our investment in rent supplementation will be double what it was when we took office, and it will be complemented by other investments to address housing needs. As part of this initiative, we are also providing 25 more rent supplements each to the Stella Burry Corporation and the Canadian Mental Health Association to provide housing for persons with complex needs.

We will partner once again with the Government of Canada to proceed with the fourth phase of the **affordable housing program** with a total provincial investment over the next three years of \$8.1 million matched by the federal government to create some 250 to 300 new affordable housing units for those with the greatest need.

We will also advance **poverty reduction through education**.

- We will invest \$1 million over the next two years in the Positive Actions for Student Success, or “PASS”, program, which currently supports over 250 disengaged or at-risk young people across the province so they stay in school;
- We will invest an additional \$115,400 in the Murphy Centre in St. John’s to expand access to academic programs; and,
- We will provide an additional \$225,000 for the Housing Corporation’s Education Incentive Program, which is keeping many Grade 7-12 students from dropping out of school.

To expand the social safety net and eliminate a potential barrier to employment, we are **eliminating the clawback of income tax refunds** so income support clients are better able to transition into the job force.

We are also expanding the **Employment Transitions Program** to two new locations, enabling single parents to attend sessions on career planning, job readiness, job maintenance and life skills.

As our Premier stated in her response to this year’s Speech from the Throne: “Child care, early childhood learning, education, career access, inclusion for persons with disabilities, poverty reduction, affordable housing – our investments in these areas all contribute to placing self-reliance within reach of many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who might not achieve it otherwise.”

With a total investment in poverty reduction this year approaching \$140 million, we are bringing our cumulative investment in poverty reduction since 2006 to more than \$620 million. It’s no wonder antipoverty advocates are describing us as a model for the country!

STANDING STRONG ON LABRADOR

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Labrador.

In 2007, we introduced our province's first-ever *Northern Strategic Plan* for Labrador, a far-reaching initiative to address the challenges unique to Labrador and give Labradorians new opportunities to prosper. We had already begun investing in Labrador in our first budget in 2004. In fact, by the end of the current fiscal year, our government's total spending in Labrador since 2004 will have exceeded \$3 billion.

It is money well spent, because it is changing lives as never before. This year's initiatives will make a significant difference in the lives of families from the Labrador Straits to the north coast, and from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Labrador West. Let me list just some of them.

- We will invest \$68.2 million provincially plus another \$3.5 million in federal funding in order to complete the widening and continue the hard-surfacing of Phase I of the **Trans-Labrador Highway**;
- We will invest \$3.4 million provincially and will lever an additional \$1.5 million in federal dollars to complete a highway realignment at **Pinware River** on the Trans-Labrador Highway in southern Labrador;
- We will invest \$2 million to complete a new **weigh scale** inspection facility near Wabush;
- We will invest a total of \$6.3 million over the next three years, including \$2.2 million in 2011-12, to remediate the former **military site in Hopedale**;
- We will continue to invest \$230,000 in the **Air Foodlift Subsidy** program this year, ensuring fresh and healthy food is available at reasonable prices to residents of Labrador's communities at times of the year when ice makes marine transportation impractical;

- We will invest \$1.2 million to construct four **public housing units** for low-income residents in Hopedale;
- For residents of Inuit communities on the north coast who register their **home heating oil tanks** in compliance with the storage tank regulations, we will invest \$1.5 million to reduce the costs they incur from about \$4,400 to about \$1,800 – a 60% savings;
- We will continue to provide for subsidies totalling over \$20 million annually to reduce the cost of **electricity and home heating** for residents in coastal Labrador communities;
- We will invest \$1 million for this year’s component of a three-year **Labrador Caribou Management Initiative** to enhance the collection of data from the George River caribou herd;
- We will invest \$2.1 million for a new Inland Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Division to enhance enforcement measures designed to protect Newfoundland and Labrador’s valuable fish and wildlife resources, including – specifically for Labrador – an additional \$1.3 million investment in the **Inland Fish Enforcement Program** to protect valuable salmon, trout and Arctic char stocks in Labrador;
- We will invest \$357,000 to support **justice programs** in Natuashish and Sheshatshiu that build on the success of the Innu Healing Path initiative;
- We will invest \$100,000 to update our **Aboriginal Consultation Policy** to ensure there are open lines of communication for dialogue on development projects and other key issues;
- We will invest \$100,700 to continue **land use planning** in the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area;
- We will invest funding for the **Northern Development Ministers’ Forum** taking place in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in August on the theme of “Northern Directions: Evaluating Strategic Planning in Northern Canada”;
- We will invest \$656,000 over the next three years to support Memorial University’s **Native Liaison Office**;

- We will invest \$3.6 million to complete construction of the College of the North Atlantic **Labrador West campus**;
- We will invest \$892,000 to complete the construction of **K-12 schools** at Port Hope Simpson and L'Anse au Loup, for a total investment of \$25.4 million;
- We will invest an additional \$200,000 in the **Labrador Travel Subsidy Program** to help offset the high cost of travel for Labrador athletes and teams coming to the island of Newfoundland to compete in provincial sport competitions, provincial and Canada Games tryouts, and training;
- The program also includes a **hosting grant for provincial championships** within Labrador to alleviate the cost of teams coming from the island to Labrador to compete in provincial competitions;
- We will further enhance the **Medical Transportation Assistance Program** by allowing for the prepayment of 50% of the cost of economy airfare for medical travel for all residents throughout the province;
- We are investing to enhance **mental health and addictions supports** in Labrador, which I will highlight in just a few moments when I outline the significant overall investment our government is making in mental health and addictions services; and,
- We will invest \$23.7 million this year toward the construction of the new \$90 million regional **health care facility in Labrador West**.

We are standing strong with the people of Labrador!

STANDING STRONG ON HEALTH CARE

Mr. Speaker, throughout Labrador and across the island, health care is our number one priority. While it would be impractical for me to list everything our investments in health care this year will achieve, let me describe some of the advances we are going to be making, focusing on initiatives that improve access, address mental health and addictions issues, enhance long-term care services and expand infrastructure.

Parents of **children with autism** have told us they want greater access to intervention programs. We have listened. Currently, the provincial Applied Behaviour Analysis program ends in Kindergarten.

- With an initial investment of \$2.2 million this year, we will expand access to that program to Grades 1 and 2, and with funding of \$2.9 million in 2012-13, we will expand the program to Grade 3.
- Funding of \$297,000 is also included to add seven positions to enhance the diagnosis of autism and also decrease wait times for speech language and occupational therapy services for children with autism and other diagnoses.
- In addition, \$255,000 is provided to develop a regional office of the province's Autism Society in western Newfoundland and expand two programs that provide specialized therapy for children and youth with autism.

We are also investing in a range of other initiatives to improve access to care.

- We are investing \$700,000 to strengthen the **Medical Transportation Assistance Program**. As I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this will allow for the prepayment of 50% of the cost of economy airfare for medical travel – a benefit of great significance to the people of Labrador, western Newfoundland and others. But there is more. We are also going to help

those who use private vehicles when travelling to access insured medical services. We are lowering the threshold for claiming expenses from 5,000 kilometres a year to just 2,500 kilometres a year, retroactive to October 1 of 2010.

- We are also investing \$734,000 to eliminate patient fees for interfacility transfers by road and air ambulance services.
- In addition, six new drug therapies will be covered under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

Access to care is a significant issue for people suffering from kidney failure. Since 2004, we have greatly improved regional access to **dialysis services** across the province. This year, as announced last week, we are building on those measures by investing a further \$3.1 million for dialysis enhancements in Burin, St. John's, Stephenville, St. Anthony and Labrador City, and we are also establishing a new satellite dialysis site in Harbour Breton.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking significant steps this year to advance the care of persons with **mental health and addictions issues**, to help reduce the stigma often associated with these conditions. Our government recognizes that individuals living with mental health and addictions issues in our communities must have the appropriate programs and services available to them, and we continue to illustrate that commitment through significant investments.

We will invest \$4.5 million this year to begin the **replacement of the Waterford Hospital in St. John's**. This new mental health facility will support a modernization of the approach to treating those with mental illness.

One of the biggest challenges in advancing mental health and addictions issues is the stigma associated with them. We are working to demystify mental health, create awareness and promote understanding by the public. Through an investment of \$1 million, we will implement three new initiatives for this purpose:

- We will develop an interactive, web-based e-mental health service. This is an innovative and engaging method that creates **greater access and service delivery of mental health services** in areas that are geographically isolated;
- We will enhance tele-mental health services to increase rural and remote access to mental health and addictions counselling; and,
- We will create a provincial public awareness campaign to decrease the stigma and discrimination attached to mental illness and addictions and increase understanding of how and when to seek help.

Our commitment to enhancing mental health and addictions services throughout the province continues through the following investments:

- We will invest \$2.2 million to place five full-time **mental health and addiction counselors** in Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik and Natuashish, plus \$195,300 to place mental health and addictions intake workers at Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay;
- We will also invest \$402,900 to add two rural case managers for adults in Placentia and Bonne Bay and add two rural case managers for youth in Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor;
- We will provide \$180,000 to enable the provincial division of the Canadian Mental Health Association to staff regional offices in Stephenville and Grand Falls-Windsor;
- We will provide \$140,000 for the province's Consumer Health Awareness Network to provide community mental health peer support personnel in the central and western regions; and,
- We will provide funding to enable Choices for Youth to advance its "Moving Forward" program.

In addition to improving access and enhancing mental health and addictions services, we are also continuing to move forward to enhance **long-term care**, acting on some of the input the Minister of Health and Community Services received in public consultations over the past year. These investments include:

- \$2.6 million to increase the current home support hourly subsidy rate;
- \$2.4 million to increase the personal care home subsidy rate and create new portable subsidies;
- \$1.1 million to increase the monthly maximums for home support subsidies;
- \$792,000 to create a Small Personal Care Home Subsidy Program to address cost pressures some of the smaller homes are facing; and,
- \$250,000 to review the current home support program.

We will also invest:

- \$3 million to increase bed capacity at the new long-term care facility in Corner Brook;
- \$189,300 to accommodate a higher level of care for individuals with dementia residing at the Protective Care Residence in Corner Brook; and,
- \$250,000 to implement new legislation regarding the protection of adults.

We are committed to continuing to improve recruitment and retention of **health care professionals** in our province and we are proud of the progress we have made in this area. Right now, we have more physicians and more nurses working in Newfoundland and Labrador than ever before in our history. We will continue to do more.

- With an investment of \$1.2 million, we will increase funding for the resident bursary program for medical and dental students who choose to serve in Newfoundland and Labrador communities.

- With an investment of \$700,000, we will improve accommodations in rural areas for medical students, recognizing that many who have a positive experience in these regions are more likely to return to practise and live there.
- We are also investing \$3.6 million to remunerate physicians who take on significant leadership roles within the Regional Health Authorities, where their expertise can be invaluable in improving operations and increasing access for patients needing care.

We are also investing \$902,000 this year and \$1.9 million over three years to offer the Medical Laboratory Sciences program at College of the North Atlantic's campus in Grand Falls-Windsor; and we are investing \$1.9 million through the Labour Market Development Agreement to maintain the College's Licensed Practical Nursing program.

Recognizing that access to medical services can be improved by **moving patients through the health care system more efficiently,**

- We are investing \$1.1 million to implement the efficiency recommendations of the Patient Flow Study conducted by Eastern Health; and,
- We are investing \$1.8 million to establish a new Division of Access and Clinical Efficiency within the Department of Health and Community Services to identify new ways to reduce wait times across our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, we will also improve access for patients this year by investing significantly in **health care infrastructure**. With more than \$200 million in new and continuing construction and redevelopment projects to announce this year, we are bringing our total health care infrastructure investment in 2011-12 to \$272.2 million.

In addition to the investment to begin replacement of the Waterford Hospital in St. John's, we will begin **planning for three other new facilities** throughout the province:

- We will invest \$600,000 to begin planning for a redeveloped Green Bay Community Health Centre in Springdale;
- We will invest \$90,000 to start construction of a new building to replace the existing medical centre in Glovertown; and,
- We will also invest \$1.7 million for construction of a protective care community residence in Clarenville.

In addition, we will make significant investments this year to continue work on several **major projects already underway**, including:

- \$56.2 million to advance the new long-term care facility in St. John's;
- \$23.7 million this year toward the construction of the new \$90 million regional health care facility in Labrador West;
- \$20 million to advance the new 250-bed long-term care facility in Carbonear;
- \$18.5 million to advance the construction of a new hospital in Corner Brook;
- \$12.1 million to advance the redevelopment of North Haven Manor in Lewisporte;
- \$6.8 million to advance the redevelopment of Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor, which represents an overall project investment of \$30 million; and,
- \$5.5 million to advance the redevelopment of James Paton Memorial Regional Hospital in Gander, which represents an overall project investment of \$28.3 million.

In addition, we are committing a further \$17.8 million to expand the **PET/CT cyclotron project**. This funding will see the consolidation of nuclear medicine services at one site and allow for the future expansion of the cancer care program, which will increase the total project cost to approximately \$29.8 million.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot speak responsibly about health care without focusing on **preventative health care and wellness**. You have to look no further than our government's Provincial Wellness Strategy, in which we invest \$4.1 million annually, to recognize that we are committed to promoting health and wellness throughout the province. Some of this year's initiatives include:

- \$477,700 to expand the Janeway Lifestyles Program, providing services to help lower children's risk factors for certain illnesses;
- \$225,000 for a school-based tobacco prevention campaign targeting elementary and junior high students, continuation of a social media campaign that focuses on youth and young adults with smoking prevention and cessation messages, plus an increase in funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association for the operation of the Smokers' Helpline; and,
- \$64,900 to increase the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement Program for some 400 pregnant women a month.

STANDING STRONG ON SAFETY

Mr. Speaker, complementing health is safety, and safety can mean many things: for example, keeping children safe from harm, keeping families safe from violence, keeping citizens safe from crime, keeping workers safe from accidents and keeping communities safe from damage. We are taking action on all of these.

To keep children safe from harm:

- We are investing an additional \$9.2 million in the new Department of Child, Youth and Family Services to bring our total new investment to \$33 million in just two years;
- Having undertaken the first transition of staff from the Western Regional Health Authority to the new department on March 28, we will undertake the remaining three transitions in stages over the next year; and,
- We are hiring 15 staff to complete the corporate structure.

To keep families safe from violence:

- We are investing \$360,000 to increase safety and security at ten transition houses;
- We are investing \$100,000 to increase the capacity of ten Regional Coordinating Committees for violence prevention activities;
- We are investing an additional \$10,000 to enable the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre to expand services province-wide;
- We are investing an additional \$46,000 in the province's eight Status of Women Councils to help women access services and programs related to social issues including safety, as well as economic well-being; and,
- We are investing \$529,000 to continue the Specialized Family Violence Court pilot project to provide treatment intervention for eligible offenders and support for victims and their children.

To keep citizens safe from crime:

- We are building on our strong and ongoing investments in policing over the past several years by funding an additional crime analyst to apply the RCMP's Crime Reduction Strategy in Trinity-Conception District; and,
- We are investing \$108,300 a year for a Royal Newfoundland Constabulary officer to staff a Child Exploitation Prevention Unit in Corner Brook, further expanding our province's capacity to combat child exploitation.

This government has increased investments in policing by over 70% since 2004. This includes the creation of 192 positions, including 144 uniformed positions.

To keep workers safe from accidents:

- An additional \$2.8 million, cost shared by the province, the federal government and industry, is being provided to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board to support its operations and implementation of the recommendations for Phase I of the Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry. We look forward to any further recommendations coming from Commissioner Wells as he completes Phase II of his Inquiry. Our commitment to improving safety offshore is strong and unwavering.
- We are also investing \$650,000 over the next three years to support Memorial University's purchase and installation of two simulators: a Helicopter Ditching Trainer and a Freefall Lifeboat Simulator.

To keep communities safe from damage:

- We are investing \$510,000 to maintain tailings dams at Baie Verte, Daniel's Harbour, Springdale and South Brook; and,
- We are investing \$100,000 for coastal vulnerability mapping to prepare for storm surges, flooding, coastal erosion and landslides associated with climate change.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$3.9 million to purchase as many as 22 new fire trucks and firefighting vehicles, an increase in funding from \$2.5 million last year; and we are also continuing to invest \$1 million for new firefighting equipment such as certified breathing apparatus and bunker suits, bringing our total investment in **fire protection services** this year to a historic high of \$4.9 million.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of vibrant communities. Approximately 5,900 volunteer firefighters contribute to the security and safety of communities

throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and we deeply appreciate the commitment they are making. Today, I am announcing a new non-refundable **Volunteer Firefighters' Tax Credit** which will provide a benefit of up to \$231 to eligible volunteer firefighters – a total benefit of up to \$1.4 million.

STANDING STRONG ON COOPERATION

Mr. Speaker, through regional and community cooperation, we are forging partnerships that enable us to reach farther and achieve more than we could otherwise. For example, while regional waste management may not be the answer for every community, for many it is an ideal way to cut costs by sharing services. The same cooperative approach can ensure all sorts of reliable services are delivered to citizens at reduced costs: recreational infrastructure, firefighting and many others.

Cooperation is particularly evident in many sectors of our economy.

Communities and regions are cooperating more than ever to enhance **tourism opportunities**. Cupids 400 was one example, and there are others.

- In keeping with our new tourism strategy entitled “Uncommon Potential”, we will continue to run our award-winning tourism marketing campaign with a budget this year of \$13 million, which is \$7 million higher than the marketing budget when we took office.
- We will invest \$300,000 to continue to develop and support multi-seasonal tourism products and to focus on regions offering great promise for growth: Labrador and the Twillingate-New World Island area;
- We will invest \$450,000 in winter tourism infrastructure for the skiing centre of the west coast: Marble Mountain; and,
- To promote the province's tourism experiences to visitors arriving on the ferry to Argentia, we will upgrade the area's Visitor Information Centre with an investment of \$500,000.

A key feature that many tourists are drawn here to experience is our rich, vibrant and varied **cultural heritage**.

- Building on our Strategic Cultural Plan, which has brought a total investment of \$48.8 million to the cultural sector since the plan's inception, we will invest a further \$3 million over the next two years for season three of Republic of Doyle, bringing to \$7.5 million our total commitment in this internationally syndicated showcase of Newfoundland and Labrador;
- We will invest \$2.8 million to leverage additional funding to restore the historic Colonial Building;
- We will invest \$375,000 to revitalize the presentation of live performances at regional Arts and Culture Centres and community presentation venues, and to give audiences, particularly our students, greater access to these facilities;
- We will invest \$200,000 in the Cultural Economic Development Program to engage community groups in promoting key heritage attractions;
- We will invest an additional \$150,000 in the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, bringing the total annual grant to \$2.1 million; and,
- We will invest in Provincial Historic Sites programming to promote a sense of cultural ownership that will enhance their appeal.

Mr. Speaker, some of our greatest monuments mark some of our most profound tragedies. This year, we will provide \$400,000 to erect a monument to **Cougar Flight 491**. Following appropriate consultations with the bereaved families and with fellow offshore workers, we will issue a Request for Proposals for a suitable design.

Mr. Speaker, as our province grows, so too our cultural richness is growing as immigrant families choose Newfoundland and Labrador to be their new home, and we welcome them. Through our **Immigration Strategy**, we are embracing immigrants as members of our family. With an additional investment of \$150,000 over the next three years, we will support grants and subsidies for settlement and

integration projects, including tutoring in English and sponsorship of multiculturalism events and other community initiatives that nurture a welcoming atmosphere.

As our municipal leaders work cooperatively with each other to provide services, we will work more closely with them to grow our communities. For the first time in over a decade, we are increasing the province's **Municipal Operating Grants** by providing a one-time increase of \$4.6 million, bringing the total allocation to \$22.4 million. Along with this increase, the Department of Municipal Affairs will also undertake a review of the MOG formula. Allocations for this year will increase the current Municipal Operating Grants for municipalities as follows. The bulk of the increase – 50% – will go to municipalities with fewer than 1,000 people; 30% will go to municipalities with 1,000 to 3,000 people; 20% will go to municipalities with 3,001 to 7,000 people; and 10% will go to municipalities with over 7,000 people.

We are investing \$14 million to continue the **Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy** to divert garbage from landfills, water tables and incinerators.

This year, we are also committing a further \$30 million in block funding for **recreational and multi-purpose facilities** which will be used to leverage funding from other sources and will be spent over the construction life of the projects.

Municipal infrastructure is at the core of our communities. In sum, the province is allocating \$140.8 million for municipal infrastructure this year – an investment that will leverage federal and municipal funding, and bring this year's total investment to \$219 million.

Mr. Speaker, to further support the growth of our communities and families, we are announcing two initiatives that will help homeowners and generate additional business for local enterprises.

Firstly, building on a successful two-year pilot project to lower household energy costs, we are today announcing a new three-year, \$12 million investment in the **Residential Energy Efficiency Program**.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, with a provincial investment over the next three years of \$24 million and a total investment of \$36 million, we are announcing a three-year extension of the **Provincial Home Repair Program**.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me close by making it perfectly clear that, on our watch, Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to benefit fully and fairly from the development of our resources, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will continue to feel those benefits directly. As Newfoundland and Labrador becomes an energy powerhouse, it is important that we continue to maximize the benefits Labradorians and Newfoundlanders receive from those developments. To that end, I am announcing today a **rebate equivalent to the 8% provincial component of the HST for residential energy** generated by home heating fuel, electricity and other energy sources for every household in the province. The rebate program will be effective October 1, 2011, in time for the winter heating season, and will assist individuals, families and seniors with the rising cost of energy, and it will be in addition to the current home heating rebate. Our energy tax rebate will put another \$38 million back in the hands of taxpayers. All this, plus the electricity rate-reduction impact of a federal loan guarantee on Muskrat Falls, will reduce the cost of living for all consumers.

Conclusion

We believe in our families, Mr. Speaker. We believe in our future. We have the vision, the plan and the drive. We are steadfastly focused on the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Many of our great communities are small in size, but they are anything but small in their thinking.

The people of our great province are known for thinking ahead of the curve and dreaming dreams so big that some governments have been unable to keep pace. Not ours, Mr. Speaker.

In years past, when people could not find opportunities here at home, they travelled the globe to find challenges big enough to satisfy their drive and ingenuity. Whether it's been raising the skyscrapers of New York, revving the engines of Ontario or wringing wealth from the oil sands of Alberta, you will always find a Newfoundlander and Labradorian when there's a tough job to be done.

Now the time has come to turn the focus to home. This is where the golden opportunities are. Oil, gas, minerals, hydro, fish, farms, flora, fauna, oceans, aerospace, genomics, robotics, green technology, ecotourism, and on and on the list of opportunities grows.

We are closer than ever to achieving our goals. This is no time to retreat, no time to recoil, no time to fall back or back down.

With this year's budget, we stake our ground.

With a commitment to fiscal responsibility, we are standing strong.

With a commitment to low taxation, we are standing strong.

With the continent's greatest green energy resource on the lower Churchill River on the threshold of being developed, we are standing strong.

With the leadership our province's tenth Premier is demonstrating on this project and every project, Mr. Speaker, we are standing strong.

With investment poised to grow, with our economy poised to grow, with employment poised to grow, with personal income poised to grow, with disposable income poised to grow, with retail sales poised to grow, with our population poised to grow, with prosperity poised to grow, we are standing strong.

Stronger than ever.

More confident than ever.

More sure than ever that we are on the one path that leads us where we need to go.

To a brighter future of opportunity and prosperity for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.