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**Nova Scotia: Speech from the Throne, Sixth Session of the 56th General Assembly, November 20th, 1997**

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, friends and, above all else, Nova Scotians. I am pleased to open the Sixth Session of the Fifty-sixth General Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia's soul is its caring people and caring communities. We wish to pay tribute to Nova Scotians whose actions lie at the heart of what makes this province such a great place to live. Heather Grant, a 16-year-old Yarmouth resident, watched her uncle die of AIDS and then organized a march in her local community raising money for AIDS education.

The Cape Breton relatives of Jessica Whitney rallied together in an effort to save the nine-year-old's life. Their work resulted in more than 400 people from across the island becoming members of the national Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Melissa Labrador, a Queens County youth, reminded Canadians of the importance of inclusion and reverence for traditional native symbols when she brought an eagle feather to the federal House of Commons. She was recently appointed to Nova Scotia Youth Advisory Council along with 11 other young Nova Scotians.

In Dartmouth, thousands of volunteers and other citizens came together in August to welcome 700 people from 46 countries to the world canoe championships. Visitors returned home with lasting memories of Nova Scotian enthusiasm and warmth.

George Richardson of Halifax was honoured this year for saving the lives of two young sisters whose Halloween costumes had caught on fire.

These are only a few Nova Scotians who have made a difference. They remind us that it is our character, our care and compassion that make Nova Scotia the most wonderful place in the world to live. On behalf of my government and all Nova Scotia, I wish to thank them.

**A New Direction**

Today I have the pleasure of welcoming you to the first session of this Legislature with a new Premier. We are setting new directions for this province and for our future - directions that are based on the priorities of the people and on the challenges that must be met to secure our future.

My government will measure progress in terms of healthy families, strong local economies, fairness for all Nova Scotians, and vibrant communities. My government will strive to bring stability, security, and a sense of pride and accomplishment to every aspect of our lives.

My government will uphold the values of the people of this province that set us apart as a kind and caring community. We will work hard to: give Nova Scotians, particularly young people, the tools they need to succeed; attract investment and new jobs to all regions of this province; strengthen communities so that they remain safe and vital places to work, live, and raise a family; support children and families; and celebrate our heritage and diversity and support that which makes us unique.

It is government's role to instill pride and build a sense of optimism among Nova Scotians. We have untapped natural resources. We have new opportunities in emerging industry. We have the best educated generation of young people in our history.

My government owes Nova Scotians leadership that listens to and respects the wishes of the people. My government will show leadership by focusing our efforts on key priorities. Those priorities are: a strong economy that advances all regions of our province; an enhanced emphasis on health to strengthen our systems of care and build a more secure society; and a vigorous focus on jobs and education, which are vitally linked and key to our future.

**Securing Our Economic Foundation**

At the top of the Nova Scotian priority list are local jobs and strong local economies. Our foremost challenge as a government is to ensure that no region of this province is left behind by the prosperity that can be ours as we enter the 21st Century.

We are poised for growth.

Capital investment in Nova Scotia will grow by 18 per cent this year, well ahead of the national average and most G7 countries. Companies like Scotiabank and CIBC have demonstrated their faith in Nova Scotia. Call centres alone are now generating some $70 million in new income for Nova Scotians.

We see tremendous economic performance in industries that reach out, outside urban centres and into the heartland of this province, into our fishing villages, farms, and rural communities. Multi-nationals, including IKEA, Michelin, and Stora, have chosen rural Nova Scotian communities as places to expand or establish new facilities.

The film industry provides jobs in coastal towns from Louisbourg to Shelburne. This new business has expanded dramatically - 600 per cent since 1993 and 50 per cent in the last year alone. The provincial tax incentive that fuelled this growth is now being copied in New Brunswick and Quebec.

The world has already discovered what Nova Scotians have always known. Musicians like the Barra MacNeils from Sydney Mines, the Rankin family from Mabou, and Natalie MacMaster from Inverness County prove we make the best music anywhere. The celebration of uniquely Nova Scotian music, with its roots in Celtic, Acadian, and Mi'kmaq cultures, helped build a record year for tourism. This year Nova Scotia's tourism industry grew by 6 per cent, the fastest growth rate in 25 years.

Nova Scotia remains Canada's leader in quantity and value of fish landings. Fish and value-added seafood remain our number one export. Nova Scotians recognized early, and have since proven, that value-added and new markets are key to survival, growth, and prosperity in this, our most traditional industry.

Our universities are selling expertise in places like Kuwait and St. Kitts. They're adding a surprising new dimension to Nova Scotia's strong export growth - $110 million in new sales over the past year, and 1,100 jobs for Nova Scotians.

Look at what lies ahead.

Exploration and development of the seabed surrounding Sable Island will bring a whole new energy source to Nova Scotia. Industry leaders are investing $3 billion private sector dollars in an underwater "highway" and overland connectors to bring the wealth ashore. The six wells targeted for initial development represent only one-sixth of the known reserve. This project is only the beginning. My government will work diligently in the development of this new resource and will ensure economic benefits stay in Nova Scotia.

My government will soon be announcing specific training funds and programs to prepare workers for employment in the natural gas industry. Opportunities are here, in the offshore and in other emerging and traditional industries. They must be met by a government with the foresight and leadership to seize the advantage for Nova Scotia.

My government has adopted a forceful position with respect to new industries looking to set up in this province. There must be strong financial commitment to targeted training packages that will guarantee highly skilled and job-ready workers. We will ensure that Nova Scotians fill these new jobs.

My government is currently negotiating with 20 to 30 companies seeking to locate in Nova Scotia. We will ensure that training components are built into the deals we make with new employers.

We will build a Nova Scotia training advantage, partnering with the private sector and with educational institutions, such as the community college, to ensure training matches local workers to jobs.

We will protect the thousands of jobs that depend on a secure forestry by amending legislation to ensure that harvesting does not exceed the capacity to grow timber and that reforestation, environmental protection, and wildlife habitat conservation are practised on Crown and private woodlands.

My government will maintain a strong commitment to silviculture on private woodlots: $4 million will be budgeted in the next fiscal year. We will encourage a similar commitment from the forest industry to safeguard this resource for the next generation and beyond.

My government will review land use policies and farm land taxation and, in consultation with agricultural groups, will develop new policies to better support the agricultural sector.

New wealth will flow to Nova Scotia when we add value to the goods we produce and sell our goods and services in new markets worldwide. Rather than export raw materials for processing and manufacturing, we will attract investment here. The jobs associated with turning Nova Scotia's resources into finished products will be Nova Scotian jobs. A new investment incentives policy will help in this effort.

My government will soon be announcing new call centres throughout Nova Scotia. We are in discussions with companies seeking to locate in communities from Digby County to Cape Breton.

My government will remove obstacles and artificial barriers to business. My government will be introducing legislation to cut red tape and allow industry to get on with creating new jobs.

Over the coming year, we will formalize our partnership with the tourist industry to expand and improve tourism products. A new increased effort will be made to attract visitors from Quebec and Ontario.

We will continue to celebrate Nova Scotia's music through festivals and tourism, and by integrating our music with our trade and investment efforts, to expand the music industry throughout the province.

The new Nova Scotia Tax Equity Credit will promote community investment in Nova Scotia. We will move forward with this program so that Nova Scotians can invest in the business "down the road" and support local jobs.

We will build on our industrial heritage. My government believes there is a future for steel and coal. We will form an industrial commission and ask the federal government to participate with us in developing a common approach to industrial development, a common strategy reflecting our responsibilities for steel and the federal role in coal.

My government is working to ensure a viable future for Sydney Steel, a future with a private sector company with the financial backing and the long-term plan to secure jobs and reach new markets.

Transportation is vital to our economic future. Communities know there is a direct link between infrastructure and attracting investment and jobs. We must have a better partnership with the federal government that recognizes the importance transportation links play in strengthening communities across Nova Scotia.

The federal government must recognize and meet obligations to upgrade facilities as we proceed with the privatization of Halifax International Airport, one of the fastest-growing airports in Canada.

My government will aggressively seek a fair deal on marine navigation fees.

Roads are important when you move raw materials to the manufacturing plant and finished products to the market. We will commit new funds for secondary roads in this fiscal year and increased dollars yet again in the next.

Federal facilities, such as the former Cornwallis military base, are becoming generators of employment and economic activity. We will soon be announcing plans for CFB Shearwater, which is ideally located to participate in a boom in shipping and state-of-the-art port development.

**Building a Healthy Nova Scotia**

A stable and well-performing economy is the foundation of our collective security. A well-funded, first-class system of health care is the cornerstone of personal well-being.

Medical professionals are here. Hospitals are accessible. Emergency service is dependable, and medicines are affordable.

Our health care system is strong and will get stronger. We have to do better to ensure all Nova Scotians are receiving the same high level of service. Many important new initiatives have taken place in the last year to ensure services are available when and where Nova Scotians need them. A new agreement is in place to secure physician services for Nova Scotia and to attract new doctors to rural areas.

Modern medical facilities are important in our small towns and in rural communities. A new regional hospital will be built in Cumberland County along with new health care facilities in Cheticamp and Neils Harbour. Yarmouth Hospital is undergoing redevelopment. A cancer treatment centre is under construction at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. Home Care is helping 18,000 Nova Scotians each year.

The first and largest Telemedicine network in the world is connecting doctors and patients in rural Nova Scotia with the latest in diagnostics and specialist services.

We are proud of new initiatives to combat cancer, including mobile screening clinics and a co-ordinated cancer care initiative linking the Department of Health, academics and hospitals where care is delivered. We will build on these successes.

My government will fund more cancer care, train emergency doctors, and fund critical care simulation and the St. John's Ambulance Chain-of-Survival.

The government has made real progress in emergency health care. The emergency medical helicopter will soon be backed up by a fixed-wing aircraft.

We acknowledge that the health care funding equation needs to be re-examined.

My government will strengthen health care funding. Additional money in this fiscal year will total $100 million, and there will be further increases in 1998-99.

The long-term care sector has made significant contributions to the overall health and well-being of our population. The ministers of Health and Community Services will be convening almost immediately to begin efforts to ensure this sector gets the attention it deserves.

We recognize the anxiety that has been caused by health care restructuring.

To ensure Nova Scotians are receiving the best services, my government will be appointing a panel of health care professionals and community leaders to evaluate the current directions for health care and ensure that services and programs are secure across Nova Scotia. The panel will report back to government in the spring.

**Strong, Vibrant Communities**

Nova Scotia is a great province because of the strength of our people and our communities. Strong communities have key characteristics - they are safe and healthy places for our families to live and grow.

That means safe streets and safe homes. Nova Scotia is leading the country in taking a tough stand against family violence. We have added victim-support services, trained more than 3,000 justice workers and adopted a pro-arrest, pro-prosecution policy.

Nova Scotia has some of the toughest anti-drunk driving laws in the country. My government will soon be coming forward with more programs to combat drinking and driving.

My government is already taking a leadership role by supporting community participation in matters involving young offenders.

My government will go forward with a Restorative Justice program, which provides communities and victims with more satisfactory justice by giving them a voice in sentencing and alternative measures.

My government will, in partnership with the federal government, concentrate on crime prevention. Law enforcement officers, social workers, and community groups will recommend measures to reduce crime. Their work will include both preventive measures and recommendations for better enforcement.

Still, there are people in our communities who need our help and support. We will do more for children, especially during early childhood, life's most critical stage.

My government is working on a prevention framework and action plan to direct and co-ordinate government services and services delivered by other publicly funded bodies for children and youth at risk.

A Community Partner's Program will promote children's development programs. This collaborative effort will involve many players such as the YMCA, health organizations, and food banks. There will be new programs in child nutrition, early childhood language development and screening for risk factors and support for families who are overburdened.

The Healthy Start pilot project will focus on home visits and practical support to parents and children at risk. It is modelled after a program in Hawaii that has received international acclaim. Overall, we will work with communities to strengthen programs and services that prevent abuse and neglect.

We are committed to helping families. We will be deciding how best to help low-income Nova Scotians with the National Child Benefit - a new benefit that starts in July.

A new Labour Market Development Strategy is creating new programs involving training, loans and grants to clients of several departments, including Economic Development and Tourism, Community Services, and Education and Culture. In particular, social assistance clients will benefit from meaningful employment supports and experience.

The quality of community life depends upon the quality of our environment. We have the good fortune to live in one of the most beautiful, pristine places on earth. We are leading Canada in our efforts in recycling. This year, we will be putting less garbage in landfills - 50 per cent less.

During this session, my government will introduce legislation to ensure 31 areas of the province are protected today and for all generations to come.

In the spring, we will release a comprehensive state of the environment report. We are committed to keeping our communities clean, healthy, and beautiful for all Nova Scotians.

**Better Opportunity through Education**

To secure our future we must provide our young people with relevant skills, job-related training and on-the-job experience. Federal and provincial governments are working on a Youth Employment Strategy which will provide access to employment and on-the-job training for 16 to 29-year-old Nova Scotians. First ministers have made this a top priority. In addition my government will:

- develop a made-in-Nova-Scotia youth employment strategy. The government will be highlighting and supporting three key areas: education, work experience and information.

- provide an internship program within the civil service for students and young graduates seeking employment. My government is taking a leadership role to ensure young Nova Scotians gain that initial job experience so important to launching a successful career.

- commit funds through a winter works program to assist young people who are most at risk of not finding meaningful employment. Young Nova Scotians living in rural areas in particular will benefit from this program.

- connect education to the job market. In partnership with local businesses and schools, my government will soon announce co-operative education and school-to-work transition programs in our high schools.

A strong vibrant future is before us. The future depends on an education system that supports Nova Scotia's students and its teachers.

We're committed to reducing large class sizes. Studies demonstrate that smaller class size leads to enhanced teacher-pupil interaction and improved student performance.

Dozens of proposals have been received from schools eager to participate in a new program of leadership support and networking in junior high schools. The co-operating schools will be announced soon and will benefit from such initiatives as "team teaching." The aim is to give more teacher attention and adult support to young people during a critical time in their lives.

Our schools must be safe, healthy places to learn. My government will meet the needs for safe, positive school environments. Schools will have access and input into programs in peer mediation, zero tolerance for violence, conflict resolution, prevention of substance abuse, and support groups for both students and parents.

My government will be working with school boards in developing a "healthy schools" program. We will be assisting our education partners in examining air quality standards, air quality testing, and maintenance.

My government is moving forward with new curriculum that reflects black culture and scholarships for African Nova Scotian students. Working with the Afrocentric Learning Institute we will be increasing the number of black teachers.

We will be launching a Grade 7 Mi'kmaq language course and a Grade 10 Mi'kmaq studies course. All schools across our province will have access to these new materials.

Recently Maclean's magazine lauded our education system by designating two Nova Scotia universities, Acadia and St. Francis Xavier, as second and fourth in undergraduate excellence in a nationwide survey.

My government will work with the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education to address funding levels for the next four years and distribute funds appropriately among universities.

My government recognizes the crisis in tuition fees at post-secondary institutions. Nova Scotia already has a program of debt forgiveness that will be reviewed for further flexibility and at the same time, we will urge the federal government to adopt a similar program.

Increased funding for health and education depends on a strong economy and on government's ability to manage taxpayers' dollars wisely. My government remains committed to prudent fiscal management and will commit new funds to our priority areas: a strong economy, secure health care and education linked with training.

We recognize that some Nova Scotians, especially those with low incomes and little discretionary spending, are disproportionately affected by the Harmonized Sales Tax. My government is examining ways to ease the tax burden on necessities.

All of the above programs, initiatives and new funding mechanisms characterize a government that reflects the priorities of the people of this province. The public is well served by our professional, non-partisan public service. We will renew the public service by continuing to support new skills and management development. We recognize the hard work and dedication of the 55,000 men and women who serve Nova Scotians well.

This is an exciting time in Nova Scotia's history. We stand on the threshold of great opportunities. There is a renewed confidence in Nova Scotia and among Nova Scotians. Our goods and services are finding markets worldwide. Nova Scotia's reputation for excellence is growing. Sable gas is an economic bonus that will result in new jobs and economic opportunity for Nova Scotians and increased resources to fund vital public programs, like health care and education. Nova Scotians and those who view our province from afar, see unlimited potential. My government sees all these opportunities clearly, and is determined to seize them for the benefit of Nova Scotians today and tomorrow.

In every community, my government will champion that which makes this province great. The generosity of spirit, the determination, the courage, the vision and the wisdom of her people.

God Save The Queen;

God Bless Nova Scotia;

God Bless Canada.