

Noteworthy

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2003 Speech from the Throne

On Wednesday, March 19, 2003, His Honour The Honourable Edward Roberts, QC Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador delivered the **Speech From The Throne: Building Our Future Together** *The New Newfoundland and Labrador* at the opening of the Fifth Session of the Forty-Forth General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

To obtain a copy of the Speech From the Throne please visit the government web site at <http://www.gov.nf.ca/thronespeech/>.

New initiatives to effect better relations with the federal government

The 2003 Speech from the Throne introduced the establishment of the People's Congress and the annual All-Party Symposium.

"As our province grows and prospers I determined early in my tenure as Premier that it is vital that we, as a government, seek the input of the public on the direction that we must go to secure our identity and place in the Canadian union," said Premier Roger Grimes. "To this end I established the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada.

"The People's Congress will be a representative group of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who will review the recommendations of the Royal Commission's report on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada."

The Throne Speech also introduced a second initiative to effect change between this province and the federal government. Following on the model of the historic All-Party Committee on the Cod Fisheries, this fall the Premier will convene an annual symposium of the members of the provincial legislature and members of the House of Commons and the Senate from Newfoundland and Labrador. The issue the Premier proposes for this fall is Equalization.

"The present model of Equalization continues to impede this province's ability to work towards a better level of independence and sustainability," said the Premier. "A review of the Equalization process will take place in 2004."

Government announces new program for youth

The Throne Speech introduced the establishment of a Youth Opportunities Newfoundland and Labrador Program. This initiative is designed to encourage post-secondary graduates with student loan debt to stay and work in the province following graduation and remain active participants in their communities.

"This government believes a well-educated population is essential to economic prosperity and social well-being," said Anna Thistle, Minister of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education. "This new program will provide incentives for employers who hire co-operative work-term students and those who hire new graduates, making it easier for these individuals to find meaningful employment and pay off their student debts by working right here in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Over the past two years, tuition rates at Memorial University have been reduced by 20 per cent and will decrease by a further five per cent in September 2003. Tuition at Memorial University is now the lowest in Canada.

"Tuition rates for public post-secondary institutions in this province are now among the lowest in the country," said Minister Thistle. "We have also made significant changes to our student aid program that are helping to reduce student debt load."

Minister pleased with Throne Speech focus on education

The primary focus of the 2003 Speech from the Throne was education. Gerry Reid, Minister of Education, was very pleased with details provided in the Throne Speech, which highlighted the government's commitment to our education system and our students, from kindergarten to post-secondary.

"We all know that the key to any successful society is an educated society," said Minister Reid. "The Throne Speech is a clear indication that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to ensuring our students are prepared to lead this province into a bright and prosperous future." The Department of Education focuses on all

aspects of student life, and all of those factors which contribute to healthy and productive citizens.

"We recognize the critical importance of the early years in determining future success," said Minister Reid. "As such, we are placing great importance on standardized testing in the and elementary grades, which allows us to determine how our students are doing, and identify areas that need improvement."

The Speech from the Throne also laid out government's goals for the future of the education system in the province.

"By 2006, we want students to rank among the best in the world," said Minister Reid. "We want our students in rural and remote communities to have the same opportunities as their urban counterparts and we have specific plans to accomplish these goals. Our agenda is progressive and dynamic. It is imperative our education system meet the needs of the students of today, who will become the leaders of tomorrow. They must have the skills and knowledge to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of the future and it is up to us as a government to provide them with those skills."

