

P R I N C E   E D W A R D   I S L A N D



S P E E C H   F R O M   T H E   T H R O N E

Delivered by His Honour  
The Honourable J. Léonce Bernard  
Lieutenant Governor



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

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3:00 PM

# *Advancing Our Quality of Life, Together*

*Madame Speaker,  
Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I take great pleasure in welcoming you to this 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly. This historic chamber has witnessed many significant accomplishments for Prince Edward Island and Canada. I look forward to a continuation of that co-operative spirit during this session and wish Honourable Members well in their deliberations.

This past year has been an especially rewarding one for our province. We continue to celebrate Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee. My Premier and I will mark the Queen's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary during ceremonies tomorrow at Fanningbank where we will present a number of Queen's Jubilee Medals to deserving Islanders who have made an outstanding contribution to our communities.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast joined Prince Edward Islanders on the Charlottetown waterfront to celebrate our national pride as the Cradle of Confederation provided the backdrop for CBC Television's live broadcast of its 2002 Canada Day festivities.

This year is also marked by the opening of the Atlantic Technology Centre, an important vehicle in furthering our province's evolution in the new economy.

In September, Prince Edward Island hosted SoftWorld 2002, an important information technology forum which attracted innovators in this dynamic industry from around the globe.

Our primary industries – agriculture, the fishery, and tourism – all reporting strong seasons, has resulted in much optimism and opportunity.

Islanders have every reason to be confident in our collective future. Our economy has demonstrated significant progress over the past year. My Government's initiative in partnership with Islanders has resulted in measurable progress:

- 7,000 jobs have been added to our economy since 1996, resulting in record employment rates
- retail sales continue to exceed the national average creating more jobs and opportunity
- the value of manufacturing shipments has virtually doubled over the past five years
- housing starts have expanded by approximately 50 per cent over last year
- credit rating agencies have demonstrated confidence in government's approach to financial management by repeatedly upgrading the province's credit rating
- The Conference Board of Canada projects that our province will this year experience the second highest rate of economic growth in the country

Preparing for the future is very important, and My Government is committed more than ever to ensuring that we continue to make improvements to our economic and social structures. This is important so that Islanders can hand on to future generations a quality of life which makes Prince Edward Island a leader and innovator.

An advanced quality of life for all Islanders is the basis for My Government's agenda.

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## *Extending Government's Partnership With Prince Edward Islanders*

**A**n enhanced quality of life can be achieved only when a government reflects the needs and aspirations of those which it represents.

My Government has taken the principle of partnership seriously and continues to advance positions which make it easier for Islanders to contribute in a meaningful way to the future direction of Prince Edward Island.

Our governance has benefited from the regular town hall meetings hosted by Honourable Members in communities across the province. Government policy is more effective because the provincial cabinet has visited communities and consulted with Islanders directly. Government openness and transparency has been improved by the implementation of Prince Edward Island's first *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

My Government will add to these initiatives by introducing a package of measures which will:

- enhance the autonomy of the Auditor General
- make the reporting of financial statements more understandable and complete
- establish an enhanced debt management plan
- ensure that our civil service continues to operate independent of political influence

### *Electoral Reform*

The most important and fundamental right of our democracy is the franchise. It is incumbent upon political leadership to ensure that the way in which we elect our representatives continues to be relevant and effective. Therefore, My Government will appoint an independent commission to consult on and consider Prince Edward Island's electoral system and accompanying statute and regulations so that it continues to reflect what Islanders require of their legislature.

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## *A New Relationship With Our Natural Environment*

**O**ur quality of life is largely dependent upon the sustained quality of our land and our water resources.

As people living on an island, we are acutely aware that our resources are finite, fragile and limited. Ensuring the sustainability of our Island and its natural resources for present and future generations must be a priority for all Islanders and their government.

Soil erosion is considered by many to be the number one environmental problem in our province. Agricultural runoffs are posing a threat to aquatic habitat. Nitrate concentrations are a challenge. There is growing public concern about the level of pesticide use. Forest harvest levels exceed the rate of reforestation.

There is a growing public concern about the quality of our drinking water. As the only province completely dependent on groundwater as the source of drinking water supplies, we must ensure the safety and protection of this vital resource.

Taken together, these and other issues undermine our pristine image as a province, and pose a potential threat to our way of life.

It is My Government's objective to ensure safe drinking water, surface water protection, soil conservation, improved air quality and environmentally sustainable development. My Government continues to attach a strong priority to these initiatives.

A safe, healthy environment needs to be our legacy to future generations. Progress has already been achieved in a number of areas.

Over the past six years, government and industry have made a major investment in measures to protect our environment. More than \$12 million has been invested in soil and water conservation projects. Buffer zones have been implemented. Three-year crop rotations are now mandatory.

*"Our quality of life is largely dependent upon the sustained quality of our land and our water resources."*

Enforcement of pesticide use has been increased and Integrated Pest Management Practices have been adopted. Staff and financial support is now being provided to organic producers. Access by cattle to streams has all but been eliminated. The majority of agricultural producers have completed Environmental Farm Plans. The level of reforestation has been increased. A new program has been introduced to provide financial and technical support for woodlot owners to undertake non-clearcut silviculture activities.

To further improve the sustainability of our resources, the majority of the recommendations of the Round Table on Resource Land Use and Stewardship have been implemented.

My Government has also introduced a Drinking Water Strategy. Public information has been prepared for the planning, construction and maintenance of private wells and sewage disposal systems. Handbooks have been produced for use by developers in on-site water and sewer servicing and new field manuals have been prepared for use by technical field personnel in conducting site suitability assessments for sewage disposal systems. New regulations are being implemented on safety measures for wells and sewage disposal.

For municipal water supplies, My Government has developed and is implementing new water monitoring and public reporting regulations for central water supply and wastewater treatment systems.

Despite these and other measures, our province and its people continue to face environmental issues – issues which will become more serious if not addressed through positive actions.

### ***Comprehensive Action***

Accordingly, My Government is announcing a new Sustainable Resource Policy to chart the future direction of agriculture, fisheries and forestry in Prince Edward Island.

The overriding objective of this new policy is to ensure the health of our environment, the vitality of our economy, and the well-being of our people. We owe it to our Island, to ourselves, but most importantly, to our children.

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Some of the elements of the new Sustainable Resource Policy include:

- a review of current legislation to make it more enforceable
- tax incentives to encourage more responsible production practices
- the introduction of cross-compliance as a condition of eligibility for programs
- the designation of “Select Farms,” operations that have developed and implemented a resource plan that will recognize and reward sustainable practices

In addition, new initiatives will be undertaken to reduce pesticide use, evaluate higher-value rotational crops, identify alternative uses for conventional crops, and encourage measures to provide greater diversity in the agriculture industry.

The *Environmental Protection Act* will be amended to strengthen provisions regarding headland buffers and conservation tillage. New regulations will be developed and penalties for infractions will be increased.

Administration of the *Pesticides Control Act* will be transferred to the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment, which has the lead mandate for environmental protection.

Efforts will continue to be strengthened on providing information to producers on soil conservation practices and buffer zone establishment and maintenance.

My Government will support research on the effects of pesticides on aquatic habitat and improved soil management practices. Work will continue with the federal Pesticide Management and Regulatory Agency to develop a sustainable crop management strategic plan for potato production.

The numbers of fish kills experienced in recent years are indicators of more fundamental issues related to land use and stewardship. The Ministry of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment will hire a dedicated freshwater fisheries biologist to provide an ecological perspective on these unacceptable incidents.

To build on progress in achieving a safe drinking water supply, My Government will continue to strengthen the Drinking Water Strategy.

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The Water Resources Division of the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Environment will be realigned to include a dedicated drinking water section with appropriate resources to support its work.

A new provincial agency will be established to consolidate environmental and agricultural laboratory services and steps will be undertaken to achieve full accreditation for its water, microbiology and chemistry services.

To ensure the safety of our drinking water supplies, My Government will begin negotiations with federal and municipal partners on capital funding requirements for the expansion and upgrading of municipal water and sewer systems.

It will seek to cultivate new relationships among the public, industry, and government on our relationship with the land, air, and water on which we all depend.

My Government will continue to work with organizations and communities to foster a spirit of co-operation in addressing environmental issues.

## *A Tradition of Quality From Our Land and Sea*

**O**ur quality of life is enhanced by a strengthened resource sector.

As the leading contributor to our economy, the food industry, namely agriculture and the fishery, will continue to grow and develop with the support of My Government.

My Government will be undertaking new initiatives to broaden the agriculture, fishery and food industry. Increased diversification will result in new opportunities for growth and development and increase the contribution of these sectors to the economy and to rural communities.

*“Our quality of life is enhanced by a strengthened resource sector.”*



## *Agriculture and Forestry*

A new strategy to expand the livestock sector will be implemented. Expanding livestock production will encourage the further integration of all sectors of the agriculture industry, and support its sustainable growth.

The success of the award-winning Atlantic Tender Beef Classic and My Government's initiative to establish a new beef processing facility in Prince Edward Island will further strengthen the expansion of this important sector.

A new feeder loan co-operative has been established to support the profitability of beef producers. In addition, a new cow-calf co-operative encourages expanded production.

Additional measures are being undertaken to encourage the expansion of the hog sector. A new program, with a cost of \$1.5 million, is aimed at the repopulation of herds to improve health and genetics.

My Government is also working closely with the dairy industry to improve productivity and to capitalize on our high genetic standards in export markets.

My Government is committed to pursuing opportunities for diversification in other sectors. A cranberry development strategy is being carried out to support the commercialization of this new crop in our province. Bonafide farmer status will be extended to those producers who are working with crops in the developmental stages.

A new crop insurance program for strawberry growers will be made available. The cole crop program will be revised and strengthened. Support for organic producers will also be strengthened.

Agri-forest initiatives, with high-value species, will be supported, especially on high sloped lands and in buffer zones. Through the Public Forest Council, new wealth-creation opportunities on provincially owned lands are being developed. New, higher-value rotational crops are being evaluated. Taken together, these and other measures will result in broadening the range of agriculture, food, and forestry products we produce and market.

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Because of the need to attract new entrants to the agriculture industry, My Government will be announcing an apprenticeship program to help new farmers become established. Further elements of the Future Farmers Program are being developed to help meet the need for highly skilled and innovative producers.

## *The Fishery*

My Government will continue to support the fishery by representing its interests to the federal government on important issues, such as the development of the long-term lobster management plan, resolution of the dispute on lobster zonal lines and access to our fair share of fisheries resources.

Harbour authorities will benefit from a new initiative of My Government to address future provincial property taxes at small craft harbours.

The aquaculture sector continues to be a thriving part of our fisheries and aquaculture industry, making a substantial contribution to our rural communities.

The maturation of the sector does, however, see a myriad of issues that will require sustainable production practices. For example, growers in some areas are developing management plans to limit production and ensure sustainability and the shellfish industry has developed an Environmental Policy and Code of Practice.

To enhance these initiatives, My Government will be redirecting current resources to create a sustainable aquaculture program to assist aquaculture producers and processors in exploring new methods and technology to ensure long-term sustainability of the aquaculture sector.

My Government will expand its capability and strengthen our commitment to work with the federal government to assist the aquaculture sector to deal with alien invasive species such as clubbed tunicate, oyster thief and green crab.

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## Opportunity Through Education

A quality of life requires access to knowledge and skills development.

Learning that is lifelong and life-wide is a key component of the high-quality of life that My Government envisions for all Islanders. The foundation of a strong and vibrant economy and society is the existence of a learning culture, a culture that values learning and celebrates success and excellence in all learning endeavours.

Prince Edward Island is such a society and it is time for the spotlight to shine on learning.

Islanders are passionate about education. They know that the economic, social, and even the physical health of our population is inextricably tied to our levels of educational attainment and achievement.

My Government knows that there is a strong positive association between levels of educational attainment and both participation in the labour force and high levels of income. We know that the economy is ever-changing, and that the jobs of the future require an ever-increasing emphasis on education and training.

My Government continues to fulfil commitments under the Capital Construction and Renovation Plan for Island schools. Earlier this year, official opening ceremonies were held at the renovated Parkdale School and the new school and community centre serving the Summerside-Miscouche area. A new addition at Miscouche Consolidated is complete and an official opening will take place this fall. In addition, ground was broken for the extensive renovation work at Kinkora Regional High School.

My Government has accomplished many successes under our school construction plan. We can take pride in our record of addressing the significant facility challenges that were a result of years of under-funding in this area, and will continue to do so with upcoming work planned for Bluefield High and Summerside Intermediate.

*"A quality of life requires access to knowledge and skills development."*

*"... it is time for the spotlight to shine on learning."*

While infrastructure and healthy learning environments are essential for our students, My Government is cognizant of the need to strike the appropriate balance between funding capital construction and renovation for schools, and funding for programs and operations.

My Government is proud of our publicly funded, community-based kindergarten system. We know that resources directed toward the early years of a child's life are good investments. My Government will provide increased program support to kindergartens to enable the acquisition of more program resources for the benefit of Island children.

My Government is committed to ensuring our youngest citizens are ready to learn when they enter the public school system.

During an extensive consultation process, it has been determined that children should be older when they enter Grade 1 so that they can take full advantage of this important chapter in their young life. Therefore, My Government will be enacting the necessary regulatory changes to provide that children enrolled in Grade 1 will eventually be six years old on or before August 31. These regulatory changes will be phased in over a multi-year period.

My Government will continue to respond by investing more in the educational front lines.

We have heard from Islanders that there is a need for additional resources in the area of program and operational supports for the public school system.

Over the past number of years, significant resources have been invested to address financial pressures associated with special needs students. For this current school year, an additional \$1.2 million has been allocated to school boards primarily to assist in this area. Among other things, this funding resulted in new special education/resource teachers, additional teacher assistants and more youth workers.

My Government has covered the operating deficits of school boards and it is our hope that additional funding, primarily in the area of special education, will help alleviate funding pressures.

*"My Government will continue to respond by investing more in the educational front lines."*

My Government has honoured its commitment to maintain the number of teaching positions despite declining enrolments. This is an important measure to help ensure our student-teacher ratio continues to improve.

### ***A Focus on Literacy***

Literacy is the foundation skill for learning. We learn to read, and then we read to learn. My Government has put significant resources into improving literacy programs and services in Prince Edward Island. We believe that the literacy levels of Islanders are improving, but we also know that there is much more to be done, and that early intervention and family literacy approaches are key to breaking the cycle of low literacy skills.

My Government has introduced the highly successful reading program in Grade 1. Response to the program from parents and educators has been extremely favourable, and My Government is committed to enhancing the resources available for this program to ensure that even more children experience the joy of early success in reading.

My Government is committed to improving the literacy skills of all Islanders. One of our success stories in this area is the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids. This program started in 1998 with five tutors working with 97 elementary school students. This past summer, the program employed 23 tutors – the majority of whom are pursuing a post-secondary degree in education – who worked with approximately 600 students. This program is one of many that illustrates My Government’s commitment to working with partners to reach common goals.

### ***Adult Learning***

The knowledge-based economy is creating a demand for a more highly skilled and adaptable workforce. Given the demographic trends, labour shortages are anticipated, particularly for skilled workers. My Government is committed to the pursuit of innovative and effective ways to expand the skills and abilities of Islanders, and to place even greater emphasis on our commitment to education.

We are proud of the accomplishments, reputation, and significant contribution to the economy of our two public post-secondary institutions, Holland College and the University of Prince Edward Island. My Minister of Education will work with these institutions to develop a new multi-year funding plan to enable those institutions to plan for a promising future.

*“My Government is committed to working with employers to identify labour force shortages, and to put in place programs and financial incentives to target areas of anticipated shortage.”*

While anticipated labour force shortages present challenges for our province, they also open up a wealth of opportunity for the many young Islanders preparing to enter the work force, as well as adult Islanders who wish to retrain for new occupations and professions.

My Government is committed to working with employers to identify labour force shortages, and to put in place programs and financial incentives to target areas of anticipated shortage. Our competitiveness as a province depends on our ability to meet our present and future labour force challenges.

We know that a skilled workforce is essential for the continued economic development of our province. With the number of apprentices increasing, these apprentices will need in-school training. My Government will be examining options to enhance the future of our vocational and trades training capacity.

## *Good Health Through Quality Care*

**M**y Government understands that the most important determinant of a quality of life is our ability to access quality health and social services.

Our health is our most important resource, and My Government is committed to helping Islanders stay healthy, to improving health services, and to improving accountability to the public by regularly monitoring and reporting our progress in health.

Recently, My Government released a landmark report on the health of Islanders. The report reaffirmed the results of other studies that show Islanders are very satisfied with the quality of our health services and their access to them. It also reaffirmed the need for comprehensive strategies to address our high rates of chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, many of which can be prevented or reduced with the necessary knowledge, skills, and supports.

To this end, My Government will implement several strategies in the coming year to prevent and reduce chronic disease in our province.

*My Government understands that the most important determinant of a quality of life is our ability to access quality health and social services.*

In partnership with Island communities, we will implement a provincial Healthy Living Strategy to encourage Islanders to make healthy lifestyle choices, and to assist them in making good health habits part of their daily lives. The Healthy Living Strategy will aim to improve our results in three key areas: healthy eating, physical activity, and tobacco reduction.

In addition to promoting healthy lifestyle choices, we will establish mechanisms across the province to co-ordinate the work of health professionals, individuals, and communities to help Islanders prevent, reduce, and manage chronic disease.

We will work with our community partners to develop Prince Edward Island's first Cancer Control Strategy, modeled on the National Cancer Control Strategy.

Recognizing that the incidence of chronic disease, such as Type 2 diabetes, increases as our population ages, My Government will continue to increase investments in diabetes education and disease management.

Finally, we will bring our province a major step forward in the fight against chronic disease by introducing and passing the *Smoke-Free Public Places Act* this fall that will ensure smoke-free public places in Prince Edward Island.

### ***Continuing Our Children's Agenda***

Good health and well-being throughout the lifespan is determined to a large extent in the early years. To this end, several initiatives will be implemented as part of our Healthy Child Development Strategy to improve outcomes for children in health, behavioural and emotional development, and readiness to learn.

My Government will make major new investments in screening and assessment services for children from birth to three years of age, and their parents, through an expansion of the Best Start Program. This province-wide early intervention initiative is designed to identify potential risk factors for abuse and neglect, enhance parenting capacity, and improve quality of life.

Our new Partnerships for Children initiative will support a community development approach to caring for children, by providing funding to

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strengthen Children's Action Networks which work to improve child outcomes in our province.

During the coming year, My Government will undertake a further enhancement of preschool early intervention services for children with autism by hiring new staff with expertise in behaviour-intervention programming and increase our capacity to provide services to support these children and their families.

The protection and care of children and the support of families is a significant obligation which is taken very seriously by My Government. The health and well-being of children is a precious trust of parents, families, communities, and government. Our first objective as a society should always be to keep our children safe and secure. However, when they do need protection, we must be able to respond effectively, respectfully, and lawfully.

This year, we will continue the evolution of the new *Child Protection Act* by introducing amendments to strengthen the new act, and put in place new legal provisions that will enable children to receive appropriate care more quickly.

*"We will continue to support the recruitment and retention of health professionals."*

### ***Facilities and Tools to Do the Job***

My Government recognizes the need for continued investments in health facilities and technology. This coming year we will open a new \$50 million hospital in Summerside, and build an expansion to the Community Hospital in O'Leary.

New MRI services will become operational for the first time at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, as well as new Linear Accelerator services at the PEI Cancer Treatment Centre.

My Government will continue to establish family health centres throughout the province where salaried family physicians work collaboratively in teams with other health professionals. Other new primary care initiatives will support improved access to services.

We will continue to support the recruitment and retention of health professionals.



My Government is concerned about rising demand for mental health services and the increasing toll that mental illness is placing on Island families. To this end, we will invest in a significant expansion of mental health prevention, early intervention, and treatment services in all regions of the province. These investments will include in-home supports for families of children with mental health problems, and increased supports for family members of persons suffering from serious and persistent mental illness.

We will work with the Acadian Francophone community to increase access to French language health and social services.

## *Putting People and Their Communities First*

**G**ood jobs and prosperous communities ensure an enhanced quality of life.

At the very heart of our province are our communities, both rural and urban. By partnering with communities, we not only bring long-term sustainability to areas, but we improve the quality of life of those who live and work in these areas.

My Government clearly recognizes the wealth of talent across this province and the willingness of Islanders to work together for the good of the community.

We have attempted to foster a relationship with Island communities so that we can move forward together. We believe that community-driven initiatives are the most successful, and My Government firmly believes that as each community succeeds it enhances our entire province.

The Community Development Bureau continues to be a success story. Last year, My Government supported 39 Island community projects and remains

*“Good jobs and prosperous communities ensure an enhanced quality of life.”*

committed to building stronger communities by partnering with people and their communities. This program will be expanded so that more communities can access opportunity for support and advancement.

Non-profit and volunteer organizations continue to provide leadership to community development initiatives in our province. Support will be extended to these organizations through the provision of subsidized labour which will put needed resources toward projects, while creating employment opportunities in Island communities.

Last year we honoured our volunteers through celebrations which marked the United Nations International Year of Volunteers. My Government will continue that acknowledgment by establishing a recognition program for those Islanders who devote time to worthwhile community initiatives and charities.

My Government recognizes the importance of sport and active living to our communities and to our citizens. Investments in sports and recreation are important components of ensuring a quality of life and reducing long-term health care costs. Accordingly, we have worked with partners in our provincial sports system to develop a sports strategy for Prince Edward Island. My Government will be responding to this strategy by ensuring government action is consistent with the needs and aspirations of the many Islanders who are committed to advancing our communities through sport and recreation.

The older generation continues to make a meaningful contribution to our province and our communities. We will continue the important work of the Seniors' Advisory Council to provide input on issues relevant to Island seniors such as public transportation, a renewed home repair program, as well as health and lifestyle matters.

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## *Employment Growth and Opportunity*

In order for communities to truly succeed, Islanders require assurance that meaningful job opportunities will be available.

My Government is committed to providing support so that job creation can occur in every region of Prince Edward Island.

The location of Help Desk Now in Bloomfield will result in approximately 100 jobs being added to the West Prince region. On-line Support has located a call centre in Montague which will employ approximately 120 Islanders in that vibrant eastern community.

My Government continues to carry out its economic development plan for Prince Edward Island by "Bridging Tradition With Technology."

As a result, CO-OP Atlantic will be locating a new beef processing plant in our province, providing not only new employment opportunities, but also an opportunity for our agricultural community to further expand and diversify. Additionally, My Government funded and helped the communities of Cardigan, Kensington, and O'Leary establish rural IT centres which will serve as incubators to foster business opportunities for Islanders in this dynamic sector.

More will be done.

To further augment the progress made within our communities in the research and development sector, a Research and Innovation Crown Corporation will be established to aid in the commercialization of the products of research and to assist with innovation.

Access to capital remains a pressing issue for small business. To assist Island business in sourcing its capital needs, the Ministry of Development and Technology will aggressively market a new Provincial Nominee Program to potential immigrants. The objective of this program will be to make available investment capital to new and existing Island businesses.

*"My Government is committed to providing support so that job creation can occur in every region of Prince Edward Island."*

While our employment numbers steadily improve, some areas of our province, typically at the geographic extremities, continue to experience above-average rates of unemployment. To address this challenge, a commitment will be made to target business and investment opportunities for these areas so that Islanders can easily access meaningful job opportunities no matter where they live in Prince Edward Island.

Governments do not lead economic development, they partner with communities and individuals to advance opportunity.

To ensure that government continues to offer relevant partnerships to business and entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Development and Technology will initiate an enhanced and integrated Small Business Support Program that will ensure the vitality of this important sector and its contribution to the provincial economy.

Our tourism industry continues to be a significant contributor to our economy. This past season saw yet another increase in tourism revenue which came to our shores. Our Government will continue to work in partnership with the tourism industry to ensure that our marketing plan has the resources to do the job and continues to attract new markets and retain existing ones.

There is an increasing need for the tourism industry to examine ways in which it can extend the shoulder season and establish an improved winter tourism product so that our tourism sector can continue to grow and prosper. To that end, My Government will work with industry and its representatives to augment our current product by securing our place as a destination of choice for the travelling public during the fall, winter, and spring tourism seasons.

Reliable transportation linkages between communities are vital ingredients to advancing our province. Business needs to move its goods and services throughout Prince Edward Island and to other provinces seamlessly. The travelling public expects a road network which is safe and efficient. My Government will continue to make upgrades and improvements and solicit the partnership of the Government of Canada in further modernizing Prince Edward Island's roads and highways.

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*“Reliable transportation linkages between communities are vital ingredients to advancing our province.”*

*Madame Speaker, Honourable Members ...*

You will be asked to consider a number of legislative proposals which, if enacted, will serve to position our province and our people to better access an enhanced quality of life.

As representatives of the hopes and aspirations of this great province, Islanders have placed a tremendous trust in your ability to carry out that duty. May future generations look back at the work of this Assembly and appreciate your commitment to strengthening Prince Edward Island and enhancing the quality of life for her people.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.