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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouvelle-Écosse | 58e  | 2e  | Discours sur la santé | 28 novembre 2002 | James Muir | Minister of Health |  |

Mr. Speaker, just an hour ago the much-awaited and eagerly anticipated report from the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada was officially released. I want to say in terms of the renewal of health care it's a good start.

I am also pleased to report - I have said in various forums during the past month that

I hoped in his report Mr. Romanow listened to Nova Scotians, and we also hope that Mr. Chretien and his colleagues listen to Mr. Romanow. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that we've fulfilled just about half of that commitment, as it appears that Mr. Romanow did listen to us when we made our presentations.

We welcome Mr. Romanow's report and welcome what it means for the well-being of all Nova Scotians. This government's initial reaction to the report is twofold. We are very pleased to hear his call for increased federal funding to the provinces for health care, including home care and Pharmacare - it's a start. We were, however, disappointed that he did not make any recommendations for funding long-term care, which has been a particular concern to us.

Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Romanow is setting the stage for the future of our health care. His months of touring the country, speaking with and listening to Nova Scotians, has resulted in solid recommendations that will lead to a better, more accountable and sustainablehealth system, a system that supports this government's number-one priority, and that is to ensure that Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live in this province, can access quality care when they need it.

Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Romanow is also validating the path Nova Scotians have been on for the past three years. Nova Scotians are national leaders and innovators in health care, ensuring Nova Scotians get the care they need and in promoting healthy policies across government and with our health partners. Changes made to improve people's access to better care include:

* attracting and keeping more doctors and nurses to care for Nova Scotians
* a new approach to funding to help improve health planning and reduced wait times
* more nurse practitioners to help make it easier for people to get the care they need in our own communities
* a new information system that will save time and improve care by having the most up-to-date patient information much easier to access for health care providers
* the best emergency response services in the country
* and an increased focus on prevention to help keep Nova Scotians healthy longer with a province-wide physical activity strategy for young children and Canada's toughest anti-smoking legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear to see that Nova Scotia is making many improvements in health care. We are working hard with our partners who care as much as we do that people get the best care possible. We are fortunate here in Nova Scotia to have some of the most talented and committed people in Canada working in health care. I am indeed very grateful for all of their hard work and dedication. We have come a long way. Nova Scotians are working hard, but the job isn't over yet.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical, as Commissioner Romanow has suggested, that the federal government renew a partnership - a true and real partnership - with the provinces if we are to meet people's health needs. Health is the number one priority for Canadians. It is the number one priority in Nova Scotia, and it must be the number one priority for Ottawa. We were pleased to see that Mr. Romanow recognized the need for the federal government to contribute more to fund health care in Canada.

As I said at the beginning, it's time for the Prime Minister to hear what's being said and to make that commitment to Canadians, to Nova Scotians, in the next federal budget. Provinces need to have stability and predictability in health care funding. We are doing it here in Nova Scotia with our new rolling three-year health budgets that will help stabilize and secure health care, but we hope that the federal government will take the lead and introduce stability and predictability to funding the provinces, as has been recommended by Commissioner Romanow. We must renew a full partnership with the federal government, again as recommended by Commissioner Romanow, if we are to reduce wait times and bring to the province the health care professionals we need.

Having said that, my focus as co-chairman of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Health Ministers will be to drive an agenda centered around health. Money will be and should be the responsibilities of the First Ministers and the Finance Ministers. I look forward to reviewing and discussing Mr. Romanow's recommendations with our health partners, including the district health authorities, health care workers, universities, patients, doctors, nurses and others to ensure that we stay on track and to discuss where the emphasis should be placed in the near and longer term and to determine how best to deliver health care. It's all about doing the right thing for Nova Scotians - ensuring that they receive quality health care when they need it and, if Mr. Romanow's recommendations are adopted and funded adequately by the federal government, we will move a considerable way along that path.