

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

SPEECH FROM
THE **THRONE**



Delivered by
The Honourable Frank Lewis
Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island

At the Opening of the Fifth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island

November 12, 2014
at 2:00 p.m.

As Her Majesty's representative on Prince Edward Island, it is my duty and time-honoured privilege to present this Speech from the Throne, reporting on progress already made, and outlining the priorities and agenda that will guide our Island Government in the years ahead.

2014

This year marked the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference. The celebrations reminded us of our shared history as Canadians – and most especially, the role of the Island in shaping a modern nation that is the envy of much of the world.

Across Prince Edward Island, thousands of Islanders planned, carried out, and took part in events to highlight our shared pride in our province. And thousands more from across Canada and around the world joined us – and became witness to our accomplishments as a province, and as a nation.

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of the start to the First World War – and the 75th anniversary of the Second World War. During this year, we remember the sacrifices of those men and women who served their country in time of war.

Canadians have always gone beyond the call of duty to bring hope where there was despair, justice where there was chaos, freedom where there was oppression and peace where there was violence. These contributions have played a deep and abiding role in the shaping of our nation. And once again, I was moved by the attendance of so many Islanders at Remembrance Day events across our Island.

We are also mindful of the attacks on members of the Canadian Forces here at home – and our thoughts and prayers remain with all those who protect us.

The celebrations reminded us of the role of the Island in shaping a modern nation that is the envy of much of the world.

TODAY

There is no question that Islanders have a deep attachment to our home province – and this is one of our greatest strengths. Given the opportunity, many Islanders would choose to stay in Prince Edward Island to build their future – and many others would want to return.

But throughout our Maritimes region, we face forces of change which are challenging our ability to grow and prosper, and which are causing population declines. Since 2011, the population of our sister provinces has fallen by several thousand.

We were able to stand against this trend, growing our population by over 2,200 over the same period but our challenges will continue. Across our region, our youth and young families are being drawn to opportunities elsewhere and our number of seniors will grow rapidly in the coming years. Working within continued fiscal constraints, we must rise to the challenges of change in our population, our economy, and our place within the Canadian nation.

Since My Government came to office, Islanders have achieved outstanding progress on many fronts. And the Island has achieved this progress despite regional trends.

Since 2007, our population has grown by over 8,500 Islanders – rising from less than 138,000 to over 146,000. Looking forward, the latest projections call for PEI's population to grow by 19 per cent over the next two decades similar to the national rate, while the rest of the region holds steady.

The reasons for these positive trends are clear and wide-ranging. Our long-established economic engines of agriculture, fisheries, and tourism have all posted record highs with the highest farm receipts ever, the highest lobster landings ever, and the highest tourism visitation in over a decade.

Our industries in the areas of information technology, bioscience, and aerospace are growing rapidly and driving record levels of investment, exports and employment.

Our long-established economic engines of agriculture, fisheries, and tourism have all posted record highs with the highest farm receipts ever, the highest lobster landings ever, and the highest tourism visitation in over a decade.

Energy from wind is playing a greater role here when compared to other provinces. It is providing secure, sustainable, affordable, made-in-PEI electricity for our homes and businesses.

These gains have created new opportunities and prosperity for Islanders. Since 2007, our employment growth has been outpaced only by Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Those opportunities have enabled Islanders to stay, or to return and have attracted new Canadians to our province.

FORWARD

Over the next year, My Government will build on those strengths to meet the new and changing challenges facing our province by concentrating its efforts on four major areas:

- We will maintain our commitment to offer children, youth, and families the best possible future through high quality early childhood and education programs.
- We will intensify our efforts to develop more and better job opportunities and to match and train our youth and our workers for those opportunities.
- We will support our industries and communities to work in partnership to ensure a healthy environment and to use our land and water resources in a sustainable way.
- We will provide integrated social supports and high quality, accessible health care to our youth, families and seniors.

Our best investment is in Islanders.

First, My Government will continue to invest in people in a way that maximizes employment opportunities and a diverse and healthy economy.

Second, Government will continue its longstanding commitment to support Islanders of all ages. This means maintaining the best possible social supports for young families and those who have enjoyed long and productive lives in our province.

My Government will continue to invest in people in a way that maximizes employment opportunities and a diverse and healthy economy.

Together, these two goals will offer all Islanders a better opportunity to pursue a secure and prosperous future here at home.

EDUCATING ISLANDERS TO EXCEL IN A CHANGING WORLD

From the beginning, My Government has worked collaboratively with teachers to give Island children the best possible start to their future by strengthening our education system and our supports to parents. This is a long-term project and the benefits will be felt for generations to come.

Our assessments have been showing strong improvement in student achievement over time and, last month, national data from the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program on the performance of our 13-year-olds in literacy, math, and science verified the progress that our students have made.

Our Island students showed more improvement than any other province in Canada, moving from last place to a middle ranking in all three domains, and exceeding the Canadian average on science outcomes.

As a result, thousands of young Islanders now have a stronger foundation to build a lifetime of learning and productive, skilled work.

We remain committed to building on this progress, preparing our children and youth as fully as possible for their future in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

Our widely acclaimed early learning and child care system is providing our youngest Islanders with high quality early learning experiences in an educational and caring environment - building the base for a happy and productive life.

In 2011, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) ranked PEI's new early learning and child care system second in Canada, behind only Quebec. Since then, our system has been further enhanced through continued education and training of our early childhood educators and ongoing support to the implementation of our provincial early learning curriculum framework. Earlier today, OISE released its Early Childhood Education 2014 Report, increasing PEI's rating and moving it to a first place tie with Quebec.

Our Island students showed more improvement than any other province in Canada.

Since its introduction in 2010, our full-day kindergarten program has provided over five thousand children a strong start in school.

My Government recognizes that ultimately, parents are their children's most important teacher and it is committed to providing not only a high quality early childhood system but also supports to parents.

Some of our young families face significant life challenges. For many years, the Best Start Program by CHANCES Family Centre has provided in-home visiting supports to vulnerable infants and families, with over 500 families assisted to date. My Government has increased funding to restore services for children aged 24 to 36 months and over the next five years, we will provide additional funding of over \$300,000 to CHANCES for a new Family Literacy Initiative, including in-home support, books and materials, and group learning experiences.

More broadly, all families face the pressures of parenting in our complex and rapidly changing society. In the coming year, My Government will introduce a new program to help families meet these challenges. The Positive Parenting Program, or Triple P, has a worldwide track record of success in helping parents to raise happier, healthier children, to build strong family relationships and to improve their own wellbeing.

These early childhood supports are helping our children to enter the school system more ready to learn. Over the past several years, our literacy investments and student learning assessments in elementary and intermediate schools have helped us to understand where we need to target our supports and refine our approaches to make a difference. With steady improvement in our reading and math results, our school system will increase its emphasis on improving writing outcomes.

In the coming year, My Government will also extend this proven approach to the senior high school level. A Grade 11 math assessment will be introduced to continue and extend the progress that has been achieved up to Grade 9.

Currently, a high school examination in literacy is being developed, with a satisfactory outcome required to graduate from Grade 12. Students not initially meeting this requirement will receive further learning support.

These assessments will establish clear standards, and provide insights on how to improve our high school curriculum and teaching approaches as we have done in the earlier grades.

All families face the pressures of parenting in our complex and rapidly changing society. In the coming year, My Government will introduce a new program to help families meet these challenges.

To assist school administrators in supporting teachers in the areas of literacy and numeracy and to guide them to lead effective schools, a PEI Principal's Leadership Program has been developed in collaboration with UPEI and will be offered to school administrators and aspiring leaders.

As the world changes, it is vital for Prince Edward Island to take advantage of new tools to help young Islanders. Information technology offers a world of learning opportunities to students in every school regardless of size and location. Over the past several years, My Government has invested in new equipment and works continuously to upgrade system speed and access.

Building on these measures, My Government is undertaking wide-ranging action to enable Island students to fully benefit from information technology through partnerships with:

- Eastlink, we are investing \$8 million to upgrade every school in Prince Edward Island to equivalent Internet standards; and
- IBM, we are developing a five-year strategic technology plan to assist teaching and critical thinking in support of our learning and student achievement goals.

To enable these measures to provide their greatest benefit, My Government is:

- Planning to install wireless Internet access in every school in PEI over the next five years; and
- Providing over 7,000 new computers to the school system by 2016-17.

Within two years, these initiatives will benefit all of our 20,000 students in 1,100 classrooms across the Island.

My Government is mindful that some students face additional challenges in their lives and learning, and can benefit from additional or personalized supports.

My Government is planning to install wireless Internet access in every school in PEI over the next five years; and providing over 7,000 new computers to the school system by 2016-17.

Over the past year, work has been underway to develop a pilot project to provide Integrated Service Delivery to students with multiple challenges. The project creates a multidisciplinary service team with members from various government services including mental health, child protection, justice, and education. Strong community linkages have been put in place to support youth served by the team, including partnerships with the Harbourside Teen Clinic, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Women's Network.

Over the coming year, this approach will be implemented in Three Oaks High School in Summerside. As this new initiative develops, it will be refined and expanded throughout the school family and the education system to create a more student-centered approach throughout the province.

NEW ACCESS TO BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Education has been a priority for My Government not only in the early years and the school system, but at the post-secondary level. Our post-secondary programs have expanded, our George Coles Bursary and other awards are increasing student access to these programs, and our university tuition is the most affordable in the Maritimes.

To ensure that our post-secondary institutions can continue their vital role into the future, their fiscal sustainability must be assured, and pensions play a major role in this. My Government has made progress toward securing its pensions for the future, and we call upon our publicly funded institutions to follow a similar course and place priority on this area.

Beginning in January, My Government will fund a new partnership of UPEI, Holland College, and Collège Acadie to offer a suite of courses at Summerside's Waterfront Campus. Courses will be offered in English and French during the day, evening, and weekends to provide learners with post-secondary credits that they can apply to a program of their choice.

High quality accessible education is essential for our youth and they must be able to put that education to work – moving quickly into highly skilled jobs in our growing sectors.

My Government is funding a new partnership of UPEI, Holland College, and Collège d'Acadie to offer a suite of courses at Summerside's Waterfront Campus.

Over the next five years, \$3 million will be invested to connect 80 students a year to skilled employment in the private sector after they graduate.

To promote this, My Government, in partnership with the Federal Government, has developed an integrated suite of youth employment programs that connect youth to opportunities both during and after their studies.

The Jobs for Youth Program provides over 300 placements a year throughout the Island to help high school and post-secondary students gain work experience. This program will be strengthened in the coming year with a specific emphasis on enhancing the skills of those preparing for the workforce.

The Post-Secondary Program assists university students in second and third year with summertime work placements in industry to build their skills and their relationships with potential employers. Last summer, 90 students were placed and next summer, this number will grow to 100 placements.

This year, a new Career Prep Program is being launched for students in their final year of studies. Over the next five years, \$3 million will be invested to connect 80 students a year to skilled employment in the private sector after they graduate.

These programs will augment the Graduate Mentorship Program established in 2012, which has already helped over 200 post-secondary graduates start their careers in PEI. My Government will continue this program in the coming year, providing 60 new opportunities to our youth who have already completed their post-secondary studies.

Furthermore, My Government is working to help more young apprentices gain journeyman status. Right now, only 42 per cent of those who begin apprenticeship programs complete their training. According to industry, interprovincial barriers are keeping our apprenticeship programs from reaching their full potential.

In response, My Government is working with other Atlantic Provinces, and recently signed a four-province agreement to harmonize ten key trades – ensuring consistent standards, testing and administration across our region. We will continue to provide financial support to apprentices, with almost 400 being assisted this year.

These programs will give our youth a chance, and a choice, to make their lives here at home and bring their skills and energy to help grow our private sector.

To further develop opportunities for Islanders, the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning will begin a consultation process in the coming months with our industries on how My Government can best contribute to their success and competitiveness.

This consultation will enable government to tailor its programs and business supports to fit the needs of our increasingly diverse economy and to ensure that Island workers of all ages can develop and apply their skills to their full potential.

Skills PEI will continue to offer strong support to workers to build their skills, with assistance for learning both in the classroom and the workplace. Last year, over 30 Island employers were assisted to provide workplace training, enabling over 400 Islanders to gain new job skills and credentials.

In August, My Government signed the Canada-PEI Job Fund Agreement, providing \$12 million over six years to further support industry-driven training to develop needed skills, and employment services and supports. Under the Jobs Grant Program, employers will select workers for training, commit to a job at the end of training, and contribute up to one third of the total cost. Funding will support tuition and related costs of training by community colleges and other learning providers, in the classroom, workplace, or online. With over \$5 million in funding over its duration, this component will assist at least 500 workers to gain needed skills and a more secure future.

My Government is also strengthening its supports to entrepreneurs, both established and emerging. The Entrepreneur Loan Program has been increased from \$25,000 to \$100,000. It is delivered directly by Finance PEI rather than through a loan guarantee to a bank. Ten new and emerging businesses have already been assisted since this change began nine months ago.

As well, My Government is expanding its supports for new and young entrepreneurs. LaunchPad PEI provides incubator space and business assistance for new and young companies to establish, innovate and grow. Locations recently expanded beyond Charlottetown and Summerside to include Montague. Under the new Ignition Program, entrepreneurs compete for up to \$25,000 in seed capital grants for startups and new ventures, pitching their concepts in writing and then to an evaluation committee. Launched this past summer, Ignition saw a strong response, with over forty start-up firms bringing their business ideas forward.

Funding will support tuition and related costs of training by community colleges and other learning providers, in the classroom, workplace, or online. With over \$5 million in funding over its duration, this component will assist at least 500 workers to gain needed skills and a more secure future.

My Government will continue to support Island businesses and to draw new investment to Prince Edward Island to continue to create new opportunities for our youth and better opportunities for our existing workforce across the full range of industry sectors.

The aerospace and engineering sector continues to grow strongly throughout PEI. By last year, it had reached 900 jobs, ranked as our third largest exporter and 2014 has been another strong year.

Summerside has gained 74 new jobs at Vector Aerospace, while Charlottetown will see over 80 new jobs at Portsmouth Atlantic, Three Points Aviation, and Action Aero.

Aspin Kemp has relocated its head office and 25 jobs from Ontario to Montague and recently won an \$80 million contract to supply General Electric with electrical components for drilling ships, expected to bring a further 50 trades and professional jobs to the community. In addition, Atlantic Advanced Power Technologies is adding 30 jobs in Poole's Corner over the next three years.

MacDougall Steel Erectors is expanding its production capacity in Borden-Carleton to meet growing demand for its products and to enable bidding on larger projects in Western Canada. The expansion will create 40 jobs, and includes a state of the art training facility.

The information technology and professional services sectors continue to create new opportunities. Our existing firms have added over 100 jobs this year and growth will continue in the coming year with the recently announced expansion of Invesco and the opening of two new firms, Carta Worldwide and Buchanan Technologies, at the Atlantic Technology Centre.

The bioscience sector is growing rapidly, with revenues more than doubling since 2006 and exports up by over 150 per cent. With over 1,000 mostly highly skilled, high wage jobs in the sector, PEI now leads the country in the proportion of biology and animal health scientists and technical personnel in its workforce. Further growth of over 100 jobs is taking place in both Charlottetown and in rural communities including Victoria, Souris, and Montague.

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These and other gains in skilled employment opportunities across the Island are moving PEI closer to My Government's goals of 75,000 jobs by 2016 and 2,000 more jobs in our emerging sectors of bioscience, aerospace, information technology and professional services.

These gains are fuelling strong growth in exports. From January to August, our exports grew by over 19 per cent compared to the same period last year – almost double the national rate. These gains translate directly into wealth for our province and indirectly into revenues to sustain our health and social programs.

My Government recognizes the particular importance of the food industry in Prince Edward Island. Our three largest industries – agriculture, fisheries, and tourism – have been shaped by the production and trade of food products.

Global demand for food is forecast to grow strongly over the next two decades. In response, the international food industry is undergoing fundamental and rapid change. To succeed in this changing market, Prince Edward Island must adapt its products, marketing approaches, and trade relationships.

To make the best of these opportunities, My Government is working to develop a Food Innovation Strategy that would bring together our strengths and more closely link our rural and urban areas in a single integrated and competitive food value chain.

A new industry partnership is taking the lead in this work. The AgriAlliance and the Culinary Alliance are joining forces to create strategies to maximize the value added to food produced in Prince Edward Island to increase the success of producers, processors, and ultimately the provincial economy, and to help the tourism industry grow and benefit.

This work is built on strong growth and diversification across the agriculture industry. This past year saw record production of many crops, including blueberries, grains and oilseeds and the expansion and modernization of food processing operations throughout the province.

From January to August, our exports grew by over 19 per cent compared to the same period last year – almost double the national rate. These gains translate directly into wealth for our province and indirectly into revenues to sustain our health and social programs.

Up to \$2 million will be available to expand feeder cattle inventory, and up to \$3.3 million will be available to create a supply of lean beef to Atlantic Beef Products for processing into a new lean hamburger product for PEI.

A new certified Island beef brand has been created to increase sales and profits. To further boost beef production and profitability, My Government is introducing a new program to finance the expansion of cattle on farms. Up to \$2 million will be available to expand feeder cattle inventory, and up to \$3.3 million will be available to create a supply of lean beef to Atlantic Beef Products for processing into a new lean hamburger product for PEI.

To ensure that our youth can continue the business of family farming into the future, My Government will take action in the coming year to introduce a Farmland Financing Program. The program is based on industry advice on how best to help new entrants to farming, and will provide access to up to 100 per cent loan financing for new farmers to acquire land, up to a defined acreage limit.

To expand and diversify markets for lobster, My Government will support further expansion of live holding facilities. As well, we will introduce enabling legislation, should the industry choose to proceed with a marketing levy to increase the resources available to promote higher sales and better prices.

To further support the success of the lobster fishery, My Government will work with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Prince Edward Island Fishermen's Association to create a Prince Edward Island lobster brand aimed at significantly expanding international markets.

To support fishers facing economic hardship, My Government will continue the Low Interest Loan Program for an additional year.

To address the workforce challenges facing the sector, My Government will urge the Federal Government to be flexible regarding the temporary foreign worker program. As well, we will support increased automation of processing plants to make them more productive and to provide high quality employment opportunities.

Our tourism sector is founded not only on our growing reputation as a food destination and the beauty of our working landscape, but also our rich culture and heritage.

Those strengths are finding vibrant expression throughout this celebration year of 2014 marking the 150th anniversary of the historic Charlottetown Conference which is drawing thousands of visitors across the province.

Many tourism operators are reporting their best year ever – benefiting from the range and quality of events and festivals, visitor experiences and visitor services. Those strengths, and the hospitality and friendliness of Islanders, have helped to raise the profile of the Island across Canada and beyond – holding promise for sustained growth in coming years.

The year also marked the full connection of the province’s portion of the Trans Canada Trail, known as the Confederation Trail. The Trail is Prince Edward Island’s premiere venue for walking, running and cycling – providing Islanders and visitors alike with a safe, natural way to enjoy the pristine beauty of Prince Edward Island.

The PEI 2014 Fund assisted communities from tip to tip of the Island to celebrate our heritage and culture through music and theatre, food and festivals, art and crafts, gardens and nature, conferences and commemoration, sporting events and more. Over 160 projects, large and small, brought together Islanders and Canadians of all ages and all walks of life in diverse and vibrant events – creating a lasting legacy of pride and achievement.

My Government recognizes that our culture and heritage define our identity as Islanders and are at the heart of our way of life, our attachment to home, and pride in our province. Building on the legacy of 2014, My Government will undertake consultations in the coming year to develop a new ten-year strategy for cultural development.

As the 2014 celebrations approach the end of a successful year, work is underway to recognize the 250th anniversary of Samuel Holland’s survey of Prince Edward Island in 1765. The original map will return to PEI from London, and will be on display throughout the year. A series of commemorative events will mark the impact of the survey on our landscape, communities, and Island identity.

Islanders and Canadians are also looking forward to 2017, marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of this country. My Government is exploring options to establish a Provincial Museum as a legacy project of Canada’s Sesquicentennial, and will seek the participation of the Federal Government in this endeavour.

My Government recognizes that infrastructure plays a key role in keeping our communities and our province strong.

Building on the legacy of 2014, My Government will undertake consultations in the coming year to develop a new ten-year strategy for cultural development.

Through the Island Community Fund, more than 100 communities have been supported to implement infrastructure projects creating new economic opportunities while enhancing safety, recreational opportunities, health and quality of life in rural communities.

Through the Island Community Fund, more than 100 communities have been supported to implement infrastructure projects which have created new economic opportunities while enhancing safety, recreational opportunities, health and quality of life in rural communities. My Government is exploring options to build on the success of the Island Community Fund and to further support Island communities.

Work has begun to relocate the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal's Queens County depot from its downtown location to a more accessible and efficient site. This will provide better service, and open up the existing property for urban renewal projects.

My Government will continue to invest in infrastructure projects through the New Building Canada Fund. This fund, together with the Federal Gas Tax Fund for municipalities will provide approximately \$440 million in dedicated federal funding to Prince Edward Island over the next ten years. This year, \$5.7 million has been committed to support the replacement of the Souris Bridge, as well as three improvement projects to the National Highway System in Prince Edward Island.

My Government's annual Capital Budget provides for a wide range of investments in our roads and bridges, hospitals, manors and schools, and other needed public infrastructure while creating economic activity and jobs. Our 2015 Capital Budget will be introduced during this sitting of the Legislature for consideration.

SAFEGUARDING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Our environment has an impact on the quality of life and health of every Islander. More than in any other province, our economic success is founded on healthy soils, clear air and clean water, healthy and diverse ecosystems, and the beauty of our landscape.

We are fortunate to have these attributes in such rich measure but as a result, our land resource is in demand as a place to live, visit, and farm. If we are to protect our environmental strengths and at the same time preserve the social fabric of our densely settled and extensively farmed rural communities, we must work in partnership.

Our farmers depend on the land, and they strive to farm it sustainably in the context of a fiercely competitive global agricultural industry. All Islanders benefit from a successful and sustainable agricultural industry – we are in this together.

This recognition was at the heart of a successful partnership between farmers and the local watershed group to protect Barclay Brook’s water and fish habitat. Actions include voluntary producer codes of practice to decrease pesticide usage, soil conservation measures including terraces, farmable berms, grassed waterways, wetland construction, removal of land from production and education in sustainable land management.

My Government, in cooperation with the private sector, assisted by purchasing parcels of vulnerable land in the Barclay Brook area to further prevent agricultural runoff into streams. The land will be managed by the local watershed group.

Such partnerships between farmers and watershed groups are vital to sustainable growth and the social fabric of our communities. My Government will work with other communities to adopt and adapt the collaborative model used to safeguard Barclay Brook. As an initial step, and as committed in last November’s Speech from the Throne, a model watershed project will be established for Carruther’s Brook in the Mill River watershed, under the leadership of Trout Unlimited, Prince County Chapter.

Action at the community level must be complemented by a clear and coherent regulatory regime governing access to and impact on our soils, our water and our air administered in an open, respectful and efficient way.

To this end, the work of Horace Carver is already guiding My Government in its work to renew the *Lands Protection Act* that governs land ownership in our province. To further provide a clear and consistent regulatory framework for the agricultural industry, My Government will review the *Agricultural Crop Rotation Act*. We will also work with the industry to develop an Agricultural Code of Practice.

With regard to environmental oversight, My Government will increase its emphasis on approaches that support the partnerships taking hold in the community and that contribute to our shared goals of maintaining or restoring soil health and water quality.

My Government will review the Agricultural Crop Rotation Act. We will also work with the industry to develop an Agricultural Code of Practice.

To this end, My Government will establish an Environmental Justice Unit which will bring a restorative approach to regulatory compliance. We will examine options to take an Alternative Measures approach to enforcement and to direct fine proceeds to a new Environmental Damages Fund.

As part of its Addressing Red Tape initiative, My Government will invite the agricultural industry to take part in a sector roundtable in 2015 to identify further measures to improve administrative and regulatory processes.

Water matters to every Islander and our agricultural industry needs clarity regarding its access to our water resource. To ensure both water quality and water quantity for the long term, My Government will undertake a thorough and careful process to develop a *Water Act* for our province beginning with a public consultation process in the coming months, and cross jurisdictional analysis.

The proposed *Water Act* will consolidate water-related legislation, regulate the use of surface and groundwater, allocate water in times of scarcity, protect streams, rivers and related aquatic environments, and ensure water quality and quantity. Our goal is to regulate water use in a manner that respects human needs while safeguarding the environment.

In the coming year, My Government will work to develop comprehensive land use policies for our province, guided by the Statements of Provincial Interest recommended by the Task Force on Land Use.

Those Statements affirm that, with regard to our environment, it is in the province's interest to protect the quality and quantity of our water, our natural areas, and our forests, to maintain and improve our soil quality and to protect and manage our coastal areas.

With regard to our economy, the Statements highlight that it is in the province's interest to protect our agricultural land base, marine environment and industries, rural character and viewsapes, and to use existing infrastructure efficiently before expanding or rebuilding.

My Government will work to develop comprehensive land use policies for our province, guided by the Statements of Provincial Interest recommended by the Task Force on Land Use.

Regarding our people, the Statements call for us to ensure that people have the opportunity to engage in decisions that affect their quality of life and to encourage safe, healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

The health of our land and of our water is intertwined in Prince Edward Island and by developing comprehensive land use policies, My Government will ensure that both are protected.

Protection of natural habitats is key to preserving Prince Edward Island's environmental heritage. Steady progress is being made in partnership with community groups and Island landowners, with special emphasis on sensitive areas such as wetlands, off-shore islands, coastal cliffs, sand dunes and forested lands. This year, we are reaching the halfway mark toward our goal of protecting seven per cent of our land base – with almost 20,000 hectares designated under the *Natural Areas Protection Act* (NAPA) and in provincial parks and wildlife management areas. During the past year, a further 274 hectares in 16 properties across PEI were protected under NAPA, including areas of the Conway Sand Hills and DesRoches Pond.

Within our urban communities, the use of cosmetic pesticides is a concern for many residents. At present, municipalities do not have the jurisdiction to implement and enforce by-laws with respect to pesticides. In this legislative session, My Government will introduce legislative amendments to provide municipalities with the jurisdiction to make decisions about the use of cosmetic pesticides within their boundaries that reflect the wishes of their residents.

My Government will amend regulations under the *Pesticides Control Act* to allow for the use of more organic products to control weeds, insects and diseases.

HEALTH CARE THAT STARTS WITH PEOPLE

My Government continuously works to provide better access to better health care for all Islanders.

Assistance is being provided with the cost of insulin pump therapy for children and youth under the age of 19 who are living with type 1 diabetes.

A new out-of-province travel support program is assisting Islanders to travel to and from four cities in the Maritimes for approved health care services.

This year, we are reaching the halfway mark toward our goal of protecting seven per cent of our land base – with almost 20,000 hectares designated under the Natural Areas Protection Act (NAPA) and in provincial parks and wildlife management areas.

A new palliative care centre will soon be completed. It will provide ten beds and new day programs to increase access by Islanders and their families to compassionate, supportive end-of-life care and support.

Enhancements to our drug programs include nine new medications to assist Islanders battling cancer, with five of these included in the High Cost Drug Program and the Catastrophic Drug Program, and four available through the Hospital Drug Program.

Pharmacists are now able to diagnose and treat minor ailments and to administer flu shots, providing high quality, convenient care to Islanders.

A new palliative care centre will soon be completed. It will provide ten beds and new day programs to increase access by Islanders and their families to compassionate, supportive end-of-life care and support.

The \$65-million manor replacement program has provided seniors and their families with 350 modernized beds in four new, comfortable facilities. Work is scheduled to commence in 2015 on the final two facilities in the program, in Montague and Tyne Valley.

Since 2007, more than 80 physicians have been recruited to the province and continue to practice here today. Access by Islanders to a family physician is above the national average, and My Government continues to work to ensure that Islanders have access to health care wherever they live.

Over the past three years, My Government has placed special emphasis on better meeting the needs of Islanders with mental health and addictions challenges. Those illnesses place an enormous burden of suffering on Islanders and their families and hold them back from reaching their full potential.

My Government has appointed a Chief Mental Health and Addictions Officer who is developing a long-term mental health and addictions strategy. Her work has already led to a number of measures that offer renewed hope for those suffering from mental health and addictions problems, along with their families.

In October, My Government announced that over \$9 million would be invested over the next three years to help Island children and youth and their families.

My Government's Strength Program for youth with addictions has helped many to achieve recovery and in the coming year, the Strength Program will be expanded, and relocated to a new residential Youth Recovery Center in Summerside. The Centre will provide 12 spaces to youth for up to 18 weeks of residential treatment and programming followed by up to 24 weeks of community-based aftercare programs.

A new 12-bed Youth Mental Health Unit will be opened in the next year, more than doubling in-patient capacity. The unit will offer youth-centred treatment and therapy and a day program to help youth transition back to their community following treatment.

A new support team will be established to provide treatment to children and youth with behavioural conditions including assessment, diagnosis, and therapies.

In addition to those measures, a further \$3.7 million is being invested over five years to increase and enhance services to children with complex health needs including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, orthoptics, autism assessments, and speech language therapies.

My Government will create a new therapeutic model of services for adults with mental health and addiction problems in the justice system. This model has been shown to be highly effective for those helped, and to reduce the rate of recidivism.

The safety of our communities and neighbourhoods is fundamental to our well-being and quality of life. In the coming months, My Government will work with justice and law enforcement authorities in interested communities to identify legislation and other measures to ensure greater safety and security throughout the Island.

My Government and community partners continue to work together through the Social Action Plan to explore ways and implement actions to help reduce poverty in our province.

My Government has committed a total of \$2.8 million over five years to increase food rates for those who are on social assistance. The first increase took place in September, and additional increases will happen in the coming years based on the Consumer Price Index for food. As a further step, My Government will work with the community to identify further actions to reduce food insecurity in the province.

These investments recognize that our children and youth are our future and that early intervention and care are key to their long-term health and wellbeing.

A new 12-bed Youth Mental Health Unit will be opened in the next year, more than doubling in-patient capacity. The unit will offer youth-centred treatment and therapy and a day program of treatment to help youth transition back to their community following treatment.

SENIORS

Looking ahead, My Government is mindful that our population of seniors will grow strongly over the next several years as it will across Canada.

This population shift will have far-reaching impacts on every aspect of our lives and governments must be ready to respond and adapt.

At the Council of the Federation meeting in Charlottetown this past August, Canada's Premiers made a commitment to launch a dialogue on aging. Under the leadership of Premier Robert Ghiz, a national Task Force will examine the impacts of an aging population and highlight work that provinces and territories are undertaking to address its issues.

Already, over 25,000 Islanders are aged 65 or over. In ten years, this will increase to 37,000 Islanders and in twenty years, to 47,000.

My Government recognizes that most seniors prefer to live in their homes as long as possible and that this is best for their health, communities and loved ones.

This year, under the Social Action Plan, My Government increased the lifetime funding available to all low and moderate income seniors to carry out basic repairs on their homes.

However, sometimes more significant renovations are needed to enable seniors with health challenges to continue living at home rather than in a care facility. To enable this, in the coming year, a new Seniors Home Care Renovation Program will be introduced, providing grants of up to \$5,000 to assist with home renovations that support eligible seniors to continue living in their homes safely and securely.

Although we must ensure that our seniors have the supports and care that they need, we must bear in mind that many seniors are living more years in good health than in the past.

Our seniors' wisdom, experience and skills are invaluable resources for our society and contribute immeasurably to our social fabric and our communities.

Over the next year, programs designed to encourage seniors to mentor and assist younger Islanders will be both strengthened and introduced.

In the coming year, a new Seniors Home Care Renovation Program will be introduced, providing grants of up to \$5,000 to assist with home renovations that support eligible seniors to continue living in their homes safely and securely.

OUR PUBLIC SERVICE

In My Government's first Speech from the Throne, it committed to modernizing the public service, enhancing service delivery, addressing gender issues and improving accountability. Further to that, work has begun to convert our existing website to tap the potential of technology to better serve Islanders – with quick and convenient access to the information and services they need.

The public service plays a vital role in the province. My Government recognizes the fundamental importance of meeting public expectations with respect to the conduct of public servants and how they understand, reflect and meet those expectations. The Public Service Commission is currently engaged in developing a set of beliefs and values that guide the goals and behaviours of public servants in the conduct of their duties and their relations with the public.

My Government came to office with a promise to eliminate the longstanding practice of firing government employees based upon perceived political affiliation. This promise was based not only upon a fundamental belief in the importance of respecting human rights, but on the desire to see taxpayer dollars go to support essential services as opposed to legal settlements. I am glad to report, Madame Speaker, that this promise has been kept: there has not been a single finding of political discrimination against this Government since it came to power.

CONCLUSION

This Speech from the Throne reaffirms My Government's commitment to focus on the key priorities: strengthening the education system to enable Islanders to achieve their full potential, growing jobs and the economy, protecting and enhancing the environment and providing high-quality accessible social supports and health care to Islanders.

Working in concert, these measures will lead to a stronger, more prosperous and confident province.

During this session, Members of the Legislative Assembly will be asked to consider a number of Government bills. Among these will be amendments to the *Lands Protection Act*.

This Speech from the Throne reaffirms My Government's commitment to focus on the key priorities: strengthening the education system to enable Islanders to achieve their full potential, growing jobs and the economy, protecting and enhancing the environment and providing high-quality accessible social supports and health care to Islanders.

Other Bills will include the:

- *Animal Welfare Act*
- *Municipal Statutes Amendment Act 2014*
- *Highway Traffic Act*
- *Victims of Workplace Injuries Day of Mourning Act.*

This will be the last session to be held in these historic chambers while Parks Canada carries out the restoration of Province House. Members can look forward to returning to this chamber when it is restored to its former grandeur and glory.

Madame Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, may Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.