

Prince Edward Island

*Speech
from
the
Throne*

*Delivered by
His Honour
The Honourable
Gilbert R. Clements
Lieutenant Governor*

*At the Opening of the
First Session of the
Sixty-first General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island*

*May 11, 2000
3:00 p.m.*



*His Honour, The Honourable
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Lieutenant Governor*





Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly,

Monsieur le président, membres de l'Assemblée législative;

I am pleased on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen to officially open the first session of the 61st General Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

I welcome all Members to the Assembly, with special welcome to those individuals who are taking their seats in this Chamber for the first time.

Since 1873 when Prince Edward Island joined Canadian Confederation, 1,162 members have represented Islanders in their Legislative Assembly. Each member is entrusted with a special privilege to represent not only the interests of the district from which they are elected, but of all Islanders, as they carry on the tradition of those who have served over the past 127 years.

To all individuals who offered in the recent General Election, My Government wishes to express our appreciation for the demonstrated commitment to public service. It is the strength of our democratic system that citizens offer for elected office, thereby ensuring the public a choice.

Let's Continue

On April 17, 2000, the people of Prince Edward Island expressed their support for the policies and direction of government, and endorsed the request that those policies and that direction continue.



Le 17 avril dernier, les gens de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard ont exprimé leur appui aux politiques et direction du gouvernement, et ont manifesté leur désir que cela continue.

My Government is both honoured and humbled by the confidence placed in it by Islanders. In this Assembly and in all dealings with the public, members will seek to address the needs of Islanders in a fair and forthright manner.

Special efforts will be made to ensure that government continues to consult directly with Islanders and that the opportunity is provided for public input on government actions.

Vice Regal

As the Queen's official representative on Prince Edward Island, I am pleased that several honoured guests will visit our shores during the year 2000. Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, will visit our province for five days, June 26-30. It will be Her Excellency's first official visit to the Birthplace of Canadian Confederation.

Royal Visit

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Assembly, from July 14-16, Prince Edward Island will welcome the Earl and Countess of Wessex to our province for their first official visit to Canada. My Government is pleased the Royal couple has chosen to visit the province which proudly bears the name Prince Edward.

Mon gouvernement est heureux que le couple royal ait choisi de visiter la province qui porte fièrement le nom du Prince Édouard.



Our province will also host the Canadian Parliamentary Association Annual Conference in mid-July welcoming delegates from across Canada, highlighting once again our desire to be an active participant in the democratic community.

Priorities

The areas of health care, education, job creation and communities are the stated priorities of government and reflect the needs and concerns of all Islanders.

Health Care

We salute the many dedicated Islanders who are involved in providing an extensive spectrum of health care services to Islanders. It takes a dedicated team of many individuals, with many varied skills, to ensure quality health care. The caring and commitment of these individuals represents the vital human aspect of the provision of such services.

My government is undertaking several initiatives aimed at supporting health care professionals.

An Enhanced Physician Recruitment Strategy has already been announced, and a dedicated recruiter will soon be hired. The complement of physicians covered under the Provincial Medicare Program has been increased to address the need for family and specialty physicians. The province's first Nurse Recruitment Strategy is now being implemented. The Health Care Futures Program offers young Islanders insight into health care careers. This new initiative, undertaken for the first time last year, has proven successful and it will be continued.

Our objective is to work with all health care professions to ensure we continue to attract individuals to provide the level of care we value.



I am pleased that together we have been able to make some important additions to the health care services provided to the residents of our province.

The Prince Edward Island Cancer Treatment Centre has expanded the scope of treatments available on Island. This new centre reflects My Government's commitment to provide more services to Islanders as close to their home communities as possible.

We will add to that effort with the purchase of a Linear Accelerator. This new equipment will further expand the range of services that can be provided at the centre, and will further reduce the requirement of patients to travel off-Island for specialty treatment.

With the purchase of a Magnetic Resonance Imaging unit for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Islanders will soon be afforded the best access to MRI technology in Canada. This unit will mean on-Island diagnostic support for the hundreds of Islanders who now have to travel out of province for an MRI.

To assist those who, for a variety of reasons, must still travel out-of-province for major medical treatment, Government will develop a Medical Transport Support Program that will provide some financial assistance to those most in need.

My Government will proceed with the construction of a new hospital for the East Prince area, and will make a significant contribution to the equipment fund for the new facility.

The provision of health care services involves a number of partnerships between government and private operators.

My Government will increase the number of subsidized nursing care beds in the province and the daily subsidy for nursing home beds will be increased this fiscal year, with a further increase next year.



The Comfort Allowance for Nursing Home residents will be increased for the first time in eight years.

The subsidy rate for Community Care facilities will be substantially increased in support of the services provided.

Provincial Government support funding for a number of health related volunteer organizations will also be increased, and a Provincial Disabilities Support Program will be developed.

Recognizing the importance of the early years of life in the proper development of individuals, My Government established an advisory committee to make recommendations on a Healthy Childhood Development Strategy. The report of the committee has been received and government will proceed with implementation of a strategy.

Education

My Government appreciates and respects the role of education in assisting our youth to prepare for their future.

My Government will immediately begin the task of establishing a province-wide, publicly funded, community-based kindergarten. The recent election campaign provided an opportunity for discussion on the form of such a program and there was a strong endorsement of the community-based model which works in partnership with existing operators and builds upon the services already provided. That is the approach which will be followed.



A coordinator has been named and a working group will be tasked with the responsibility of implementing a core half-day kindergarten program. The partnership of those involved in kindergarten has been fully demonstrated by the curriculum pilot projects that have already been carried out. This offers an exciting new element to our support of young Islanders.

The new West Royalty School is now open and construction will begin this year on a new school in Fort Augustus, and planning will be carried out for Miscouche, Kinkora and Parkdale, as the Capital Construction Program continues.

In cooperation with Heritage Canada, a new school and community complex will be constructed in Summerside to address the needs of French First Language instruction.

En coopération avec Patrimoine Canada, une nouvelle école avec centre communautaire sera construite à Summerside pour combler les besoins éducatifs en français langue première.

My Government appreciates the fact that a good education is about much more than good facilities. Additional support will be provided this year for classroom materials. This support will involve increased funding for a new math curriculum, administrative support, teacher in-service training, additional teacher assistants and improved safety.

Technology is playing a greater and greater role in the education system and increased support will be provided for improved technology.

The opportunity for teachers to gain new skills and experience will be enhanced by the reinstatement of the Sabbatical Leave Program.

Major increases in funding commitments will support our post-secondary institutions enabling both the University of Prince Edward Island and Holland College to offer important educational options to Islanders.



The construction of a student centre at UPEI will be supported, and several new program initiatives will assist students with education costs.

Job Creation

The best environment for job creation is a healthy economy, and My Government will initiate measures to foster continued economic growth and to encourage employment opportunities in communities across the province.

Policies that reduce taxes and maintain balanced budgets will be pursued.

My Government has released a five-year Economic Development Strategy, titled *Bridging Tradition and Technology*. This strategy will provide the framework for new economic and job development initiatives.

Prince Edward Islanders are already proving their ability to compete effectively in the growing technology sector; and through partnership with the industry, new initiatives and opportunities will be pursued.

Government believes the combination of small business and development of key sectors offers the greatest potential for new jobs across the province. Efforts will continue to improve access to capital and expertise for new businesses and the expansion of existing operations.

My Government believes there is great potential for expansion of the research and development sector in our province. Research funds from the provincial government have already served as a catalyst for new R and D activities. The expertise available through several entities serves as a strong base for such activities.



My First Minister has just returned from a Trade Mission to the Eastern United States. Two dozen Island companies took part in aspects of the Trade Mission, exploring new opportunities for business linkages. These efforts reflect a greater emphasis on the development of exports, and the growing range of quality goods available from Island companies.

Culture and heritage not only honour the traditions and abilities of Islanders, they are a source of new employment opportunities. My Government will work with the craft and culture sector in creating a long-term development and marketing strategy.

The Community Development Bureau is coordinating efforts to facilitate greater community involvement in development discussions and planning. This reflects the belief that the greatest success can be achieved by working together and pursuing opportunities that have strong community support.

Communities

Communities are important to Islanders, and My Government is committed to a strong working relationship with communities across the province.

Les collectivités sont importantes pour les Insulaires, et mon gouvernement s'engage à entretenir des relations étroites avec les collectivités de la province.

My Government is ready to build on the success of previous partnerships and again participate in an Infrastructure Program. Funding will be allocated in the budget for the province's one-third share of a new program which will support needed infrastructure work.

After extensive planning, which included the street identification and property numbering, the province-wide 911 System will be implemented ahead of schedule. The service will provide faster access to emergency services and will enable those responding to an emergency to more easily find the location.



Protection of individuals and property will be enhanced with the funding of additional police officers. Recognizing the valuable role of volunteer firefighters, My Government will provide registration free-of-charge for one motor vehicle owned by a volunteer firefighter.

Highways are important links to Island communities, and each day thousands of Islanders utilize the roads of our province to participate in work, school and community activities.

Each year more than one million visitors utilize our roadways to access points of interest and activities throughout our province.

My Government is committed to upgrading the highway system and improving safety on Island roadways. The Department of Transportation and Public Works is leading by example, in adapting construction techniques and practices that protect the environment.

Environment

For hundreds of years, Islanders have counted on the land and sea for their food and livelihood. We have a joint obligation to ensure that these resources are protected for future generations, and that our stewardship enables those who come after us to enjoy the same benefits which we are privileged to enjoy.

Substantial progress has been made on the implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Round Table on Resource Land Use and Stewardship. We will continue to advance the recommendations of the report.

The proper use and education of people using pesticides is in the best interest of everyone. The challenge is to balance the often competing interests of effective pest management with pesticide reduction.

My Government believes that research and education are key aspects of this balancing effort.



We will work in partnership with all sectors to gain greater insight into the use and impact of pesticides and to identify ways in which pesticides can be reduced. Effective alternatives to pesticide usage will also be explored. Funding in support of the implementation of Environmental Farm Plans will be continued.

Every Islander has a role to play in the protection of our environment. The Waste Watch program is being expanded with blue bag recycling services being implemented in more communities, to be followed by the full Waste Watch program.

This will permit us to more effectively manage the waste we produce, recycle more items and properly dispose of wastes. Already, considerable progress has been made on the use of waste tires so they no longer present an environmental and safety hazard. Experimentation of new uses of waste tires will be explored.

My Government will also seek ways to improve hazardous waste collection so that home owners have a more consistent opportunity for the collection and proper disposal of hazardous wastes.

There are special features of our province which must be protected, and we will continue the Endangered Spaces Program with a view to increasing the acres protected as natural areas. New Wildlife Management areas will be developed and the public consulted on the management of these areas.

My Government is concerned about the proper management of Island woodlands which are vital to the environmental health of our province. Recognizing the need to involve land owners in efforts to ensure the effective management of our forest resource, Government will lead by example.

A new Forest Agency will be developed which will take the lead in exploring a variety of economic opportunities associated with woodlands, while preserving the forest cover.



Primary Industries

My Government will work with those involved in our primary industries and the food processing sector to advance the goals of the Prince Edward Island Food Strategy. Properly implemented, the strategy can increase the market opportunities for a variety of Island products.

Protection of our land and waterways is necessary to enhance the fishing industry – both the sport and commercial sectors. Proper management of the fishery resource as well as the protection of the habitat are essential to its continued success. Working in partnership with the federal government and those involved in the fishing sector, we will pursue such efforts.

The Island seed potato industry has been hard hit by virus infestation. My Government has already demonstrated its commitment to the industry by way of the Seed Incentive Program, and we remain determined to work with the industry to bring renewed strength to the seed sector. The objective is to ensure Prince Edward Island retains and enhances its reputation for quality.

Part-time farmers make an important contribution to food production and to the life of our rural communities. Several tax measures will be implemented which recognize the commitment and role of these farmers.

Diversification of agriculture will afford new opportunities for employment, and government will support the development of new crops which enhance our food production and permit us to enter new markets.

The growth in demand for organically grown products also offers new opportunities, and government will work with this sector to take advantage of the opportunities.



The growth of the tourism industry has contributed much to our Island economy, and there is potential for even greater opportunities. Industry and Government cooperation and partnership have facilitated new initiatives such as the Vacancy Information Service which will benefit visitors and operators.

It is always welcome news when Islanders do well. This August, Prince Edward Island will proudly host the Lorie Kane Island Challenge, Canada's first women's skins game. The event will once again highlight the beauty of our Island and its attractiveness as a tourism destination.

The Canadian Pro-Golf event and the DuMaurier Series will also be hosted on the Island this summer.

This August the Confederation Trail will be completed, stretching from one tip of the Island to the other; and it will be marketed as a new eco-tourism attraction.

Government will continue to work with the tourism industry in marketing our province, and several new investments will be made in infrastructure improvements.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Effective intergovernmental relations involve a spirit of trust and cooperation. My Government has worked hard to foster such a spirit, and we will continue to work with the federal government and all governments in advancing and meeting the needs of Islanders.

We are especially concerned about the need for an increased federal commitment to health care; and in cooperation with all provincial and territorial governments, we will continue to advance the clear arguments in support of increased federal funding.



My Government will also advance the benefits of a National Highways Program, which is necessary in order to meet the growing demand for a safe and efficient national highway system which facilitates the flow of people and goods within Canada.

At the regional level there is renewed interest in the benefits of regional cooperation and a Memorandum of Understanding will soon be signed by the Atlantic Premiers to formalize greater regional cooperation. Strengthening the bonds of cooperation not only benefits Prince Edward Island, but the region and our nation.

M. Speaker, Members of the Assembly,

Several Legislative amendments will be placed before the Assembly for debate, and the Public Accounts and Reports of departments and agencies will be tabled.

The provincial budget will be introduced, and the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditures for the coming year will be presented for approval.

M. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, may Divine Providence guide your deliberations.

Monsieur le président, membres de l'Assemblée législative, que la divine providence vous guide dans vos délibérations.