



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**Delivered at the Opening of
The Second Session
of the Forty-Seventh
General Assembly
of the Province of
Newfoundland and Labrador**

**by His Honour
The Honourable Frank F. Fagan, CM, ONL, MBA
Lieutenant Governor
of Newfoundland and Labrador**

MARCH 25, 2013

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Since 2003, My Government has taken a series of deliberate actions to raise Newfoundland and Labrador, step by step, from underperformance toward the full measure of its potential. The journey has not been easy, and the work is not yet done, but how far we have come!

Prior to 2003, people were moving away from Newfoundland and Labrador by the thousands for lack of work. The tax burden on families was excessive. Critical infrastructure was crumbling from neglect. The government was hamstrung by the highest per-capita debt in the country. The province relied heavily each year on Equalization payments just to provide basic services comparable to those in the rest of the country. Newfoundland and Labrador was in a downward spiral.

Thanks to the leadership of My Premier and My Government, and the deliberate efforts we have taken together since 2003, all that has changed. More people are working in our province today than ever before in our history. With 70,000 job openings on the horizon thanks to the Muskrat Falls development and other important initiatives, people are moving here. Families are paying half a billion dollars a year less in taxes than they were paying a decade ago. Consumer spending is up. Housing starts are up. Capital investment is up. Critical infrastructure has been repaired or replaced. Public debt has been reduced by 28 per cent. We no longer need equalization to raise our revenues to the Canadian average. We are generating those revenues on our own, and we are able to contribute to the Canadian family. That does not mean we have a windfall to spend. It simply means we are paying our own way. That is what it means to be a “have” province. And all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are sharing in the benefits of the gains we have made.

But all the gains we have made are in jeopardy if, at this critical juncture, we choose the wrong path forward. We are at a crossroads, and there are two fundamental reasons why.

The first is that our primary source of new revenue is oil. Not only is oil nonrenewable, but it is also subject to large and unpredictable price fluctuations on the world market. From Alberta to Ottawa and beyond, all jurisdictions heavily reliant on oil revenues have suffered large reductions to their bottom lines this year because oil prices have tracked far lower than the markets projected. Even the Government of Canada has been negatively affected because of the reductions in natural resource revenues. We must diversify away from an overreliance on oil if we are to put our economy on a solid, sustainable footing. My Government made this crystal clear in its 2007 comprehensive energy plan. That is why developing the renewable energy resources of Muskrat Falls is so important to Newfoundland and Labrador's future.

The second major threat to the gains we have made is just as fundamental. Newfoundland and Labrador's public sector costs are greater than our economy can afford or sustain. This province's public sector spending per capita is the highest of any province. There are only two ways to pay for that level of public spending – taxes and borrowing. But, when taxes are too high, they crush the very economy that the government is supposed to be serving. And when debt is too high, the cost of servicing that debt becomes a crushing obligation, draining revenues. Unpaid debt leaves our children a burden that crushes their opportunities. We cannot borrow for our day-to-day spending and send the bill to our children down the line. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand this.

We have to live within our means and continue to set clear and responsible priorities. It is about a balanced plan, a sustainable approach. To that end, My Government embarked last year on a Core Mandate Review to identify efficiencies and eliminate duplication and waste. The review protects essential functions while identifying innovative ways of consolidating and streamlining operations to meet these core functions more effectively and more affordably.

With our economy now stronger than ever and private-sector employment at record levels, this is the prudent time to take on the challenge of focusing on critical priorities, streamlining our public sector accordingly and zeroing in on the initiatives that place our province's economy on a solid, sustainable footing for the decades to come. Let no one pretend we have arrived. Let no one pretend the need for fiscal prudence has passed.

Truly, Newfoundland and Labrador is at a crossroads. Two paths loom before us: the path we are on, and the path that inevitably leads back to where we were a decade ago.

Still, there are some voices in this province calling loudly for us to take this other path – to grow the size and cost of the public sector and raise taxes and public debt levels to pay for it. These same voices have also disagreed with My Government's decision to develop Muskrat Falls. They have disagreed with shifting from an overreliance on oil to a more-diversified economy with a stable revenue stream from renewable energy. Their path would lead us back to the predicament from which we have come – high debt, high taxes, less consumer spending, less investment, less employment, fewer people, fewer opportunities and a bleaker future for our children and all of us. My Government will not choose that path. We know where it leads. We have come too far and learned too much to turn back the hard-won gains that together we have achieved.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

The path forward is about setting **sound priorities**. My Government is listening to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will continually examine best practices to ensure we provide public services in the best ways possible.

The path forward is also about **sustainability**. There are many ways My Government is working to make our economy more sustainable and secure. We are diversifying our economy to reduce exposure to fluctuations in the prices of commodities such as oil. We are investing in business attraction, retention, expansion, innovation, research, development and trade. We are continuing to

improve strategic infrastructure to attract new investment while making equity investments of our own to foster growth. We are assessing options to put pensions on a solid footing so they will be there for those who need them. We are running the government the way a sound business is run – in accordance with effective management principles. We are continually planning forward and making decisions strategically, with a view to their implications both now and over the long term. In this way, we are planning for the needs of today while securing a stronger, more-sustainable future.

The path forward is also about **innovation** – about finding new and more-effective ways of achieving our goals. We cannot dismiss out-of-hand the suggestion that there might be better approaches worth trying just because things have been done a certain way year after year. There is always room to improve. We can learn from the pioneering approaches and best practices of other jurisdictions, just as they can learn from ours. In poverty reduction, ours is the model to follow; in other sectors, we may have things to learn. Some of the best new ideas will come from our own people, who have seen how things work and thought hard about ways of doing things better. We need to remain open to that – open to innovation; open to suggestions. New ideas are being reflected in our approaches to providing infant child care, home care, child protection, policing, career placement assistance, and business and regional support programming. New ideas are reforming our approach to public procurement to get more value for the money we spend. “Thinking outside the box” is not just a catch phrase: it is a principle we are embracing, because it improves the ways we govern while improving the lives of the people we serve.

My First Minister, the Premier, is guiding this process with a keen eye to the impact on people. She is honest with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians about the challenges and choices we face, bringing her experience to the table and listening to others who have perspectives and particular expertise to offer. She is a champion for the vulnerable with an appreciation of the value of self-reliance; an appreciation of the role of the private sector in generating the new wealth our economy requires to thrive; an appreciation of the need to engage our youth in building the society that they will inherit from us. My Premier is determined to

leave our children a legacy more sustainable and secure than the circumstances we inherited. She has a plan for our province.

This **Sustainability Plan** will guide our approach moving forward. It is a fresh approach to governance, with a clear focus on the people we serve, the priorities we stand by, the results we need to achieve, and the path that will get us there. Good governance means serving the people as effectively as possible while living within our means. It means making choices that will leave our people better off than they would otherwise be. That is the essence of sustainability.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Growing our economy is at the centre of what we do. Growth sustains us. Businesses, industries and the people they employ are at the heart of every thriving community. The government's role is to create the conditions for growth, open doors, build networks, promote partnerships, educate and inform our people, showcase our strengths, foster innovation and till the soil so new enterprises can take root and our communities can continue to thrive.

Nowhere are the opportunities more promising than in the Arctic. Why shouldn't we be leaders in the Arctic! We are home to Arctic Peoples. Boasting one of the harshest marine environments in the world, our people have been harnessing the oceans for hundreds of years. Investing in the Arctic, economically, is simply the next step. Our government's Research & Development Corporation is spearheading **ArcticTECH**, a new three-year program that will make the most of our competitive advantages – our location, infrastructure and proven track record in the harshest of environments. RDC has also partnered with Statoil Canada to leverage an investment of \$5 million in private sector-led R&D right here in Newfoundland and Labrador that will prepare us to fill key technological gaps in Arctic oil and gas development.

And that's not all. Through the **Arctic Opportunities Initiative**, our innovation department is working with the Nunatsiavut Government, local businesses, organizations and communities to identify lucrative prospects in the Arctic.

We're linking our experts, combining our capacity, and marketing this province nationally and internationally as the gateway to the Arctic. For those not afraid of a challenge, the Arctic offers incredible opportunities, jobs and returns on investments. And we can do it all from a staging ground here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The same harsh marine environment that prepares us for leadership in the Arctic also prepares us for leadership in the **ocean technology** sector here at home. Our "blue" technology sector is on track to grow in value to more than a billion dollars a year. A US-based trade publication is already celebrating our province as "standing tall as an international epicenter of marine technology". Through partnerships linking the government, Memorial's Marine Institute, the private sector and companion institutions as far afield as China, we have positioned Newfoundland and Labrador to take the lead in pioneering blue-tech solutions to challenges confronting coastal states around the world. Imagine that!

All sizes of businesses, large and small, can secure new business opportunities. So while we are pursuing the diversification agenda, there are opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises with major projects and resource development on the island and in Labrador. Supplier development helps local companies identify new business opportunities within major industrial projects. This program connects small- and medium-sized enterprises with large industrial projects by making them aware of how the supply chain for those projects works and introduces them to the specific opportunities and players involved. Capitalizing on supplier development opportunities, particularly in terms of our major projects, is critical. We need to make sure our local companies have the information, skill and financial resources required. My Government supports economic growth through strategic investments in sector and market development, research and development capacity, key infrastructure, and workforce development. Investments made by the government are strengthening the business environment in Newfoundland and Labrador. Small and medium-sized businesses are helping diversify the provincial economy, develop innovative industries in our regions, and attract talent to our province.

We are transforming rural communities through leadership in aquaculture, and continuing to invest in innovation in agriculture through Growing Forward. Diversification enhances sustainability. That's why in all of these sectors and more, we are making investments to broaden our economic base. From tourism and the arts to fisheries and geosciences, even in a year when public spending is being reined in, the sum of our investments in growth will remain enormous and the impact will continue to be huge and lasting.

To enhance sustainability, My Government has set its sights on improving telecommunications. Since 2003, through cooperation with industry, we have increased access for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to where today, 87 per cent of the island and 95 per cent of Labrador has broadband access. As impressive as that is, it's about to get even better with the announcement this month of a major investment in Phase II of the Rural Broadband Initiative. By working collaboratively with a blend of wireless and wired providers, My Government is fulfilling its Blue Book commitment "to advance initiatives that improve broadband access" and make Newfoundland and Labrador a technology leader in the 21st century.

Here's the real secret to sustainable, long-term growth: innovation and collaboration. By thinking inventively and working together, we can make our investments work harder. By linking up, we can make it easier for new developers to link in and gain the solid foothold they need to thrive. That's why we are working, not just with industries, but also with regions and municipalities to promote **regional growth** and success. We will commence engagement with key stakeholders, including Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, on a potential comprehensive fiscal framework that is sustainable and works for municipalities in the province. We are partnering with the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs, to leverage the strengths of women in business to help drive our vibrant economy. We are partnering with the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives through a brand-new five-year memorandum of understanding. Four out of every five dollars of the development money we invest goes to rural regions because we want these regions to succeed. We are leading a collaborative approach to economic development province-wide, partnering with municipalities, community

development organizations, industry associations, business groups and private enterprises to get regions growing – to get regions benefitting fully from the opportunities springing up all around us.

We celebrate the progress we have made in developing strong and respectful relationships with **Aboriginal peoples** who contribute to this province's rich, vibrant culture. Building on land claims, negotiated frameworks and resource development, together we continue to strive for socio-economic success in our Aboriginal communities.

We are focusing, not just inward, but outward, counseling companies on how to make inroads in new markets across Canada and abroad. Trade means profit. We are helping companies knuckle down to develop robust marketing plans and growth strategies that maximize their strengths and capture new customers around the world. Their successes abroad benefit all of us here at home. That's why we are opening doors through **trade** missions, not only to traditional markets in the US and Europe, but also to growing markets in Brazil and China, where opportunities for growth are off the charts. Thanks to the annual international mining expo in China's Tianjin, for example, Labrador is getting unprecedented attention from investors with money to spend. In Europe, one of our major markets for fish products, Canada is working to reach a new free trade agreement. We welcome free trade there as well, as long as it means removing barriers that disadvantage our products, or improving access to our products. Newfoundland and Labrador will aggressively work to open up new avenues for trade, as long as those trade agreements are truly fair and do not compromise our best interests.

Trade is something we've been doing for centuries. We understand that a successful fishing industry must respond to the evolving preferences of global markets and international competition. After several months of intensive negotiation, the province and Ocean Choice International reached an agreement to reopen the **Fortune fish plant** to process its unutilized yellowtail quota. This agreement will return a minimum of 110 workers to the plant when the retrofit is complete and secure an additional 126 year-round harvesting jobs. We are confident our partnership with OCI to process yellowtail for the Burin Peninsula will prove to be a resounding success.

In western Labrador, the mining industry is abuzz about new prospects for iron ore. The **Julienne Lake** prospect is a hot commodity, for which the province has already solicited Expressions of Interest and has most recently invited six interested parties to submit detailed proposals. Our goal is to secure yet another new mining venture in Labrador and additional long-term revenue and jobs for the people of our province.

Off the coast of Labrador, there is tremendous excitement over the discovery of three new basins and the doubling in size of an existing basin with the potential for the discovery of **more oil**. Thanks to the province's investments in geoscience under our Energy Plan, our offshore is yielding new and unexpected finds. It is offering the promise of expansion beyond the current projects at Hibernia, Hibernia South Extension, Terra Nova, White Rose, North Amethyst and Hebron. Our offshore is not done yielding good news yet. Far from it! To promote even more interest and competition in our offshore, My Government will work with the federal government and the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board this year to improve the competitiveness of our land tenure system to open up new opportunities for growth.

Newfoundland and Labrador is now recognized as a frontrunner in promoting **strategic and sustainable energy development** in Canada, thanks to this province's leadership in developing the hydropower resources of Muskrat Falls. Through this project, we are opening a new energy conduit in eastern Canada while putting our own province's economy on a strong, sustainable footing. My Premier is also working alongside the Premiers of Alberta and Manitoba in leading the development of a new Canadian Council of the Federation energy strategy. Newfoundland and Labrador is seen across the country as a leader in driving energy development, cooperation and innovation.

Growing our resource sector benefits all of us. The more our resource sector grows, the more development revenues they generate, and the **less taxes we need** to collect from people to pay for the services we provide.

Resource sector growth supports **population growth** by providing a solid foundation on which people can build for the future, sink down roots, ground their families, and make strong and lasting connections. Strong, thriving communities attract and anchor the skilled workers our economy needs.

This principle has motivated My Government from the very start. A decade ago, it identified the solution that would meet the demand for skilled labour in our province while at the same time addressing the need in our communities for an influx of young families. A decade ago, it recognized what was wrong that needed fixing. New post-secondary graduates were hamstrung by burdens of debt so onerous that many had to leave the province to find jobs lucrative enough to pay those debts down. Others who would have benefitted from developing post-secondary skills were scared away by the high costs of going to college. They were instead heading out west for whatever jobs they could get. Newfoundland and Labrador was hemorrhaging its brightest and best, and largely because of a failure to appreciate the importance of accessible and affordable **post-secondary education**. My newly elected Government immediately took aim at the problem by launching a White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education followed by the Skills Task Force. The goals were clear. Prepare our young people with the skills they would need for the opportunities coming down the pipe, and reduce the burden of debt that was deterring them from putting down roots here, buying homes and starting families.

Well, what a difference a decade makes! Today, Newfoundland and Labrador offers among the lowest tuition fees anywhere in Canada and a student aid program second to none. People once prohibited by costs from advancing their skills are now thriving at college and graduating free of the excessive burdens of debt that were driving graduates away. Not only our own children, but students from across Canada and around the world are forming strong attachments to our province's communities in greater numbers than ever before, and joining us in lifting our province up to the next level of sustainable economic activity. What we are today witnessing is a wholesale transformation of our society. Graduates – from both here and away – are now choosing to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador and make this place home. With an **influx of young people and families**, we are beginning to experience the renaissance we have long been

seeking, with renewed vibrancy and new energy to drive growth. We are on the right track, and that's why we are determined to ensure Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic remain among the most accessible post-secondary institutions in Canada, with the lowest tuition fees and the best student aid program in the country. That was My Government's Blue Book pledge, and Newfoundland and Labrador is stronger today because we are keeping this promise. Our actions ensure the College and the University remain nimble, responsive and relevant to the needs of the population they serve.

We are also giving our college graduates the leg up they need **to access apprenticeships and obtain journeyperson certification** so they are ready to take the jobs our economy is generating. The high uptake under the Apprenticeship Wage Subsidy Program and the new Journeyperson Mentorship Program is a clear indication the programs are meeting real needs. We will continue to open wider the door of opportunity to those under-represented in the skilled trades, including women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. To promote inclusiveness, we will work with employers to achieve diversity obligations for major agreements and projects, just as we have with Hebron and Vale.

Our **Workforce Development and Productivity Secretariat** will lead the development and implementation of a government-wide labour market strategy. The provincial government will build stronger partnerships with major resource developers, other employers, employer organizations, sector associations, organized labour, community-based organizations, and post-secondary education and training institutions to ensure we stay abreast of our changing labour market needs and supply challenges so we can adapt quickly, collaboratively and effectively. By forecasting our needs well in advance and learning to adjust to shifting circumstances, we will be better able to match people seeking work with employers seeking workers as each need arises. By linking development to towns, we will spread the benefits throughout the province.

We are participating in a similar initiative regionally. The **Atlantic Work Force Partnership**, sponsored by the Council of Atlantic Premiers, is focusing on the particular labour needs associated with the mining, electricity and shipbuilding sectors to ensure we are prepared as demand grows.

My Government's **10-year Child Care Strategy** also supports labour market development by making quality child care accessible and affordable for parents.

To bring the benefits of growth to individual citizens, we will transform the province's network of Career Work Centres to an enhanced network of **Employment Centres** to take on a greater role in transitioning people from joblessness to the work force. AES offices will take on this employment-focused role to complement the already existing network of departmental resources. No one should be left behind simply because they are not currently in receipt of Employment Insurance. We want to give all of our people the opportunity to find meaningful and productive careers so they can share in the opportunities that are growing throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The renewed one-stop Employment Centres will offer people the resources and support of trained staff with the expertise to help them make a quick and seamless attachment to the work force. This is a prime example of the way our government, by finding new ways of doing things, can accomplish more with less.

My Government realizes that new ways of thinking and new approaches cause stress and turmoil. It is important to deal with these issues honestly and openly so people are not caught by surprise, but fully engaged in the process. My Government is listening. It has heard people's concerns, and it is committed to making the transitions to new approaches as easy as possible, by working cooperatively with people to smooth out any rough patches.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

No area of public investment is more important than **health care**. Nevertheless, spending on health care simply cannot continue to grow at the current pace without becoming unsustainable. We are convinced there are ways to spend our health care investments more effectively to maintain and improve the quality of frontline services while increasing the value we get for these investments. In this year's Budget, My Government will make investments to improve the quality and performance of our health care system while ensuring a continued focus on caring for patients who rely on the services our health care

professionals so capably and compassionately deliver. By finding efficiencies in how services are delivered, we can continue to make sustainable investments in programs that deliver results to patients. Health care will not be compromised. Patients will not be compromised. But we will do a better job of living within our means while delivering services more effectively.

As My First Minister, the Premier, announced on the 20th of March, with a \$227 million investment over the next three years, My Government will advance construction of a new **regional acute care health facility in Corner Brook**. Budget 2013 will provide for the significant advancement of this important infrastructure project. The new hospital complex will provide vital health services to the residents of the western region for generations to come. It includes an acute care centre, a separate long-term care facility with in-patient mental health services, and a hostel. Construction is expected to commence in 2015.

As part of the **Supportive Living Program**, which helps provide housing to people with complex needs, Newfoundland Labrador Housing has engaged a national consultant to better understand homelessness in our province. The findings will inform future decision-making by ensuring we get a clear picture of needs that may be hidden from view.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

We must continue to stake a stand against violence. Last year, My Government undertook an evaluation of the first phase of the **Violence Prevention Initiative** it launched in 2006. Province-wide consultations were complemented by a provincial attitudinal survey about violence and abuse in Newfoundland and Labrador. Clearly, there is more work to be done. The information gathered will shape the initiative's second phase and help us prevent violence against vulnerable populations, including those who have been sexually exploited.

Violence has emerged as a significant issue among young people, particularly through new vehicles such as social media. **Bullying and harassment of students** cannot be tolerated. No student should live in fear. In the coming year,

2013 SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

My Government will use information gathered during recent consultations on bullying to inform changes to the Safe and Caring Schools Policy and protocols, and if necessary, to spur legislative amendments to address the serious issue of bullying. My Government will continue to advance the new teacher resource called My Gay-Straight Alliance to support students with different sexual orientations.

Parents and the public are increasingly concerned about those who are subjected to violence on the internet. Some 80 per cent of the victims of luring and other violence perpetrated online are young girls. Led by Newfoundland and Labrador, the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women are working together to create awareness and prevent cyber-violence targeting young girls online. On the 11th of October, the first International Day of the Girl, MacDonald Drive Junior High School in St. John's became the launch site for the **Cybersafe Girl Initiative**. This program provides young girls, their parents and educators with information on how to prevent young girls from experiencing violence and abuse on the internet. This initiative was recently showcased at a United Nations Meeting on the Status of Women in New York as an example of best practices that other jurisdictions are interested in emulating. Our leadership online will help keep many young girls safe.

My Premier has just announced a new **task force linking members of the RNC and RCMP** in this province to investigate organized and serious crimes, such as illegal drug activity and child exploitation. Working together in this way, our police forces will make a tremendous difference in combatting crime and protecting our people, particularly children, from harm.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

Expect to see advances over the next two years in the implementation of **province-wide 911 emergency services**.

Expect to see new legislation in this session to improve safety in the province's offshore. Even though people labouring on our province's oceans have been facing risks with courage for generations, My Government believes there are things we can do and ought to do to solidify the importance of **safety in the offshore oil and gas industry**. The first Bill on the legislature's Order Paper will be amendments to the Atlantic Accord Acts to provide for a comprehensive offshore petroleum Occupational Health and Safety regime. The amendments will provide a clear and enforceable regime and provide regulatory-making powers in offshore petroleum occupational health and safety.

Already, this past September, we provided for the establishment of a **Fish Harvester Safety Association** to bring a greater measure of protection to one of the most dangerous professions in the world.

As part of our **open government initiative**, we have started releasing restaurant inspection reports online, along with reports on school repairs, geological mapping, park statistics, game harvests and departmental salaries, and the annual reports of the governing bodies of regulated health professions. There is much more to come. Ours is the most open and accountable government in this province since Confederation, and among the most transparent in the country. More information is readily accessible than ever before, while information that warrants protection for reasons of privacy is kept secure. My Government has struck the proper balance that preserves the right to know while protecting privacy and personal information.

Open government also means open consultation, which we are achieving through our new **Office of Public Engagement**. This office enables us to engage young people, seniors, rural stakeholders, community organizations and other citizens in deliberations and decisions that profoundly affect their lives. In a truly open democracy, engaging citizens is not a luxury but a basic principle of good governance.

My Government is clearly focused on the well-being of children. Complementing our Continuum of Care Strategy is our ongoing province-wide **Foster A Future** campaign welcoming new foster parents, whose care our vulnerable children

desperately need. Our continuum of care approach is all about giving these children the stability and support they need to thrive.

There are other ways we are preparing our young people to maximize their potential. Through our investments in **early childhood learning**, we are targeting children at the youngest stages of their lives, when cognitive development is most rapid and structured intervention makes the greatest difference. Intervention in those earliest years opens the floodgates to learning in the years that follow when children go to school.

Through our continuing investments in **K-12 education**, we are continually doing more to ensure our students can compete with their peers across Canada and around the world. We are paying close attention to the best practices of others and setting the bar high so our students can excel in mathematics and the sciences, language arts and technology. We want to ensure they are ready to take the lead in seizing the opportunities they are about to inherit.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

We are determined to prepare our children with the skills they need to secure a bright and prosperous future. We are determined to leave them a legacy that is **sustainable fiscally, environmentally and economically**. Spending within our means is fiscally sustainable. Developing renewable energy is environmentally sustainable. Diversification is economically sustainable. These are deliberate approaches we can take and must take to shape the future our children will inherit. That's why they are at the heart of this year's budgetary plan. When we are honest about where we have been, how far we have come, and what it took to get to where we are, it is clear the plan we have chosen is sound. The best path forward is the path we are on.

* * *

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.

Thank you.

