



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The First Session
of the Forty-Seventh
General Assembly
of the Province of
Newfoundland and Labrador

March 5, 2012



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Delivered at the Opening of
The First Session of the Forty-Seventh
General Assembly of the Province of
Newfoundland and Labrador
by His Honour
The Honourable John C. Crosbie, PC, OC, ONL, QC
Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

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Celebrating Our Heritage

Diamond Jubilee

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

It was on a Wednesday, the 6th of February 1952 – just a week after my 21st birthday – that King George VI passed away. His eldest daughter, only 25 at the time, inherited a burden of responsibility the weight of which none of us can truly comprehend. Canada was the very first Commonwealth realm to proclaim Her Majesty's accession to the throne, with a prayer that God would bless our new Queen *“with long and happy years to reign over us.”* Long and happy years they have indeed been, and throughout 2012, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will join others around the world in celebrating a very rare Diamond Jubilee. Once as Princess and three times as Queen, Her Majesty has honoured Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with a visit. As we embark on a year of commemorations, we convey to Her Majesty not only our joy, gratitude and profound respect, but also our hopes and prayers for the years to come. As the prayer in the third verse of the Royal Anthem states: *“Thy choicest gifts in store, / On Her be pleased to pour; / Long may She reign: / May She defend our laws, / And ever give us cause / To sing with heart and voice / God save The Queen.”*

The Colonial Building

Of our many Sovereigns, only one other marked a Diamond Jubilee: Queen Victoria, who reigned for 63 years and seven months. It was in the tenth year of Victoria's reign, 1847, that construction began on the Colonial Building, the site where Responsible Government was given to Newfoundland in 1855. In the coming year, My Government will advance the restoration of this historic site, which also served as our province's first official legislature. Once restored, the Colonial Building will be a flagship Provincial Historic Site, a place where residents of and visitors to Newfoundland and Labrador can step back through those ionic columns to learn about our unique and colourful history interpreted within.



Soldiers, Sacrifices and Security

Ours is a history written with the blood of sacrifice. The freedoms we cherish were purchased by heroic Newfoundlanders and Labradorians willing to lay down their lives that others might reap from the crimson soil a harvest of peace. From Beaumont-Hamel to Suvla Bay, the stories are told of valour unsurpassed. To all who suffered and all who died, we owe our gratitude and honour. It is atop their proud shoulders that we stand tall. This year marks the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, where the Newfoundland Regiment – as it was then called – served gallantly in what is now Ontario and in the United States in the battles of Crysler’s Farm in 1813 and Lundy’s Lane at Niagara Falls in 1814. A century later, our soldiers’ heroism was immortalized at such places as Gallipoli in 1915, Beaumont-Hamel in 1916 and Masnières in 1917. As the 100th anniversary of World War I approaches, My Government is working with others both locally and internationally to develop initiatives by which we will commemorate, as we must, the sacrifices of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who served.

Even today, our sons and daughters are serving to secure peace and save lives. On the front lines overseas and in training missions here at home, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are stepping into harm’s way to deliver others from peril. Whether in combat or preparation for combat, as protectors of the peace or guardians of the vulnerable, they deserve our gratitude and our admiration for all they do.

Just as Newfoundland and Labrador has played a strategic role in national and international defence in times past, we can play a strategic role in times to come. We urge the Government of Canada to take full advantage of our strengths by investing in defence infrastructure and initiatives at key centres such as 5 Wing Goose Bay, 9 Wing Gander and Canadian Forces Station St. John’s on our country’s easternmost flank.

Canada has a responsibility, not only to ensure the security of our nation's coasts, but also to ensure the safety of those who travel them. Whether it is fishers sailing the seas in boats or rig workers skimming the seas in helicopters, people are not unjustified in expecting the Government of Canada to provide the resources to enable Coast Guard and Search and Rescue personnel to respond promptly and effectively to emergencies.

Sadly, there are times when searches end tragically. We as a people have witnessed far too many terrible endings. While each and every tragedy is profoundly felt by the loved ones of those it touches, some grip the hearts of people far and wide. Such has been the impact of the death of 14-year-old Burton Winters in January on the icy coast near Makkovik. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will never forget Burton's fierce determination to get back home to the ones he loved. We are heartbroken by his loss. We mourn for the many like Burton whose lives have been so tragically cut short. Even in recent days, we have been reminded how swiftly a tragedy can strike. We also share the burden of those who brave the elements to search for the missing, putting their own lives in jeopardy to focus on others. Sometimes, even the most vigorous and valiant rescue efforts are unsuccessful. As we remember those we miss, let us also honour those whose extraordinary efforts are dedicated to bringing people home. Sons, daughters and friends of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians serve bravely in vital Search and Rescue capacities. As we pause for a moment now to reflect on those we have lost, let us also remember those who serve and commend them for their selfless dedication.

(A MOMENT OF SILENCE)

Energized for the Future

A New Mandate

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

The responsibility for representing the best interests and legitimate aspirations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rests on the shoulders of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Elected with a fresh and decisive mandate in October of 2011, My Government is fully prepared to bear that responsibility with new energy and firm resolve. Our Premier is celebrating our province's strengths and vigorously pursuing new opportunities for growth in dealings with Canada's other First Ministers, American Governors and leaders of industry both nationally and internationally. The people of our province share this determination to realize our full potential. How far we have come already! We have finally embraced our newfound status as one of Canada's leading economies, buoyed with confidence and optimism that we are poised to witness successes unprecedented in Newfoundland and Labrador's history

Those successes hinge on the choices we make today. Whether we are talking about 30 years from now, or ten years from now, or two years from now, the future we reap will be determined by the seeds we sow – the choices we make – right here, right now. We will not allow poor choices based on failed philosophies and narrow agendas to reverse every gain we have worked so hard to achieve and squander the very opportunities that our approach this past eight years has made possible.

Three Objectives Moving Forward

To ensure Newfoundland and Labrador takes maximum advantage of the unprecedented opportunities before us right now, My Government will focus this year on three principal objectives:

- The first is to refocus the Government's approach to the delivery of services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The second is to give Newfoundlanders and Labradorians the added support they may require to seize career opportunities.
- The third is to improve the conditions that give businesses and communities the power to grow.

These three objectives encompass everything our Government does, so this year's strategy is an ambitious one. What follows are some details of the ways My Government intends to make progress on all three of these objectives in the year ahead.

Focused on Priorities

Accountable, Adaptable, Responsive Government

Refocusing the Government's approach to service delivery is vital. The world is changing. Technology is advancing. Governments must adapt. Public service delivery in the 21st century does not have to be complicated. It must be focused. It must be flexible. It must be responsive to the needs of our people and receptive to feedback from those it serves. It must be transparent and accountable.

My Government's commitment to accountability is solid. This is the Government that proclaimed the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and strengthened its provisions. This is the Government that introduced the *Transparency and Accountability Act* and the *Lobbyist Registration Act*. This is the Government that opened the books of

the House of Assembly to the Auditor General, commissioned the Green Report and led the implementation of its sweeping recommendations to overhaul House of Assembly operations. This is the Government that began legislating and publishing performance-based plans and progress reports from government departments and agencies. This is the Government that commissioned Justice Margaret Cameron to inquire into failures of hormone receptor testing and recommend sweeping reforms, and then took action to implement those recommendations. This is the Government that has repeatedly earned the praise of the Auditor General for exceeding targets in acting on the recommendations of the annual reports of this independent office of the House of Assembly. My Government will build on this solid record by bringing forward amendments to the *Public Tender Act* and the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

A Clear Focus on Priorities

Just as My Government will strengthen accountability, it will also take measures to ensure public service delivery is versatile to adapt to people's changing needs, user-friendly and clearly focused on priorities. Each department will undertake a structured review of departmental functions to identify opportunities to do things better. These reviews will be complemented by cross-departmental studies and ongoing reviews of the province's Regional Health Authorities. The objective is to ensure all the Government's personnel and resources are focused first and foremost on delivering high-priority services and achieving high-priority goals. This process will identify not only the current best practices for service delivery but also innovative approaches to deliver services more effectively.

A Responsible Approach to Fiscal Management

My Government's 2011 policy Blue Book makes a commitment that: "The pace of growth of public investments must be sustainable. Our commitment to fiscal sustainability is firm. In implementing the commitments identified in this Blue Book and in fulfilling our

responsibilities as a Government, we will ensure annual provincial expenditures do not grow beyond the level our economy can sustain.” My Government stands by these words.

When facing the global recession two years ago, My Government opted to take a long-term, multi-year approach to fiscal management. It opted to bridge the period of decline in private sector activity by accelerating the pace of growth in public investments, knowing it would be ratcheting back the rate of growth once the recession was over. This was the right approach, and it worked. The two-year period of accelerated growth did precisely what it was intended to do. No province weathered the downturn more successfully than Newfoundland and Labrador. Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney said our approach served as a model for the country. Now that the recession has ended and private sector activity in the province is rebounding, this is the right time to contain the pace of public investment growth to ensure we continue to live within our fiscal means.

Just as a multi-year approach enabled us to bridge a short-term dip in private sector activity, it can also enable us to bridge the short-term dip in public sector revenue we are facing in the next two years. My Government has prepared Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to expect revenues to dip in 2012 and 2013 as federal payments under the Atlantic Accord end, two offshore platforms are taken offline for refits and the volume of oil production is reduced. To achieve balanced budgets in those two years, the province would need to reduce expenditures so precipitously that critical services could be compromised. Rather than take such a rigid, shortsighted approach, My Government has opted once again to take a long-term, multi-year approach to fiscal management. It is determined to achieve efficiencies and to maximize the value of every public dollar spent; but to ensure vital programs are not compromised when revenues swing due to circumstances beyond its control, My Government has established a longer-term debt reduction target. Already, it has reduced the province’s burden of debt by more than a third from a high of \$12 billion to an estimated \$7.7 billion at March 31, 2012, diverting hundreds of millions from interest payments to high-priority initiatives and tax relief. Improving Newfoundland and Labrador’s debt position even more in



the next ten years to achieve the same per-capita debt as the Canadian average is a goal the province can reach through discipline in spending and the allocation of a significant portion of surpluses to debt reduction, while allowing for periodic deficits. Debt reduction is not an end in and of itself, but a means of strengthening our economy to leave our children a legacy of growth. This is the responsible way forward, and Newfoundland and Labrador will be stronger for taking it.

Health Care Advances

In moving forward with a long-term, multi-year approach, My Government remains committed to the delivery of health care services, a critical area of provincial responsibility. In fact, My Government has been improving health care delivery to such an extent that Newfoundland and Labrador, once a laggard, is now a leader in cardiac care. We know that having access to the best tools to diagnose and treat cardiac disease is crucial in our province, and our investments reflect our commitment. The redevelopment of two of our cardiac catheterization laboratories in Eastern Health and the addition of a third cath lab is enabling us to treat more cardiac patients from throughout the province. We have also invested in the latest in new technologies when it comes to cardiac care, which is key to recruiting cardiologists. Health care professionals are travelling to this province to learn best practices in cardiac surgery. Imagine that!

My Government is taking the lead to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador becomes a centre of excellence in other health disciplines as well and raises the bar nationally in the delivery of health care services. Every health care dollar must be spent as effectively as possible, particularly in light of changes the Federal Government is imposing on future health transfers which will constrain growth in our share. Our Premier, with her colleagues at the Council of the Federation meeting in January, established a national Health Care Innovation Working Group to drive collaboration and innovation to provide better care for seniors and all Canadians. Our Minister of Health and Community Services just fulfilled two election

commitments by announcing strategies to reduce wait times for emergency departments and hip and knee joint replacement surgeries.

My Government will also be making strategic investments in the Long-Term Care and Community Supports Services sector to address the significant growth in the home support program and ensure existing and new clients receive the care required. As promised in the Blue Book, policy improvements are being developed that, firstly, will realign patient care funding so it is based on a patient's assessed need and, secondly, will create options for receiving that care from family members. My Government will introduce legislation to ensure that clients of our drug programs pay less for generic drugs. At the same time, we are in dialogue with the Pharmacy Association to mitigate the impact of reduced revenues to pharmacies, especially small pharmacies in rural areas. In these and other ways, My Government will build in the year ahead on the major advances it has made in health care delivery in the past eight years.

Child Protection

Another critical area of provincial responsibility is child protection, which My Government has strengthened through the creation three years ago of the new Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. The Department will complete the transfer of all staff from the Regional Health Authorities this month and is moving toward full implementation of improved service delivery. With the new *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act* now proclaimed, My Government will better serve the varied and complex needs of children and youth. A key component of this plan involves fundamental changes to our foster care system, providing greater supports for foster parents in recognition of the vital role they play in caring for children most at risk. In addition, the child protection program will provide services and supports to families to address children at risk and help them remain in their own homes. For those who cannot be returned to their families, My Government will make it easier for these children to be adopted into permanent homes. These improvements to our child

protection system illustrate the advances we can achieve throughout the public service by focusing more clearly on priorities. Complementing these initiatives will be ongoing efforts to combat bullying and child exploitation.

Ready to Work

Career Opportunities and Labour Supply

The second objective My Government will focus on this year is to make it easier for employers to attract the skilled workers they require while making it easier for individuals to find the skilled careers they need. Through an unprecedented series of investments in public post-secondary education, My Government has already given Newfoundland and Labrador students the best student aid program and among the lowest tuition fees in the country. Over the course of the four-year term ahead, My Government will continue to hold the line on tuition fee increases at Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic and shift the balance from student loans to grants.

In the skilled trades, graduates require on-the-job experience and professional certification. In this year's Budget, My Government is introducing and expanding programs to help apprentices progress through to journeyman status. We are increasing employer participation and employment opportunities for apprentices. We are increasing employment opportunities within government; we are increasing opportunities for seasoned workers to become certified, for training and advanced training for under-represented groups; and we are increasing awareness of the benefits of hiring apprentices. We are also providing additional supports and plans to address barriers for apprentices and journeymen.

We are continuing to improve the participation rates of women in non-traditional skilled trades. Having established the Office of Women Apprenticeship, My Government will work

to finalize Gender Equity Plans for the Hebron project, Hibernia South, the St. Lawrence fluorspar mine reactivation project and the proposed Alderon project, among others. We will also continue review and compliance monitoring for approved Gender Equity Plans including Vale Inco's Long Harbour operation, the Rambler Mines project, and the Labrador Iron Mines and Tata Steel Minerals Canada operations in Labrador. All future resource development projects in the province will require such provisions.

There are tremendous opportunities in our province for women, not only in the skilled trades, but also in business. To help support women entrepreneurs and encourage young women to pursue future careers in business, My Government will build on its partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE) to advance the Business Connections program. Together, they will link women-led businesses with specific opportunities on the local, national and international stage. Some of these opportunities will relate to the major industrial projects on our horizon.

Some industrial employers will face challenges finding local workers. My Government will move forward this year to create a Workforce Development Secretariat to link industrial development and employment opportunities with people who are ready to do the work. While we will work vigorously to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians benefit first and fully from these employment opportunities, other workers will also be required. As people move here from outside the province to meet labour market needs, we will welcome them with open arms, encouraging them to sink down deep roots and make Newfoundland and Labrador home. We have finally started to turn the corner toward population growth, and we look forward to building on those gains.

Recognizing that the foundations for personal achievement are established in childhood, My Government will build on the unprecedented investments of the past eight years to further advance the quality and breadth of our province's K-12 education system.

Two additional initiatives will help people to capitalize on new opportunities in our province. My Government will be moving forward with a Provincial Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. It will also be releasing a new poverty reduction action plan. Both strategies will include measures to assist people who wish to make the transition to employment.

Power to Grow

Strength Through Diversification

The third objective My Government will focus on this year is to fuel sustainable economic growth. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand the importance of diversification for growth. Ours was once an economy grounded exclusively on the export of fish. As recently as the nineteen nineties, we learned how devastating a sharp decline in that one sector could be for hundreds of our communities and tens of thousands of our people. Today, because of diversification, some regions are buffered against the consequences of sharp downward spikes in the demand or supply of specific export commodities. With a broad base plus provincial support, both Stephenville and Grand Falls-Windsor were able to weather the loss of their pulp and paper industries. When communities experience losses of employment in major industries, My Government remains determined to work with the people of these communities to minimize the impacts. This Government has a record of standing steadfastly beside towns facing struggles, rolling up its sleeves and finding solutions. But My Government's principal strategy is to be proactive, fortifying our regions against such downturns by broadening and diversifying the economic foundations to enhance our regions' long-term stability. There are several approaches we can take. Innovation is one of the most powerful.

The “Blue” Economy

BMO Capital Markets, in its Blue Book for February 2012, reported, “The mood among our customers in Newfoundland & Labrador is definitely more optimistic than it was just six months ago”. The report went on to give one of the reasons for this optimism, stating that: “The province is also becoming a key centre for innovation. As the host for the Ocean Sciences Centre at Memorial University and a growing expertise on oil & gas, deep water drilling and deep water exploration, Newfoundland & Labrador now boasts some of the best ocean science expertise in the world.”

My Government is implementing a five-year, \$28 million ocean technology strategy to collaborate with our local cluster in support of its goal to increase the value of our “blue” economy to a billion dollars by 2015. Ocean technology products, services and expertise are being marketed, not just nationally, but around the world, and Newfoundland and Labrador is establishing itself as an epicentre of ocean technology. Through sustained partnerships with educational and research institutions and industry, the province will support innovators from the idea phase through initial business startup to commercialization. A partnership with Memorial University’s Genesis Centre has already helped with the development of five new ocean technology companies. Our significant investment in C-CORE will enhance our capacity to engage in northern resource development projects, leveraging our unique location and established strength in developing solutions for harsh environments. We look forward to continued collaboration with Memorial University, its Marine Institute and OceansAdvance to further enhance the research and industrial capacity of our vibrant sector.

Innovation Enhancement

In other leading-edge sectors, such as life sciences and green technologies, knowledge-driven advances are turning heads toward Newfoundland and Labrador. Investments in Memorial University’s Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science and the Fisheries and

Marine Institute will position Newfoundland and Labrador for innovation and growth. The province's Research & Development Corporation will continue to foster partnerships with industry and academia and drive for success in priority areas such as ocean technology, energy and mining. My Government is also encouraging the private sector to invest in innovation to enhance the competitiveness of local enterprises, large and small. Expanded incentives under My Government's Innovation Strategy are driving growth, not only in larger centres but in rural communities as well.

The Fisheries

The province's billion-dollar fishing industry remains among Newfoundland and Labrador's most important. While there are significant challenges in some areas of the fisheries, My Government has been working vigorously to build partnerships and find solutions to these challenges. The fishing industry has been studied for decades. We have a good understanding of the structural deficiencies that serve as impediments to progress. To effect change, we need the collective will to come together for a common purpose, to set aside old agendas and work together to address the core problems. My Government is there. It is imperative that all partners come to the table with a firm resolve to move forward.

Sometimes, with so much focus on the challenges, people lose sight of the opportunities available in global seafood markets and the successes we are achieving in building a stronger fishing industry. Under the province's Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program, we will continue to fund industry-led development projects in the fishing industry, leveraging additional dollars to drive research and development. Newfoundland and Labrador is rapidly becoming the growth centre in Canada for aquaculture, an important contributor to our economy in rural and coastal communities. Continuing investments in aquaculture will enhance biosecurity to safeguard our reputation for product excellence in this growing industry. The new Coastal and Ocean Management Strategy and Policy Framework will advance growth in ocean industries by balancing interests and safeguarding

ecosystems. The province is working with fish processing companies on the establishment of seafood sales consortia. Better market intelligence, export development and targeted promotion will enable this province to increase the value, and enhance the economic benefits, of this billion-dollar industry for the people of the province.

Industries, Regions and Communities

In other sectors as well, Newfoundland and Labrador is growing. The gross value of mineral shipments is forecast to exceed \$5.6 billion in 2012, while corporate investments in mineral exploration, which hit a record high of \$172 million in 2011, are projected to reach \$234 million in 2012. Like shipments and exploration, mining-related employment is also expected to reach a record high this year.

Across all sectors, the level of private sector investment in Newfoundland and Labrador this year is projected to exceed \$8 billion, and public capital spending this year will continue to be significant. Economic activity in our province this year will be white hot.

Over the past eight years, My Government has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure to improve the quality of life in our communities and lay a solid foundation for new investment. The Trans-Labrador Highway is among the most exciting initiatives to happen in our province's history, and its completion remains among My Government's highest priorities. As part of continuing to invest in the growth of communities and regions, My Government is developing a new formula for municipal support which recognizes the contemporary nature of municipal governance and is equitable and transparent. My Government is also encouraging communities to work in partnership with their neighbours to share service delivery wherever possible so that we can take advantage of economies of scale, enhance capacity and promote growth. Through collaboration and innovation, communities will be better able to deliver high-priority services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Volunteers and non-profit organizations also have a vital role to play in delivering services within communities, strengthening community infrastructure and drawing people together just as such organizations have been doing so effectively for centuries. My Government will work collaboratively with the community organizations to develop innovative approaches to the increasingly complex challenges our people and communities face; it will introduce accountability provisions that measure performance outcomes and help community organizations improve their overall impact; and it will investigate new initiatives that reward results. It will nurture partnerships between and among community, academic, private sector and government bodies because it believes that effective collaboration has the power to make real change and enhance the overall quality of life in our province.

From the smallest partnership to the largest project, Newfoundland and Labrador is growing. Hebron is expected to make up some of that new growth as the proponents take the last regulatory step before project sanction. The ramp-up of Hebron construction at Bull Arm and other locations will further drive growth and confidence. Together with Vale Inco's Long Harbour project, Hebron fabrication demonstrates our capacity to add value to commodity industries and enjoy the benefits of skills transfers. Having negotiated equity partnerships in three offshore projects, My Government has established an international reputation for strength and proficiency in the energy sector.

The Shift to Renewable Energy

We are about to take our energy sector leadership to new heights by advancing another project in our energy warehouse. Among the most important things Newfoundland and Labrador can do to fortify and grow our economy is to shift from nonrenewable sources of fuel purchased on the world market to renewable sources of fuel generated here at home. Wide swings in the price of oil mean instability for jurisdictions that rely on oil to meet power needs. Muskrat Falls gives us an alternative to fossil fuel – an alternative that is not only more stable but also less expensive than any other option.

The development of Muskrat Falls is needed to meet the electricity needs of individuals, families and businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is the least-cost means of meeting those electricity needs. The project will have the added benefit of transitioning our province from reliance on greenhouse gas-producing fuels to clean, green, renewable energy.

The Muskrat Falls development proposal has received more advance scrutiny than any other project in Newfoundland and Labrador's history. It has been on the drawing board for decades. Later this year, My Government will make its sanction decision. A number of significant factors will inform the Government's decision, including these:

- In June 2011, the Government asked the province's Public Utilities Board to review and report on whether the Muskrat Falls project represents the least-cost option for the supply of power to Island Interconnected customers compared to the Isolated Island development option. The deadline for the final PUB report is March 31, 2012.
- In August 2011, the Environmental Assessment Joint Review Panel released its report on the Muskrat Falls generation project. The Government is completing its review of the panel report, including its recommendations, and will communicate its decision in the coming months. The Labrador-Island Link and the Maritime Link are also registered for joint Federal/Provincial Environmental Assessment.
- In August 2011, the Governments of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia signed a Memorandum of Agreement to provide a loan guarantee for the Muskrat Falls project.
- In September 2011, Nalcor released an independent review of the Muskrat Falls project undertaken by Navigant Consulting. The review validated the proposed development of Muskrat Falls and the Labrador-Island Link as the long-term, least-cost supply option for electricity consumers on the island of Newfoundland.

- In November 2011, the official signing of the Innu Land Claims Agreement-in-Principle, the Lower Churchill Impacts and Benefits Agreement, and the Upper Churchill Redress Agreement occurred.
- In February 2012, as part of the PUB review, Manitoba Hydro Inc. released its report that analyzed two generation expansion alternatives: Muskrat Falls, and an Isolated Island system. Manitoba Hydro concluded that Muskrat Falls is the least-cost option to supply power to customers on the Island to meet anticipated load growth.
- Last week, the Consumer Advocate affirmed the conclusion of Manitoba Hydro that Muskrat Falls is the least-cost option for supplying energy to the province.

If the Government decides to sanction the project, it will then take the required actions, such as bringing forward the requisite legislation during 2012-13 so the project can move forward.

Partisan campaigns must not colour the Government's decision. Neither unreasonable attacks nor fear to act should deny people the power they need at the lowest cost. Failure to take the right course of action today would be no different than taking the wrong course of action a generation ago.

Muskrat Falls will be a decisive step toward energy self-reliance, positioning the province not only for Gull Island development later on, but also for the return of control of the Upper Churchill to Newfoundland and Labrador in 2041. In the decades to come, there will be sufficient renewable energy in Labrador to fuel unprecedented growth throughout our province. Not only will we have the natural resource commodities, the skilled workforce, the culture of innovation and the solid backbone of reliable infrastructure that developers require, but we will also have inexpensive power in bountiful supply. What we do not use, we can sell to buyers hungry for power, generating revenue to grow our province and benefit our people.

The Best is Yet to Come

Newfoundland and Labrador is ideally positioned to achieve growth the like of which the province has never seen and few in the province ever imagined. This growth is neither fortuitous nor inevitable. It will be achieved only if we continue to make sound decisions and resist the calls to sell ourselves short for lesser gains. It will be achieved only if people park their divisive agendas and come together to partner for growth. This is true in all sectors, including the fisheries. Surely it is time to put Newfoundland and Labrador's best interests first, to forego the negativity and to focus on people so no one is left behind. My Government has been given a decisive mandate to steer the course and to build on the solid foundation it has established. By creating a healthy climate for business growth and innovation, by supporting individuals as they reach out to grasp the opportunities before them and by sharpening the focus of the public service to concentrate on addressing high priorities, My Government can ensure the peak in economic performance we are enjoying today becomes the new high plateau on which we build a more prosperous society for our children and grandchildren. Considering how far we have come already, we are right to be optimistic, right to be confident and right to believe that the best is indeed yet to come for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Mr. Speaker and 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 Her Majesty.

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

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.



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