

JANUARY 17, 2003

Noteworthy



BUSINESS OUTLOOK 2003

Excerpts from Premier's address to St. John's Board of Trade

"The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador embraced the new year with pride in our achievements of 2002 and with confidence that these accomplishments will secure a path to prosperity.

"The government that I lead is very proud to have played a significant role in creating a climate of investment that is showing a positive impact. We are proud of our small business initiatives that support new business in all parts of this province. We are proud of the programs and policies that are shaping our education system, a system that is current and relevant and challenges our students to achieve and excel.

"In 2002, we marked the beginning of a new era of health and community services in this province with the release of Healthier Together, a new strategic health plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. The strategic health plan calls for a far-reaching renewal of the primary health care system. Primary health care is the first point of contact people have with the health and community service system. Our new model of primary health care will establish sites thorough out the province, each site providing a core set of services.

"Attention was heavily focused on our resource sector for the past 12 months, and no where was this more evident than the Voisey's Bay file. After years of negotiations, we reached an agreement that sees the development of the Voisey's Bay nickle-copper-cobalt deposit in northern Labrador.

"Major Canadian banks have declared our economy the fastest growing in the country. Our GDP growth has nearly tripled from 2001. Canada's economy is expected to continue to expand strongly in 2003. Real GDP is anticipated to grow by 3.5 per cent again next year. On a provincial basis, private sector forecasters are predicting most provinces will post strong real GDP in 2003. Newfoundland and Labrador is expected to outpace all provinces this year.

"More than 60 per cent of the 27,000 new jobs created in our province in the past several years have been created in communities outside the St. John's area. The real changes happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador were profiled at RuralEXPO 2001 and are recognized each year through the annual Community Economic Development Awards ceremony.

"In conclusion let me say that we are building on two years of strong growth in particular strong growth in 2002. There is no reason why strong growth, as all the indicators I addressed in my remarks show, that this should not continue in the same positive direction. Our role as government is to continue to facilitate that, to feed that, to work with everyone who is committed to these good things that are happening in Newfoundland and Labrador."

For complete text visit www.gov.nf.ca/releases

Minister comments on FPI-Union MOU

Fishery Products International (FPI) and the Fish, Food and Allied Workers Union (FFAW/CAW), have reached an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the company's groundfish operations on the province's south coast. Gerry Reid, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, congratulated the two parties on reaching this important agreement.

"I am very pleased that FPI is living up to commitments regarding employment," said Minister Reid. "I am also encouraged to see that negotiations between the company and the union appear to be progressing in a mutually beneficial manner. This is positive news for the workers, the company and the industry as a whole."

Workers voted 93 per cent in favor of the MOU, which provides significant capital investments for equipment improvements and additional trawlers without any loss of employment.

Pre-budget consultations

Finance Minister Joan Marie Aylward has scheduled a series of pre-budget roundtables so that individuals and groups can give their opinions on what direction they would like to see the 2003-04 Budget take.

Roundtable discussions are scheduled to begin Jan. 20 in Carbonear, and conclude Feb. 5 with sessions in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Labrador City. Other Consultation sessions are scheduled for Jan. 21 in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor, Jan. 30 in Stephenville, Feb. 3 in Corner Brook, and Feb. 4 in St. John's.

There will also be an electronic town hall on Feb. 8. Arrangements are being finalized with Memorial University's Telemedicine Centre to link various communities with the minister.

