

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 Third Session of the Sixty-second General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island

NOVEMBER 16, 2005
3 p.m.

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

I take great pleasure in welcoming you to this Third Session of the Sixty-second General Assembly.

The past year was a time of reflection and celebration in our province. In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, 2005 was designated as the Year of the Veteran. I am especially pleased to welcome a number of veterans as our distinguished guests on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. This is the first time in the history of this chamber where specially invited guests have been in attendance during the reading of the Speech from the Throne. We are honoured to have you with us today.

I was honoured to welcome Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, and His Excellency Jean-Daniel Lafond, on their first official visit to Prince Edward Island. Their Excellencies certainly enjoyed the opportunity to exchange ideas with Islanders from all walks of life.

The Council of the Federation Literacy Award was presented for the first time in Prince Edward Island to Dianne C. Smith of Charlottetown. This award was created by Canada's premiers to recognize the importance of literacy and the great contributions being made by individuals and organizations to literacy in each province.

Islanders are very proud of all the young men and women who represented Prince Edward Island at the Canada Summer Games. Our team demonstrated a commitment to excellence and sportsmanship. Jared Connaughton received special recognition as Prince Edward Island's first ever Canada Games double gold medal winner.

"I am especially pleased to welcome a number of veterans as our distinguished guests on the floor of the Legislative Assembly."

Another highlight was the Terry Fox Run across the Confederation Bridge marking the 25th anniversary of the Marathon of Hope which attracted over 13,000 participants.

The past year was also marked by many natural disasters around the world. The tragedies brought about by the tsunami, and by floods, earthquakes and hurricanes, remind us that we as citizens of the world have a responsibility to care for the earth and for one another. Islanders responded with caring and compassion to people affected by these disasters, in the same way they respond to Islanders in time of need.



Taking Charge of Our Future

A new legislative session provides a time to mark our progress, and describe the next steps forward. My Government has listened to Islanders, and responded.

My Government is unwavering in its commitment to strengthen the quality of life and standard of living of the people of Prince Edward Island. We recognize that the strength of our society rests on the health and well-being of our economy, our environment and our people.

As Prince Edward Islanders look to the future, My Government believes there are three important goals. We must nurture a robust and sustainable economy. We must protect and enhance our exceptional quality of life. And we must invest in our people, by enabling them to live healthy, productive and rewarding lives.

With the uncertainty of our times, My Government is committed to partnering with Islanders to take charge of our future.

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Investing in Health and Well-being of Islanders

My Government continues to make improvements to the health-care system in ways that respond to the priorities of Islanders.

My Government has reorganized the health and social services system so that programs and services can be delivered more effectively and efficiently. The role of community hospitals will be strengthened. Community hospitals and local leaders will continue to have an important role in the delivery of health services to Islanders.

The new Department of Health is designed to have an increased focus on front-line service delivery. Staff, physicians and volunteers from throughout the system, along with partners and community members, will have the opportunity to participate in the development of long-term strategic plans.

The creation of a new Department of Social Services and Seniors will provide My Government with an increased focus on the well-being of families, children, youth and seniors. Helping people take charge of their own future will be a top priority for My Government.

As we move forward, we must continue to find innovative ways of delivering services in the health-care system to ensure sustainability for future generations of Islanders.

A critical challenge for the future will be having skilled health-care professionals available to serve Islanders. My Government has worked hard to recruit doctors, nurses and other health professionals; and we continue to focus on ways to keep our system attractive and stimulating.

Team work will continue to be the driving force in achieving the successful delivery of programs and services to Islanders. Important lessons were learned in evaluating the participation of nurse practitioners, and My Government continues to support their role as key partners in health-care delivery.

"The new Department of Health is designed to have an increased focus on front-line service delivery."

"My Government has worked hard to recruit doctors, nurses and other health professionals; and we continue to focus on ways to keep our system attractive and stimulating."

Improved access to services in the health-care system is also an important priority. My Government is committed to beginning a dialogue with communities and stakeholders in West Prince on a single, state-of-the-art, health-care facility. This will be an important step toward streamlining and modernizing health-care delivery through innovation.

My Government wishes to emphasize its commitment to the redevelopment of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to ensure the needs of citizens of the province, physicians, staff and volunteers are met. The Queen Elizabeth is the primary referral hospital in the province and we will continue the process to ensure that it is a modern facility prepared to deliver quality health care to Islanders.

My Government has improved wait lists in key areas including the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Emergency Department. The number of patients waiting for beds in the emergency room has been substantially reduced. Investment in surgical services has also resulted in reduced wait times.

The establishment of a focused ambulatory care centre at the Prince County Hospital has improved patient service and decreased wait times for a variety of diagnostic services. The redevelopment initiative currently underway at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will have similar impacts.

Wellness and chronic disease prevention are top priorities for My Government. A cancer control strategy was developed in response to concerns about the increasing incidence of cancer in Prince Edward Island and across Canada. This collaborative initiative is designed to reduce cancer incidence, improve the quality of life of cancer patients and contribute to the sustainability of our health-care system.

My Premier will soon be meeting with the Prime Minister, other premiers and aboriginal leaders in a First Ministers' Meeting on improving aboriginal health. My Premier has consulted with aboriginal leaders in Prince Edward Island and will be voicing Island concerns related to health, education, economic development and other issues.

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Taking Action for Healthy Lifestyles

Research demonstrates that there is a fundamental link between a healthy start in life and the long-term impact on the well-being of children. Through the Healthy Child Development Strategy, My Government, in partnership with community organizations, continues to give priority to supporting families and children.

Earlier this year, My Government restored provincial funding for the Best Start program, to assist new parents to care for their children, and to give them a good start in life.

My Government looks forward to securing a funding agreement with the federal government to further support the development of quality early learning and child care for young children and their families.

Healthy lifestyles and chronic disease prevention are top priorities as Islanders take more responsibility for their own health. The new PEI Strategy for Healthy Living promotes collaborative efforts to encourage and support Islanders to take measures to address the three most common risk factors for chronic disease: tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy diets.

In the months ahead, My Government will work with the Prince Edward Island Active Living Alliance to encourage more Islanders to be physically active. A provincial Physical Activity Strategy will be developed that will focus efforts in a variety of areas to support Islanders.

Healthy lifestyles and nutrition have a positive impact on learning. My Minister of Education and the school boards worked closely with the Healthy Eating Alliance to develop new policies that increase healthy food choices in elementary and consolidated schools. This year, development of healthy eating policies for intermediate schools will occur, and work with coaches and community leaders to increase the availability of healthy food choices in sports and recreation facilities will be initiated.

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"A provincial Physical Activity Strategy will be developed that will focus efforts in a variety of areas to support Islanders."



Investing in Individuals

The Government of Prince Edward Island has an important role to play in reducing poverty among Islanders in areas such as increasing the minimum wage and providing affordable housing. Through determined, co-operative efforts with our federal, municipal and community leaders, and voluntary sector organizations, all Islanders need to work together to eliminate poverty.

Suitable and affordable housing is important for health and development. In partnership with the other governments and communities, 77 new affordable housing units were opened across Prince Edward Island last year.

Effective April 1, 2006, the minimum wage in Prince Edward Island will increase from \$6.80 per hour to \$7.15 per hour. This increase is a result of My Government's efforts to balance the needs of low-wage earners with the needs of businesses to remain competitive.

Work continues with provincial, territorial and federal partners as well as community groups to explore simplified options for family law services and to ensure fair access to legal aid.

My Government recognizes that the incidence of family violence remains far too frequent in this province. It continues to invest in support for front-line services for family violence prevention, with funds flowing directly to groups which address family violence issues every day.

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A Renewed Commitment to Lifelong Learning

A hallmark of My Government is the commitment to ensuring quality education for Island students in their own community. My Government believes that education is the key to a better future for Islanders. Education is the bridge to opportunity in a new economy that is dependent on specialized knowledge and skills.

My Government is taking action on several fronts to encourage and engage Islanders in learning: in early childhood, in our public school system, in higher education and in the community.

Recognizing that reading is the foundation for all learning, My Government will work with partners in the coming year to develop a provincial strategy to improve literacy and learning in our province. As a first step, My Premier will work with the Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance to host a Premier's Literacy Summit where Islanders from all walks of life will work together to build a culture of learning in our province.

My Government was pleased to work with partners to launch the PEI Reads project, a family literacy initiative to help children develop a love of reading at an early age. Government and community groups are providing information to parents to help encourage their children to read. Every child in grades one to three across the province has received his or her own library card.

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Investing for Enhanced Learning

My Government is beginning to see substantial results from the implementation of the new Instructional Staffing Model which is designed to reduce class size and provide students with more access to specialized teachers.

My Government will continue to work with partners to improve student learning. Working with school boards, we will develop new tools to assess student progress and make early interventions that help students succeed. Of particular note is My Government's new School Improvement Planning initiative which brings the Department of Education, school boards and schools together to improve student learning. Using this whole-school approach, My Government hopes to address the many factors that influence a student's achievement and experience.

In February, My Premier named a Task Force on Student Achievement to recommend ways to improve student learning and success in Prince Edward Island. The task force has consulted widely and examined how students are achieving and how our education system is performing. My Government looks forward to the recommendations of the task force.

My Government applauds the hundreds of adult Islanders who take charge of their future by returning to school to upgrade their education and training. We will continue to support adult learning programs such as the GED program, and community programs like Laubach Literacy which connects volunteer tutors with Islanders wishing to improve their reading skills.

Training and skills development remain a special challenge as we take charge of our future. My Government recognizes that in coming years most new jobs will require post-secondary education and training, and the number of jobs which do not require higher education and training will decrease significantly. For this reason, My Government continues to invest in new opportunities for Islanders to access higher education and skills training as an important step toward greater prosperity. Over the past five years, the Government of Prince Edward Island has increased funding for higher learning in the province by over 60 per cent.

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"My Government continues to invest in new opportunities for Islanders to access higher education and skills training as an important step toward greater prosperity."

My Government is providing financial support to the campus renewal program at the University of Prince Edward Island through a \$25 million gift to its capital campaign.

In 2005, My Government was pleased to provide assistance to Holland College to establish the new Centre for Learning and Labour Force Innovation which will address the needs of industry in emerging sectors such as bioscience and information technology.

Islanders can take pride in the great progress these institutions are making and the positive results we see here in Prince Edward Island as we take charge of our future together.

My Government is committed to working with the Island francophone community to increase learning opportunities here at home. Through a partnership with the federal government, additional funding has been provided to adult learners seeking to improve their literacy, skills training and post-secondary education.

In addition to funding post-secondary institutions, My Government assists students with the cost of their education. Last year, the Department of Education provided direct financial assistance of over \$10 million to approximately 3,500 students through provincial student loan programs. This included funding of \$8.3 million in loans and \$2 million in grants. The Island Student Award program supported 1,172 Island students in their final two years of study at UPEI, Holland College and la Société éducative.

This year, My Government will introduce a new Trades Training Strategy to encourage high school students to explore careers in the trades and to expand core skill development in the trades. The strategy will strengthen linkages between high schools, Holland College and Islanders working in the skilled trades.

My Government continues to work with partners to urge the federal government to acknowledge its responsibility to assist the provinces in improving quality and access to post-secondary education and training. Working together, we can ensure that Islanders have the post-secondary learning opportunities they need to take charge of our future.

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World-class Research

*T*his province is quickly becoming an attractive home for researchers, with the University of Prince Edward Island's five new Canada Research chairs. Since the Prince Edward Island Health Research Institute began at UPEI in 2000, the number of health-related research projects being carried out by Island researchers has grown from 19 to 81 projects. Health research dollars coming to Prince Edward Island have risen from just under \$2 million to almost \$7 million annually. These activities contribute significantly to the health of Islanders and to the health of the Island economy.

My Government introduced the Research and Development Fund earlier this year and there has been overwhelming interest. Forty projects valued at more than \$25 million have applied to the new program.



Investing for Prosperity

Islanders have seen several decades of solid progress in improving economic performance relative to Canadian averages.

Scotia Economics reported that Prince Edward Island is taking charge of its future by leading the country in job growth. Since 2004, the growth in the number of new jobs was at 4.4 per cent. The report indicated that 9,800 new jobs have been created in the province since 2000, the largest growth in our history.

In addition, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council shows that growth is continuing for 2005, as the Prince Edward Island job growth rate remains the highest in the country for the first seven months of 2005 at 3.4 per cent.

Global indicators suggest that to be competitive and prosperous in the future, regional economies must be proactive, adaptable and innovative. My Government is making strategic investments to ensure that the proper infrastructure is in place, that entrepreneurs and a culture of innovation are supported, and that strong partnerships are formed to build on existing public and private success.

My Government is working on a number of different strategies to improve the business climate in Prince Edward Island. Creative ways and means will be explored to promote local investment in local industries and to promote the Island as a good place to invest.

The Progressive Tax Program has received a positive response from the business and investment community and has led directly to the creation of 200 new jobs since it was introduced last year. My Government recognizes that taxation is an important consideration in a competitive business environment. We will undertake a review of taxation policy in order to remain competitive in the global economy.

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A New Way of Doing Business

Significant changes have occurred in the structure of the economy, particularly the shift in employment from resource-based sectors to employment in the knowledge and service sectors.

Enabling the growth of new economic sectors takes hard work and co-ordinated effort. The aerospace industry has grown into a successful niche cluster. Recent expansions have put employment growth at over 15 per cent per year, with over 900 employees and \$260 million in export sales.

As we look to the future, My Government has identified life sciences, and in particular bioscience, as a priority sector for future economic development.

Prince Edward Island is developing world-class strengths and capacity in areas that provide a base for developing bioscience products and processes. We are widely recognized for expertise in the areas of veterinary medicine, aquaculture, agriculture and human health, and commercial activity in plant tissue culture and field crop improvements.

My Premier convened the Round Table on Bioscience as a forum for strategic thinking, practical advice and intensive networking. In 2004, Prince Edward Island bioscience businesses had sales of \$56.6 million and employed 412 people.

The Prince Edward Island BioAlliance recently launched a development strategy. It forecasts that by 2015, there will be 10,000 new employment opportunities for knowledge workers, contributing more than \$1 billion to the provincial economy. We must aggressively take charge of our future to succeed in this highly competitive field, and My Government will make the needed strategic investments to support this initiative.

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The National Research Council's Institute for Nutrisciences and Health will place Prince Edward Island in the forefront of nutrisciences research. Governments, the agri-food sector and the research community are enthusiastic about the potential for nutraceuticals and functional foods to improve citizens' health, help growers diversify, and contribute to increased sales of high-value products to niche markets.

With the increased capacity of the Food Technology Centre and the expansion of the Atlantic Veterinary College, augmented by the work of private-sector businesses and organizations, this province has a strong foundation for the growing field of bioscience, with significant potential for new economic and employment opportunities.

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A Special Place to Live

With an aging society and fewer young families, our population will soon decline unless steps are taken to attract people to live in Prince Edward Island.

Attracting new people is one important element of our strategy to increase the Island's population. Keeping young Islanders at home and creating opportunities for our sons and daughters to move back to the Island must be our first priority in taking charge of our future.

Immigration has always contributed to the social and economic development of both Canada and Prince Edward Island. Bringing new people to the province will be an important aspect of future prosperity. The most critical labour market issue facing Prince Edward Island from 2005 onward will not be unemployment, but skill shortages. The knowledge-based economy combined with changes across the traditional sectors has created a demand for a more highly skilled and adaptable workforce.

My Government understands the importance of increasing our population for social and economic stability. Initiatives we are undertaking include establishment of the Prince Edward Island Population Secretariat; introduction of the Specialized Labour Tax Credit, which helps employers attract individuals with skills not available in PEI; the enhancement and marketing of an electronic job bank to be developed this year; and help to build a social support network for immigrants who have chosen to live in Prince Edward Island.

"Keeping young Islanders at home and creating opportunities for our sons and daughters to move back to the Island must be our first priority in taking charge of our future."



Energy for the Future

Addressing the province's requirement for energy is an integral part of taking charge of our future. The global spike in the price of non-renewable fossil fuels has once again underlined the importance of My Government's strategy to diversify Prince Edward Island's energy supply by enhancing the role of renewable energy.

Prince Edward Island has a strong track record in developing, demonstrating and implementing renewable energy technologies such as the energy-from-waste district heating system in Charlottetown and wind energy at North Cape. This reputation will be strengthened over the coming months with the opening of the Canadian Wind Energy Institute and the development of Canada's first wind-hydrogen village. The goal is to position Prince Edward Island as a leader in renewable energy research and development.

Over the next several months, My Government will significantly expand its wind energy resources with the construction of a 30-megawatt wind farm in eastern Kings County. When the facility is operational, wind will be supplying 12 per cent of this province's electricity needs. To maximize the benefits of this development, landowners and the community will share in the revenues from the turbines. Every Islander will have the opportunity to invest in the wind-farm project and have a stake in their own energy future.

Another critical component of a progressive energy plan is energy efficiency which helps Islanders reduce costs. My Government has introduced a \$1.4 million energy assistance plan that includes home energy efficiency upgrades for low-income Islanders and tax incentives and low-interest loans for alternate heating systems.

Through the Atlantic Energy Ministers Forum, My Government will participate in a regional campaign to address the issue of increased fuel costs, as well as the growing demand for electricity, by encouraging Atlantic Canadians to take steps to reduce energy demand and use energy more efficiently. This will also contribute to My Government's objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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Environmental Stewardship

Prince Edward Island is blessed with a rich natural environment. Protecting and enhancing our natural resources continues to be a key priority for Islanders and it continues to be a key element of My Government's plan for a sustainable future.

Prince Edward Islanders have been leaders in environmental stewardship. Through the Waste Watch program, almost 65 per cent of the waste we produce is composted or recycled. The amount of waste per person that goes to landfill is just over 700 pounds, which is less than half the Canadian average.

My Government continues to work with conservation groups to protect and manage significant properties, such as Boughton Island and other natural areas, for the benefit of present and future generations.

My Government will transfer responsibility for the Wildlife Conservation Fund to the advisory committee which includes representatives from various conservation groups. In future, those who contribute to the fund will play a more active role in deciding how the resources are best invested to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.

My Government is moving forward with a comprehensive plan to amend provincial laws governing the handling and use of pesticide products. The proposed changes will safeguard the health and well-being of Islanders by reducing the risks associated with pesticide use. Amendments to the *Pesticides Control Act* will be introduced during this session of the Legislative Assembly.

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Supporting Primary Industries

Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism continue to be the foundation of our provincial economy, our rural communities and our way of life. Ensuring their sustainable growth and development is critical to taking charge of our future. Measures to broaden and diversify these industries and to add further value to our natural resources of land and sea will be explored. Industry-led solutions are critical if all sectors of our Island economy are to achieve greater profitability. My Government will continue to create an environment which supports and encourages our primary industries to achieve greater self-reliance.

The new beef processing facility in Borden-Carleton will help livestock producers throughout Prince Edward Island and the Maritime provinces take charge of their future. Financial contributions from both levels of government, including support for new, state-of-the-art traceability equipment, have helped make this facility one of the most advanced in North America. The new partnership between beef producers, processors and retailers is designed to provide a more fair and equitable return to producers.

My Government is pleased to recognize the efforts of the potato industry to better match production with demand through voluntary reductions in acreage.

Under federal-provincial safety net programs, approximately \$20 million has been made available to producers to offset losses.

Over the past year, significant new private investments have been made in the fisheries and aquaculture processing industries aimed at improving plant efficiency and establishing new fisheries and aquaculture products. These investments reflect new levels of confidence in the stability of fisheries processing in Prince Edward Island.

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"These investments reflect new levels of confidence in the stability of fisheries processing in Prince Edward Island."

My Government is working closely with the federal government, regional partners and the industry to address the increasing incidence of aquatic invasive species, such as tunicate. Financial and technical resources, and new research and development initiatives will be needed to address the problem. A federal-provincial task force has been established with the mandate to take strong action to protect the industry.

While lobster landings have been relatively stable over the past year, there are continuing concerns about the state of the resource in the Northumberland Strait. My Government is working closely with the industry, with other provincial governments and with the federal government to determine the economic impact on fishers, along with the measures needed to strengthen the long-term management of the resource.

My Government continues to pursue the goal of having fair and equitable access to the fisheries resources in this region. Achieving this goal will help to strengthen, stabilize and diversify the Prince Edward Island fishing industry.

Over the coming months, My Government will proceed with a new provincial forest policy to reflect the vision Islanders have for the future of forests and forestry in Prince Edward Island, and to recognize the contribution these resources make to our environment, economy and society. The public consultations which the Public Forest Council held last winter were a testament to the value Islanders place on public and private forests.

In the past year, My Government strengthened our partnership with the Island's tourism industry, associations and communities.

The new Tourism Advisory Council is finalizing a five-year tourism strategy for Prince Edward Island to provide clear direction and guide the development of marketing initiatives, new tourism products and solid research.

My Government will review its own programs and operations in the context of current industry standards and begin an ongoing analysis of visitors' needs.

Work is underway on the Prince Edward Island Cultural Heritage Corridor project which will take an integrated approach to marketing the Island's heritage, arts, food and natural history experiences in a tourism promotion campaign to be launched in 2007.

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"In the past year, My Government strengthened our partnership with the Island's tourism industry, associations and communities."



Taking Pride in Our Culture and Heritage

I am proud that My Government is supporting a wide range of cultural initiatives. Islanders have a strong sense of place and this shines through our stories, songs, pictures and landscape.

My Government has been an active partner with the cities of Charlottetown and Summerside and the federal government in supporting the Historic Places Initiative, nominating more than 150 historic places for inclusion on the Canadian Register of Heritage Places.

Festivals across the Island have drawn visitors from around the globe to experience the Island's rich culture, cuisine and history. Events such as the Festival of Lights and the Summerside Lobster Carnival saw record crowds this year.

In February 2006, Prince Edward Island will once again host the East Coast Music Awards. My Government takes pride in being a partner in this much-anticipated event.

Support for culture is not limited to festivals and performances. The Confederation Centre of the Arts, the Jubilee Theatre, the Arts Guild in Charlottetown and the Victoria Playhouse are just a few of the venues which My Government has supported and which contribute to the cultural vitality of the province.

My Government was very pleased to work with committed partners to introduce the ArtsSmarts program to Prince Edward Island. In its first year, ArtsSmarts brought together 19 Island artists, working with teachers in eight schools, to help hundreds of students learn core curriculum through the arts.

"Islanders have a strong sense of place and this shines through our stories, songs, pictures and landscape."

"My Government was very pleased to work with committed partners to introduce the ArtsSmarts program to Prince Edward Island."

In August 2009, My Government is setting the stage to host the best young athletes and artists in Canada at the largest multi-sport and cultural event in the country, the Canada Summer Games. A strong bid committee has completed a hosting plan that has been approved by the Canada Games Council. This event has the potential to inject well over \$75 million into the Island economy.

My Government recognizes the significant commitment, effort and sacrifices it takes to be a winning athlete. Through the Sport and Recreation Division, My Government will work with the provincial sport community through the 2009 Best Ever program to provide both financial and human resources to enable Island athletes to take charge of their future success.

“My Government is setting the stage to host the best young athletes and artists in Canada at the largest multi-sport and cultural event in the country, the Canada Summer Games.”



Strong and Safe Communities

Strong and vibrant communities are the cornerstone of taking charge of our future. Care and attention to planning is essential to maintain the character of our communities and the environment.

Last spring, My Government announced a five-year framework agreement for three infrastructure funds with a total investment of some \$121 million in local communities.

Recently, My Government announced the funding of 34 projects under the Canada-PEI Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund with a total value of more than \$14.6 million. Throughout the life of this program, My Government will invest more than \$18 million.

Work will continue with the federal government and municipalities to enhance opportunities under the Strategic Infrastructure Program and the New Deal for Cities and Communities.

Many voluntary organizations make an invaluable contribution to our communities. The Royal Canadian Legion is one such organization. In recognition of the valued role of veterans and their organizations, My Government will begin reducing all property taxes paid by legions in this province.

Safety and security are a valuable part of our communities. A new Division of Public Safety will be established. Bringing together the resources of the Emergency Measures Organization, 911 and the Fire Marshall's office will strengthen our capacity to prepare and respond.

My Government has made the conditions of Island roads a key priority in a number of ways. Since 2002, \$20 million has been invested in projects to enhance the safety and efficiency of Route 2, the Veterans Memorial Highway. My Government is working through the Council of the Federation to have federal fuel taxes invested in restoring Canada's roads and bridges for the benefit of all Canadians.

"My Government announced a five-year framework agreement for three infrastructure funds with a total investment of some \$121 million in local communities."

Promotion of safety on Island roads is another important focus of My Government. Measures to strengthen the *Highway Traffic Act* are beginning to have positive results. The number of convictions for illegally passing school buses has doubled since 2002.

A recent community seat belt survey indicated that the level of seat belt compliance on Prince Edward Island has increased over the past year.

Recent reforms to insurance legislation have resulted in reduced costs for auto insurance. The average overall decrease in rates was approximately 13 per cent in 2004 and a further decrease of five per cent in 2005.

There are concerns related to the operation of all-terrain vehicles by young people. In recognition of these concerns, and to reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities, My Government will strengthen regulations respecting the operation of ATVs by young people.

"Recent reforms to insurance legislation have resulted in reduced costs for auto insurance."



Good Government

My Government is a good and accountable steward of our resources.

Good government is as much about controlling expenditure as it is about creating new initiatives. In an effort to ensure that every possible resource is devoted to the current needs of the province, My Government has introduced a program evaluation unit to regularly assess whether our programs are achieving the intended results. My Government is working collaboratively with a wide range of industry and community partners to ensure that resources are being allocated to priorities.

In pursuit of our goals on behalf of all Islanders, My Government will adhere to the highest standards of public service. My Government will be open, accountable, transparent and responsible, and will administer its human and financial resources to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness for the public good. We must continue to invest wisely to ensure that progress is made toward greater prosperity.

The report of the Electoral Reform Commission served as a reminder that elections are key to protecting our democratic values. Our electoral system has continued to evolve in response to the needs of a changing society.

My Government remains committed to being responsive and accountable to the citizens of this province. The plebiscite on November 28 is a significant opportunity for Islanders to express their preference for our future electoral process.

There is a new optimism about the future of Prince Edward Island. By building on the strengths of our people, the beauty and abundance of our environment, and the new opportunities before us, this province is poised to experience an unprecedented era of prosperity.

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"The plebiscite on November 28 is a significant opportunity for Islanders to express their preference for our future electoral process."

My Government will continue to work with all Islanders to advance initiatives that will support our collective efforts to take charge of our future.

In the presence of those who fought for their country in the cause of freedom, today we reaffirm and renew our commitment to strive for peace and justice throughout the world.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

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