

Thank you Katrina, and let me join those welcoming you as a new Canadian citizen.

Nova Scotia benefits from each young person who brings new ideas and new energy to our province where there is so much to be done.

Nova Scotia's universities are a magnet for talented young people.

Many of them stay to make Nova Scotia their home.

In fact, I learned just last night that university education is now one of Nova Scotia's biggest exports.

Now, before I launch into the main part of my speech, let me acknowledge this year's theme: Oceans and Innovation.

The first in-depth economic analysis this government did was of the marine and ocean industries.

That analysis revealed tremendous strength in private business, universities and government.

Nova Scotia has one of the world's greatest concentrations of marine research and ocean tech knowledge and ability.

And this tremendous asset forms the basis for some of the new opportunities I will discuss today.

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It's great to join you again and to discuss the State of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Our great province is turning a corner these days.

While the world economy remains a constant source of concern . . .

Nova Scotians today have extraordinary opportunities, the likes of which our province has never seen before.

I want to tell you why, and what lies around the corner.

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In 2009, this government was elected because families wanted the HST off their power bills;

They wanted to keep ERs open.

They wanted better options for seniors to receive care at home.

They wanted better support for college and university students.

They wanted desperately needed road improvements, and a government that would live within its means.

Keeping election commitments was a challenge for past governments. But we had more to deal with besides...

Shortly after we took office, an independent review found that the Province was on the fast track to a \$1.4-billion deficit.

At the same time, the full force of the Great Recession had just begun.

A panel of economic advisors said Nova Scotia needed three things to turn the situation around: more revenue, less spending and better economic growth.

We realized that a \$1.4-billion deficit gap can only be closed if the whole province works together on the challenges and the solutions.

Today, Nova Scotia is closing the gap.

We are navigating through very difficult economic times.

And we're putting the priorities of families first, thanks to the largest budget consultations in history and the good common sense of so many Nova Scotians.

The province is on track to be back in balance next year.

My colleagues and I avoided past mistakes like the temporary relief and long-term pain of wage freezes, wage rollbacks or schemes like paying nurses to leave their profession.

Money taken from school board administration and duplication is being invested in Kids and Learning First, a plan that focuses on better reading and math, better learning and extra teachers where they are needed to keep classes sizes small.

Tens of millions have been shifted from health care administration into better care sooner. That includes fairer drug prices, more health prevention and better patient care.

March madness, the frantic year-end spending by the previous government, added a billion dollars to the provincial debt. With the NDP, there is no more March madness.

You may recall that in 2010, my government ran a \$600 million surplus. We didn't spend a dime of it. We put all of it directly on the debt.

In the face of such difficult economic circumstances, this government has not forgotten its deepest values. Even in these toughest of times, we are helping more Nova Scotians break out of the cycle of poverty.

That includes the new caregivers benefit...

The largest single investment in student aid...

And rebating provincial income tax to nearly 20,000 of Nova Scotia's poorest seniors.

This first ever NDP government is doing things differently.

We are fixing the mess that we found three-and-a-half years ago.

We are guiding Nova Scotia's economy through three of the toughest years this province has seen since the Great Depression.

And on top of all of that, we are keeping **all** of the platform commitments the NDP made to Nova Scotians.

There is much more to do, but Nova Scotia is turning the corner.

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Friends, one change is fundamental for Nova Scotia to turn the corner on 20 years of Canada's worst economic growth — one change that can open the future and lift the quality of life for you and your family.

That is to create the secure jobs that Nova Scotia's economy needs.

That is the number one commitment I made to Nova Scotians in the last election.

Some say that I am obsessed with jobs.

In my view, a Premier needs to be obsessed with jobs.

I don't focus my energy on jobs and business investment because it is popular.

I'd be a pretty poor politician if I did.

I do it because it is the right thing to do.

Each job represents a person who has a better future.

People like Amy, Veronica, Jamie and the others we saw in that video.

My door will be open to new opportunities, as long as I am the Premier of this province.

When a company is coming here, or expanding here, I want it to be profitable — profitable enough to re-invest and keep hiring Nova Scotians.

Companies can choose from many possible locations.

If people here don't get those jobs, the jobs will go somewhere else, families go elsewhere, more young people go elsewhere.

Every other province and every other country is putting its best foot forward.

That is why I am astounded when some Nova Scotia politicians greet new private investment and hundreds of new jobs with criticism.

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Friends, I can tell you that I was never prouder to be a Nova Scotian than the day that Irving Shipbuilding won the federal shipbuilding contracts.

The entire province, and indeed people from across Canada rallied to support Irving's bid because ships... start... here.

This is the single most important opportunity Nova Scotia has ever seen to create jobs and propel our economy into the future.

The shipbuilding work is estimated to generate \$2.8 billion in additional revenue to the province over the next 19 years.

It will mean 11,500 jobs for Nova Scotian families.

In addition to the experience and expertise of the Halifax Shipyard, Irving's bid included provincial investment.

This government committed funding to modernize the yard, and to eliminate any additional cost to the federal government.

I want to be perfectly clear about this:

Without the participation of the province, the Halifax Shipyard could not, and would not have won the rights to build Canada's next fleet of combat vessels.

The bid had the support of a wide coalition, including this chamber.

We Nova Scotians won that bid, by working together.

Yet down the street in the Legislature, there are opposition MLAs who say that they are appalled by the provincial investment that made this possible.

One party is actually running TV ads attacking the investment to upgrade the Halifax Shipyard.

Friends, Nova Scotia will not turn the corner by cowering in the face of opportunity.

If my political future rests on the decision to make sure Nova Scotia won that shipbuilding contract, so be it.

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The shipbuilding contract is not the only opportunity for Nova Scotians.

Today, Port Hawkesbury Paper has a new owner.

A new owner who is investing his own money and employing hundreds of people by operating one of the world's most modern paper mills . . .

. . . an owner who is committed to the forest of the future, generating the profits needed for reinvestment and developing new products to replace those markets that are shrinking.

<<LOOK TO THE AUDIENCE AND INTRODUCE RON STERN>>

Today, the Lower Churchill project is on the brink of receiving approval from the legislature and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It just won the promised federal loan guarantee.

This project is about building a stronger, more united country.

And it is taking just as much political willpower as it took to build the national railway connecting Canadians coast to coast.

The Lower Churchill project means a cleaner, greener economy.

It unleashes more secure, local renewable energy.

It further frees this region's ratepayers from the volatility of fossil fuel prices.

And, the project is expected to generate \$3.5 billion in jobs and economic spinoffs, including thousands of jobs for Nova Scotians.

<<LOOK TO THE AUDIENCE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE EMERA TEAM >>

Ratepayers in this province rightly want to know the bottom line for them.

That is why, right now, the province is completing an independent comparison of the Lower Churchill project with the other options available.

I'm confident this study will show what we have known all along — that this project provides the lowest, fairest rates for Nova Scotia to meet its power needs as Canada cuts greenhouse gas emissions.

To ensure Nova Scotians have as much information as possible, we will release that independent report before the Maritime Link portion of the project goes before the Utility and Review Board for approval.

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Today I can also announce that by February, Nova Scotians will be actively consulted about the land nominated to protect natural habitat forming at least 12 per cent of the province by 2015. This goal was set by the United Nations two decades ago.

It became established wisdom that Nova Scotia could not meet the 12 per cent goal.

Today, not only is this province a leader in renewable energy, Nova Scotians are proving themselves to be leaders in protection of the natural world itself.

Next Tuesday, the province will host a forum on the Forest of the Future to review how Nova Scotians can take the greatest advantage of a tremendous renewable resource — the forest.

That forum will look at the future of an industry that employs thousands of people, at a turning point when the largest single private landholding is up for sale.

In the world today, wealth flows most easily toward those who have natural resources.

Not only is Nova Scotia rich in resources, most of ours are renewable — forests, fish, farming and energy.

To my mind, Nova Scotians must seize this moment, and create a new, better destiny for ourselves and our families through innovation.

We should focus on the environmentally sustainable, innovative, profit-making and job-sustaining options that exist in forestry, fishery, farming and energy — both renewable and the offshore.

It won't happen overnight. And it won't be easy.

But that is all the more reason to make sure that it does happen.

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For the first time in decades, Nova Scotians are seeing industries moving here.

Jobs from Alberta... jobs from Ontario... coming to Nova Scotia.

That happens when there is a government that is open to new ideas — a government that cares enough about people to look for every opportunity that will earn a solid return for Nova Scotia and for families.

I see such tremendous grassroots spirit in efforts like the campaign by the Canadian Union of Public Employees to have their 18,000 members shift 10 per cent of the family budget to Buy Local.

But it cannot be about any one government or any one campaign.

It has to be about the collective determination of Nova Scotians to build our new economy.

That is why I am so grateful to five exceptional Nova Scotians: Ray Ivany, John Bragg, Dan Christmas, Irene d'Entremont and Susanna Fuller.

They have agreed to be the members of Nova Scotia's commission on building our new economy.

<<INTRODUCE RAY IVANY>>

I believe that local economies throughout Nova Scotia, in HRM and beyond, can thrive, not just survive.

To do that, Nova Scotians must understand our province's common opportunities, and share ideas about seizing them.

I have encouraged the commission to help Nova Scotians participate in this process, to put more and more people, families and communities in a position to win and to grow.

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For more than three years, this province has made difficult decisions that will pay off in the long run.

The well-trodden path used to be just seeing to the end of the week, piling up debt and making little effort to seize historic opportunities.

The easy decision would have been to leave a hole in the middle of Halifax. Instead, this government agreed to be a partner in a modern convention centre. The Nova Centre will be the backbone of tourism in this province for the next 30 years.

<<LOOK TO THE AUDIENCE AND ACKNOWLEDGE EITHER JOE RAMIA AND/OR MAYOR SAVAGE>>

The easy decision would have been to let IBM and Projex go elsewhere.

Instead, this government decided to invest in a future that will mean a thousand good jobs in high tech new industries for young Nova Scotians.

<<LOOK TO THE AUDIENCE AND RECOGNIZE SCOTT RICHARDS>>

Friends, the province we leave to our children is important enough for us to make the difficult decisions today.

I believe that Nova Scotia is turning the corner. I believe the Ivany Commission will truly engage people across the province in the questions of how to build our new economy.

So, let me talk for a moment about what I see around the corner.

Economic prosperity is vital.

But its real value . . . the reason it really matters, lies in the fact that it provides us the capacity to propel social prosperity.

That is why this government is also planning how best to lift up the quality of life for families across the province.

The Early Years project will get underway in 2013. It will provide Nova Scotia children with a good, healthy start in their earliest years. And it will enable far more parents to participate fully in the work force.

We will further the provincial emphasis on training and education that lead to good jobs. That is starting now with Succeeding in Reading, better math and the new skilled trades centres in high schools.

Through the newly launched Atlantic Workforce Partnership this region is getting ready to fill the jobs that are coming. Nova Scotia will increase the successful completion of apprenticeships, and expand skills training. You can already see this beginning with the Nova Scotia Community College's shipbuilding centre of excellence.

The innovation and competitiveness that are the basis for success in the next generations mean Nova Scotia does much more business with fast growing economies like Brazil, India and China. This has the support of the jobsHere plan that is already boosting the productivity of nearly 400 smaller businesses.

Our affordable housing consultations will be the launching pad for investments that give more people a real chance to afford their home as new jobs open up and the competition for housing gets tougher.

And after an historic expansion of home-care services, the province will take the steps that finally move continuing care and services for persons with disabilities beyond the old institutional framework into a model of care focused on the individual.

This will help to maximize the independence and dignity of each senior or vulnerable person.

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Nova Scotians can ensure that once-in-a-lifetime opportunities are used to strengthen our communities, our institutions and our families.

But it isn't inevitable.

Let me ask you a Nova Scotia trivia question: when was the last time Nova Scotians elected a consecutive majority government?

It was in 1988.

Since that time, our province has endured a fractured political landscape of successive governments going from majority to minority status and then being replaced.

Now ask yourself – over the last 25 years have the biggest challenges facing this province been largely fixed, or largely avoided?

Whether you're talking about escalating program costs, the over-burdened health care system or the state of secondary roads - the truth is that the fractured political

landscape has also fractured the policy landscape.

Big challenges take time to address. They take effort, experience and even some faith.

But for 25 years, instead of taking the time to get it right, governments promoted short-term fixes or else tried to please everybody. Meantime, the unsolved challenges got worse.

But here is what is different today:

Through a combination of good fortune, and the hard work and dedication of many, this government has lined up an array of opportunities that can truly start transforming Nova Scotia for the better. It is a rare moment for this province.

Such transformative potential puts Nova Scotians in the position to do something very unique: To give our next generation a better opportunity. It feels like that has not happened here in a long time.

But friends, let's take the time to get it right.

There will always be critics.

I know that suffering the critics is worthwhile when I hear that there are 30 building cranes at work right now in Halifax, after the building crane had become Nova Scotia's most endangered species.

And I know it is worthwhile when I hear that one of the bright spots in Nova Scotia's recent economic performance is the high level of business investment — investment that means a better deal for you and your family.

Nova Scotia's first NDP government is working hard to make life better for families, in very difficult times.

The decisions already made will improve the future of this province forever.

Yet as I look ahead and think about the once-in-a-lifetime economic opportunities right in front of us, I see two basic questions:

Will Nova Scotians step up and seize the new opportunities?

And will the benefits of prosperity be shared fairly, to make life better for families across the province?

And I see an answer too.

If this small province can pull together to support and win that shipbuilding bid, we can do just about anything we set our minds to.