

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE



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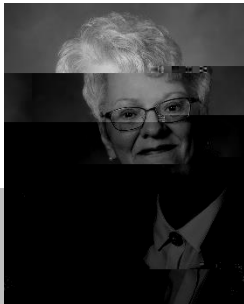
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE



Delivered by
The Honourable Antoinette Perry
Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island

At the opening of the Second Session of the
Sixty-sixth General Assembly of the
Prince Edward Island Legislature

February 25th, 2021



Introduction

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests and guests joining us virtually; welcome to the Second Session of the Sixty-sixth General Assembly of the Prince Edward Island Legislature. It is my great pleasure to share with you the policy and program initiatives my government has chosen to pursue on behalf of the people of Prince Edward Island over the tenure of the next Session of this Assembly.

Much has changed since last I had the opportunity to address this Chamber. One member has chosen to retire after having devoted many years as a

The Disruption of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The greatest changes since last I was here, of course, are those imposed by the current global pandemic. This year marks the 170th anniversary of responsible government in this province. I follow in the footsteps of many representatives of the Crown, both Governors and Lieutenant Governors, who have had the privilege of summoning the Assembly. But I can say with some confidence, that I am the first of Her Majesty's representatives to wear a mask into the chamber.

We are fortunate, on Prince Edward Island, to be able to gather in this Assembly. Other of our sister provinces are not so fortunate or, at least, not to the extent we are able. But I hasten to add that our good fortune is not a function of luck. Since the COVID-19 outbreak was first declared a

Growing, Adapting, and Moving Forward

In anticipation of that recovery process, my government some months ago, created the Premier's Council for Recovery and Growth. The Council's mandate was to solicit the input of community leaders and citizens and to recommend to government, measures to facilitate a timely economic and social recovery.

The Council's report will be tabled in this session of the Legislature. Indeed, many of the initiatives outlined in this Speech from the Throne, are inspired by the recommendations of the Council and the many Islanders who submitted their ideas and suggestions.

I want to thank the members of the Council for their dedication to the betterment of our province and for their commitment to grass-roots democracy and representation.

As the security and confidence assured by our vaccine regimens take root and grow, we must turn our attention to our recovery, to assessing lessons learned, and to minimizing the risk of similar disruptions in the future.

To that end, my government outlines today, the broad elements of a plan for sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation. The initiatives underlined are the result of broad consultations with Islanders, business and community leaders, as well as members of this Legislative Assembly on all sides of the House.

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The initiatives underlined are the result of broad consultations with Islanders, business and community leaders, as well as members of this Legislative Assembly on all sides of the House.

Working with our public school system, post-secondary institutions, community, and industry, we will ensure greater awareness in schools of non-traditional paths, trades, educational opportunities, and labour market needs.

The Province of Prince Edward Island will create a School-to-Workforce Transition Team and establish a permanent framework to support our student's early work success and contribute to a more highly skilled and sustainable workforce for our province.

As part of this initiative, my government will build on the success of the Science and Heritage Fair concept to introduce a new initiative for Junior and Senior schools. The Clean Tech Science Fair will encourage our youngest minds to tackle the challenges of climate change, energy use, robotics, and artificial intelligence.

As a further incentive to engage young Islanders and harness their ideas, my government will introduce a UPEI & Holland College challenge fund that provides seed money to help develop enterprise solutions, and the creation of new clean technologies.

Coordinating our efforts in workforce preparedness and transition will be the role of the new Agency for Workforce Development. At the core of the Agency and dictating much of its programming profile will be a labour market information unit that will closely track PEI's labour market needs and trends. This unit will give employers and potential employees access to a timely and accurate snapshot of labour market job market opportunities specific to Prince Edward Island. Our current reliance on national data fails to recognize issues unique to the Island such as scale, seasonality, and geography.

The Agency will work in tandem with our post-secondary institutions on the education and training development of workers, including increasing co-op and workplace training initiatives to allow for a better integration of training and work.

Investing in Clean Technology

The people of Prince Edward Island recognize the importance of our environment. With challenging coastal considerations, extreme weather events, and with natural resources that are both complex and fragile, Islanders are very much attuned to the impacts of climate change.

Prince Edward Island has an established reputation in renewable energy and climate action. Our leadership in wind energy has been forged over decades, and we continue to build our capacity across the province in this valuable sector.

Energy from waste and bio-fuel provides heating to more than 150 public buildings throughout PEI, including our hospitals and many of our schools. Since 2018, Efficiency PEI has supported the installation of more than 13,000 new heat pumps, and now 98% of new homes built in PEI are using clean energy. It is through these innovations that Prince Edward Island has been able to see its per capita carbon emissions decline by 27.5 % since 2005. This kind of climate action is essential to protecting our province's environment for generations to come.

But we all know that even more innovation is needed. Tackling climate change now and in the future will require our best ideas, ingenuity and enterprise. We need viable, long-term solutions in areas such as transportation and agriculture to meet our target as the first province in Canada to reach net zero.

In order to advance this objective, my government will embark on a strategy to build PEI's Clean Tech sector, supporting PEI-based companies to develop and deploy competitive, clean technology solutions. Our aim is to encourage leading-edge development that will help solve some of our most pressing environmental challenges: climate change, clean air, clean water, and clean soil.

Features of the strategy include the creation of a specific loan portfolio valued at \$50 million dollars to assist new businesses and existing businesses adopt and develop clean technology solutions.

The strategy will also establish three tax-free development zones that will provide opportunities for Clean Tech businesses to cluster and take advantage of common services and supports so that they can accelerate their work.

My government will use its tax system to advance clean tech business interests by establishing an equity investment grant that will provide a rebate to anyone investing in an approved PEI Clean Tech firm.

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Becoming a leader in clean technology requires investment in research and development. To that end, my government announces two new initiatives.

The first is the introduction of a \$10 million dollar fund over the next 5 years specifically earmarked for research and development projects in the Clean Tech Sector.

The second initiative is the establishment of the PEI Energy Academy and Eco-Innovation Park.

Working in partnership with Holland College and the UPEI Canadian Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation, these two facilities will seek to grow our expertise and demonstrate ecological and economical practices as a baseline for sustainable futures.

Every Islander deserves to live their life free of violence and physical or mental abuse. However, we know that isn't always the case and far too many of our children, family members, friends and neighbours continue to live in fear. My government commits to working across political parties and departments and with the Child and Youth Advocate in the development of strategies to combat gender-based violence, family violence, sexual violence and harassment.

In addition, government will explore new therapeutic justice options for those in conflict with the law. These initiatives will ensure that individuals have the proper supports for representation, treatment and rehabilitation.

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My government is working in partnership with Pride PEI and PEERS Alliance to assist in making our province a leader in celebrating and supporting the diversity of gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression.

We will also establish a partnership with vocational schools such as the Atlantic Police Academy to fund seats for under-represented groups and visible minorities. It is essential that our institutions and agencies reflect the diversity of our community. We must ensure that our policing agencies are reflective of the society they service and are community focused. We will evaluate our policing model in this province to ensure it is reflective of the people and addresses the concerns of the community. Government will work with our police agencies to focus on crime prevention measures and programs, and to explore alternative approaches to punishment and rehabilitation.

My government continues to strengthen its relationship with First Nations. We will work with First Nations leadership to celebrate and preserve the native language, to ensure our first peoples have a voice in significant issues, and to commit resources to create wealth and independence in our Mi

Enhancing our Community

I have already referred to the Premier's Council for Recovery and Growth. More than 1,100 ideas were shared with the Council by Islanders from across the province.

Chief among the concerns raised and the suggestions made was the desire to mitigate poverty. Many groups and individuals cited the desire for some form of basic income support. My government will continue to work collaboratively with our federal partners to explore this and other options to eliminate systemic poverty in our province.

We know that housing costs constitute a large part of household expense, and any effort to address poverty must strongly factor the cost and appropriateness of our housing options

My government is committed to working with our post-secondary institutions, sector councils, employers and labour groups to support training for employment in areas of our economy, such as construction and food processing, which were able to survive or even thrive during the pandemic. This will entail the revamping of our current Skills PEI and Innovation PEI programming to be more responsive to the needs of industry, employers and potential employees.

Agriculture has long been a key economic driver and an industry that is part of our Island identity. Climate change is impacting our farming industry, and while my government has an aggressive climate action plan – we must not sit idle while this important sector is at a critical point. My government will not turn its back on farmers, instead we will work with them, side-by-side, in establishing sustainable measures that include soil health, access to water, expanding buffer zones to protect our waterways, and reviewing land requirements and crop rotations. New programs will be launched to support these initiatives focused on agricultural greenhouse gas mitigation, merit-based erosion control, reforestation, and buffer zone buyback and restoration as a start.

In addition to the many measures just outlined, Members of the Assembly will be called upon to consider an ambitious legislative agenda, with both government-sponsored and private member proposals. Members will consider:

- *Government Reorganization Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Architects Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Engineering Profession Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Insurance Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Designation of Beneficiaries Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Jury Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Planning Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Marriage Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Real Property Assessment Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Regulated Health Professions Act;*
- *Missing Persons Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Change of Name Act;*
- *An Act to Repeal the Blind Workers' Compensation Act;*
- *An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act;*
- *Temporary Foreign Workers Protection Act;*
- *Interpretation Act;*
- *Gunshot and Stab Wound Reporting Act; and*
- *Provincial Court Act*

Members will also be asked to assess several options for the implementation of School Board Elections, to ensure greater transparency and greater community and parental oversight of our public education system. At the same time, government will also embark on renewing the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to provide greater public confidence and more accountability for government.

*options for the
implementation of
School Board Elections*

Conclusion

My government has laid out an ambitious program of innovation and progress. It is a program designed to pursue the objectives and aspirations of sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation.

We are coming through a difficult time. But we are fortunate in that we are emerging with our spirit and our determination undiminished. In the example of those who came before us, we have and we will continue to persevere. We have faced comparable upheavals before, and together we survived, just as together we will survive our current challenge.

As is tradition, I leave you with this prayer: May Divine Providence guide your deliberations, and may you be imbued with a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness for the privilege of living in, and providing direction to, this beautiful and generous land we call home.