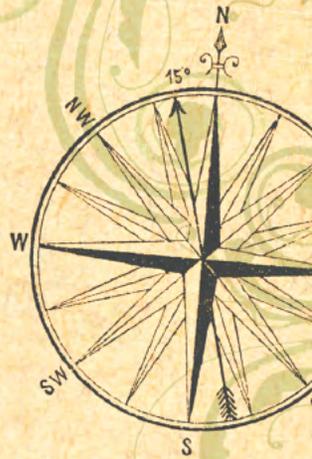


Charting the Course Ahead

Prince Edward Island at a Special Moment in Our History



**SPEECH FROM
THE THRONE**

NOVEMBER 2013

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

SPEECH FROM
THE **THRONE**



Delivered by
The Honourable Frank Lewis
Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island

At the Opening of Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island

November 12th, 2013
at 2:00 p.m.

As Her Majesty's representative on Prince Edward Island, it is my duty and time-honored privilege to present this Speech from the Throne, reporting on progress already made, and outlining the priorities and agenda that will guide our Island Government in the years ahead.

THE CHARLOTTETOWN CONFERENCE OF 1864

Soon Islanders and Canadians will begin celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, a seminal moment in our history which led in 1867 to the formation of Canada as a federal state.

Prince Edward Island truly is the crucible, the birthplace of Canada, and Islanders will be inviting Canadians everywhere to join in a year-long celebration to mark the founding of our great country. When Canada's Premiers meet in Charlottetown in late summer of 2014, the accomplishment of the leaders who formed our nation will surely inspire the work of today.

Festivities and events to commemorate and celebrate the 150th Anniversary will take place here in Charlottetown of course but also in local communities right across the province. I want to acknowledge the efforts of the provincial coordinating group PEI 2014, and express my own wish that on New Year's Eve this year, we raise a toast to the political delegates who gathered in this city a century and a half ago, and to the blessed and bountiful Canada that was their creation.

2014 will be a time to celebrate and also a time to cast our eye backward.

The great English poet and philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge said "*the light that experience gives is a lantern on the stern,*" and our 150th celebrations afford us that opportunity to reflect upon where we have been as a small Island province, and where we are heading.

"I believe, from all that I can learn that the Provinces will, ere long, be one country or nation, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Never before was there such an important meeting as this held in the history of British North America; and it may yet be said that here, in little Prince Edward Island, was that Union formed which has produced one of the greatest nations on the face of God's earth."

Thomas Heath
Haviland
PEI delegate,
Charlottetown
Conference

LEADERSHIP AND STRENGTH FROM WITHIN

My Government believes there are important truths to be drawn from those momentous discussions 150 years ago.

The first is that the national dream of Canada was both noble and worthy, and that it is possible to accomplish great things when vision and political leadership are present.

But the second truth is just as important and relevant. For while Islanders continue to look to the federal government for national guidance and fairness, based upon constitutional principles and guarantees, we must not forget our first responsibility to ourselves, to put our own house in order, and to strengthen our own province with the considerable resources that are available to us.

It does not mean that we go it alone, for we cannot, but rather that we summon the leadership, creativity, and resolve to confront our challenges as a small Island society.

Nevertheless, Prince Edward Island is a full partner in Confederation. That membership underscores our rights and responsibilities within the greater framework of Canada, and yet there are occasions when the Province must vigorously address measures which unfairly and negatively affect the Island, and Atlantic Canada.

In this manner, Prince Edward Island will continue to press its case to Ottawa in terms of a more regionally sensitive approach to Employment Insurance, transfer payments, and the federal presence on the Island.

THE COURSE AHEAD

The priority and focus of Government through the remainder of its electoral mandate will be based on five central objectives:

- making government more direct and citizen-centered;
- careful management of our land and water resources;
- living within our financial means;
- building economic strength, and
- social responsibility.

... we must not forget our first responsibility to ourselves, to put our own house in order, and to strengthen our own province with the considerable resources that are available to us.

... five central objectives:

Making Government More Direct and Citizen-centered

My Government remains firmly committed to more direct and easier access to programs and services for Islanders. Significant system improvements have been made in recent years that are providing better access and better care now. Over the coming year further reforms and system changes will be made to bring about an increasingly patient centered health system.

There have been some major achievements over the past year.

Recognizing that our seniors deserve the highest quality care, Government's \$65 million Manor Replacement Program continues to progress with new state-of-the-art manors replacing aged structures across the Island. Recently, the new 120-room Prince Edward Home was opened. This program will culminate with the replacement of the existing Riverview Manor in Montague and the addition of a new 24-bed public manor in Tyne Valley.

My Government has taken steps to provide greater access to medications, treatments and emergency services. A new Catastrophic Drug Program was introduced to assist with prescription drug costs that have been crippling some families, the new 8-1-1 telehealth service has just been launched, and the Island's first Collaborative Emergency Centre has opened at Western Hospital in Alberton.

Enhancements in ambulance services are providing Islanders with more timely access to emergency care. The new Rapid Response Units are providing faster, more local care to residents of the most western and eastern regions of our province. Soon, the introduction of a dedicated transfer unit will further improve response times.

The seriously ill and their families will soon benefit from the new stand-alone provincial palliative care centre, which will open in the fall of 2014. Once complete, Prince Edward Island will have one of the most comprehensive palliative care programs in Canada.

Islanders care about timely and appropriate care in their communities. Today, ninety-four (94) per cent of Islanders have access to a family physician – well above the national average of 84 per cent. There are also more nurses and nurse practitioners working in the system than ever before. Government will continue to attract medical professionals to ensure all Islanders have access to quality care in the regions in which they live.

Health Care

Major achievements

\$65 million Manor Replacement Program

Catastrophic Drug Program

Rapid Response Units

Stand-alone provincial palliative care centre

Ninety-four (94) per cent of Islanders have access to a family physician

My Government recognizes that to be truly healthy, one must have good physical health and mental health. To this end, work must continue to improve education, increase preventative measures, and eliminate harmful stigmas.

The newly-appointed Chief Mental Health and Addictions Officer will begin to meet with Islanders to listen to their experiences and hear their suggestions on how to make the system more client-focused.

Enhance patient outcomes

Over the coming year, Government will continue to work together with health care professionals in an effort to make our services more efficient and patient oriented. In particular, further discussions will take place with Nurse Practitioners, Paramedics, and Pharmacists to determine the best ways to expand scope and enhance patient outcomes.

Education

If the patient needs to be at the center of health care, then similarly our children need to be at the center of public education.

Since Government took office in 2007, public education has been a priority, and the overriding goal has been to give our children more educational options and to enrich their learning experiences.

Student achievement is improving significantly

Recent literacy and mathematics assessments have shown student achievement is improving significantly. These results further highlight the value of my Government's investments in education and early childhood development. Our role as a national leader in early childhood education was recently recognized in research conducted by The Globe and Mail.

Basic skills still need improvement but we are doing better and more children are achieving at grade levels.

Introduction of full-day kindergarten and the enhancement of early childhood development programs have meant that our children are better prepared when they enter Grade 1.

My Government is committed to student achievement and excellence in our school system, and we recognize that none of that is possible without dedicated and highly-trained classroom teachers and other professionals.

Critical to success at the school level is the role of the Principal.

Government, in partnership with the Faculty of Education at UPEI, is working to make the MED curriculum more robust and specific to the role of the Principal as an administrator and leader.

The overarching goal of improved student achievement is the successful transition to post-secondary education and the labour market. In the coming year, a new career planning initiative will be implemented. The program will start in Grade 9, working with students and their parents, to introduce career planning through grades 10 to 12. The goal is to ensure that the courses and programs that students select will support the individual's successful transition to university, college, apprenticeship programs and the labour market.

Prince Edward Island has made great strides in high speed internet technology and most Islanders from Tignish to Souris now have access to broadband. Moreover, we have only begun to make use of this powerful infrastructure to grow small business and help develop our communities.

As with health care and education, Government wishes to bring services closer to citizens, to create more direct access, while enabling two-way communication with citizens and business.

Therefore, our existing provincial website will be transformed into a client-centered web and mobile service platform that connects Islanders and businesses to trusted information, convenient online services and payments, as well as highlights about what is happening on Prince Edward Island.

A roadmap has been developed that will guide the conversion of the existing website – which currently provides only two online payment options – into a more accessible, more convenient and more operationally efficient service channel. Over time, the site will become a leading edge communication and service delivery tool that provides access to a full range of government services, while making the best use of social media, enabling Open Data, and eventually offering a single sign-on, “My Government” account option.

MED curriculum more robust and specific to the role of the Principal as an administrator and leader

Introducing a new career planning initiative starting in grade 9

Expanding eServices

Our existing provincial website will be transformed into a client-centered web and mobile service platform

This new approach to government service delivery will provide Islanders with consistent service whether in person at an Access PEI location, on their desktop computer, over the phone or on their mobile device while on the move.

Education Link PEI

Great strides have been made over the past year in expanding internet access in our school system. Education Link PEI is now up and running in all educational sites across the province. The challenge now will be to update computer programs and applications.

Addressing Red Tape

Islanders can be proud of the scope and quality of government services, and of the men and women who provide them on a daily basis. However, government hears regularly from citizens and stakeholders that unnecessary red tape does exist and that it can be an impediment.

Government is committed to having stream-lined regulatory processes that enable our economic and business competitiveness interests, without compromising public health, safety or the natural environment.

Project ART

Project ART is a new initiative designed to ensure that goal is advanced.

A coordinated government-wide initiative, Project ART (addressing red tape) will develop collaborative relationships between government and key business stakeholders, initiate a citizen centered regulatory reform process, reduce duplication through bundling of information, develop a regulator's code of practice, and work to improve customer service by eliminating unnecessary rules, processes and non-essential steps.

Better Managing Our Land and Water Resources

Lands Protection Act

The Carver Report

The *Lands Protection Act* was enacted in 1982. It set limits on the amount of land an individual or corporation can own and control. Its purpose was to ensure that Prince Edward Island's agricultural land base is protected, and that residents of the province continue to be the principal landowners. Historically speaking, there are echoes in this legislation of early colonial days when the Island was owned by non-resident proprietors.

Last year, Government recognized that the *Lands Protection Act* was in need of review and appointed prominent Charlottetown lawyer and former legislator Horace B. Carver to carry out this task.

Commissioner Carver held fifteen public meetings throughout the province, as well as meetings with the agricultural industry. A total of 134 written submissions were presented to the Commissioner. Mr. Carver presented his Report to the Premier on June 29th and its central recommendations have been considered and endorsed by Executive Council. The Carver Report together with an implementation plan will be tabled in this Assembly and made public during the current Session.

Uniquely qualified to undertake a review of land ownership policy, Government wishes to thank Mr. Carver for his dedicated and excellent work.

Watershed management groups play an important role in protecting and improving environmental quality in Prince Edward Island, through community-based planning and action. Thirty-one watershed groups across the province participate in stream, watercourse, and wildlife habitat restoration and protection under the umbrella of the PEI Watershed Alliance.

Government works closely with the Alliance in furthering watershed restoration and protection throughout the province, and over the coming year and in partnership with the Alliance will develop a Model Watershed Pilot Project.

Through an open nomination process, a particular watershed in the province will be selected for intensive and coordinated planning. Beginning with a detailed land use inventory and information on water quality, wildlife habitat, and other data as determined by the local community, a watershed management plan will be assembled and put into effect. If successful, this approach to watershed management and planning could be applied across the province.

Government also is committed to addressing the recommendations of the Provincial Action Committee for Sustainable Land Management; to effective enforcement of existing regulations; and other measures designed to protect the health of our streams and fish habitat.

In October of this year, the Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee made recommendations with respect to the long-term management and protection of environmentally sensitive lands in the Bonshaw Hills area. The Committee was comprised of volunteers with extensive

*Central
recommendations
have been considered
and endorsed by
Executive Council*

Watershed Management

*Model Watershed
Pilot Project*

Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee

shared experience in the areas of land use, conservation, recreation, and environmental stewardship.

In response to the recommendations put forward by this impressive committee, Government will establish the Bonshaw Hills Wilderness Park, the first of its kind in the province. Initially, the park will combine the existing Strathgartney and Bonshaw provincial parks, together with other environmentally sensitive public lands in the immediate area. The long-term plan will be to seek further extensions to the park through private land purchases and connectivity agreements.

Three core principles will guide the management and development of the Bonshaw Hills Wilderness Park – conservation of sensitive lands, recreation through active living, and nature education for all ages. This all season park will offer Island families excellent recreation opportunities including hiking, nature walks, biking, snowshoeing, wilderness cross country skiing, and canoe/kayaking.

Forest and Land Conservation

An objective to protect seven percent (7%) of its land

Prince Edward Island has an objective to protect seven percent (7%) of its land, including forested land.

Since 2007, through the *Natural Areas Protection Act*, my Government has protected more than 80 parcels of environmentally sensitive land exceeding 4000 acres in such areas as: Caledonia, Lake Verde, Riverdale, Percival, Basin Head and the Conway Sand Hills, to name a few.

With the completion of the new Corporate Land Use Inventory, and consolidation of public forest and wetland management within government, Government now is able to accurately review its landholdings and protect other significant ecological areas under the *Natural Areas Protection Act*.

Private Forests Management Program

In the coming year, Government will establish a new Private Forests Management Program.

Building upon existing incentives, this new program will include new measures to encourage good management of forests including incentives for certification and riparian zone management.

Living Within Our Financial Means

Five years ago, the economy changed. Not just on Prince Edward Island, but around the globe.

As a government, we responded to this global downturn with an aggressive stimulus program that kept Islanders working, and the economy moving ahead. We also implemented the harmonized sales tax to make Island businesses more competitive and bolster our agriculture and tourism sectors.

Because of these decisions, we were able to insulate Prince Edward Island from much of the recession and are now starting to see improvements in our fiscal outlook. In fact, all three of the bond raters have again confirmed our credit ratings.

Canadians are living longer and retiring sooner.

There is a growing gap between how much people take out of our pension plans versus how much they pay into them. These changing demographics, combined with investment volatility during the global economic downturn have been creating real challenges for the plans.

Since 1993, in addition to its regular employer contributions, the Province of Prince Edward Island has made special payments into its employee pension plans totaling millions of dollars. Even with this extra funding, it has been unable to offset the increasing costs.

So, in response, last month our Government announced changes that will keep public sector plans secure and affordable. These reforms considered equally the needs of current employees, those close to retirement, retirees and taxpayers.

Governing responsibly means sometimes making difficult decisions, but our administration firmly believes these changes are moderate. They will be phased in over time and will ensure pensions are available for members, now and well into the future.

Pension Reform

These reforms considered equally the needs of current employees, those close to retirement, retirees and taxpayers

A Food Innovation Strategy

Government will take a leadership role in the design and implementation of a new Food Innovation Strategy for the province

Building Our Economic Strength

From the days of wooden sailing ships trading in every corner of the world, Prince Edward Island has never lived in economic isolation. Now we are reaching out to the world like never before with the promise of new products for new global markets.

Government is committed to building our economic strength in every sector through advanced learning and innovation, and through enterprise and small business development.

If the Island is to fully realize its potential as a food producer, we need to explore ways to better mobilize our existing food related assets towards developing new products.

At the foundation of this food strategy is the uniqueness of the PEI Brand. Our future as a food producer and the quality of our natural environment are also closely intertwined. As someone said about PEI's brand in the food business, "it's about the salt air, the grass, the clean and green..."

Prince Edward Island is identified as a culinary destination with Fall Flavors, the Shellfish Festival, and the Culinary Alliance. We have an emerging food brand, supported by our tourism product. Our raw product is recognized internationally for its high quality. There are a growing number of local food entrepreneurs with product success stories. And research in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture is ongoing at our local institutions.

Our challenge is to design a food innovation strategy around food clustering, as an organizing principle, and to promote the synergy and alignment of resources that will lead to the development of new products. Examples of innovative products already developed include lobster paste, Prince Edward Island Certified Beef, artisan cheeses, and the expansion of local brewing and wine.

Government will take a leadership role in the design and implementation of a new Food Innovation Strategy for the province. This will be achieved by working together with the federal government, the various institutes and organizations, and the Island food industry.

Canadian Business magazine recently named the country's top 50 jobs, and one-quarter of these were in engineering or a field of applied science.

At present, the University of Prince Edward Island offers a Diploma in Engineering, with students completing their degree program at either the University of New Brunswick or Dalhousie University. But that will all change very soon.

In what UPEI has called its most transformative initiative of the decade, a new school of design engineering will be established, focusing on sustainable energy, bio-resources, and mechatronics. Students will graduate with a Bachelor of Engineering degree. This program will be unique in Canada and it will attract students from across the country and around the world.

Strong linkages exist between mechatronics and bio-resources in the area of food and food processing. Engineers trained in this specialization are called upon, amongst other things, to address productivity and plant efficiencies in the food industry, and to design solutions. The Design Engineer program at UPEI has great potential for long-term economic development in our province.

My Government, working together with both UPEI and federal partners, will advance this initiative in the coming year. Together we will expand our economy and build a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. The new Design Engineer School at UPEI will be a landmark achievement for the province.

A commitment to resourcefulness and self-reliant thinking was front and center at the recent *Georgetown Conference, Rural Redefined*, held in the historic King's County community from October 3rd to 5th of this year.

Interestingly, Georgetown was the home of Andrew A. MacDonald, Father of Confederation and the youngest delegate to attend the Charlottetown Conference of 1864. The Conference at Georgetown concluded, in part, that small communities should first look within for solutions and answers, and opportunities for development, instead of automatically turning to governments, reaffirming the principles of the provincial Rural Action Plan.

Canada's New Design Engineering School

In what UPEI has called its most transformative initiative of the decade

Rural Community Development

Government will strengthen the mandate of the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development to develop a community-based leadership program

Island Community Fund

Strategic investments in the rural Island economy

This might be called wisdom from the grass roots and Government intends to take up the same mission and embrace a similar ethos and approach when it comes to confronting the many issues and challenges that lie ahead for the province as a whole.

The organizers and delegates to the Georgetown Conference, in particular Paul MacNeill and Wade MacLaughlan, are to be commended for their inspiring work in rural community development.

The line that separates rural and urban on Prince Edward Island is often blurred and hard to see, and yet our rural communities remain distinct and strong in the face of demographic and economic realities that are often unfavorable.

As a means of building upon the positive energy and focus of the Georgetown Conference, and to further our present commitment to rural communities, my Government will strengthen the mandate of the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development to develop a community-based leadership program.

Modeled on similar programs at centers in Wisconsin, Saskatchewan and Ireland, government will work with community leaders to study and research rural issues, cultivate ideas and solutions for economic development in small communities, help develop policy options, and possibly offer professional training in the field of community development.

The Island Community Fund continues to be an important way for Government to invest in communities, as well as the economy itself. In addition to grants for playgrounds, safety equipment, and other community infrastructure and events, the Fund in 2012 also made strategic investments in the rural Island economy. Atlantic Beef Products in Borden received assistance to upgrade its cooling plant, and the PEI Grain Elevators Corporation was assisted to create more storage for a growing soybean crop.

Planning is underway to extend the program into 2014-15 and explore opportunities with the federal government to cost-share community initiatives.

In the coming year, Government will continue to put an emphasis on manufacturing and small business development.

Finance PEI will expand the Entrepreneur Loan Program by raising the maximum loan from \$50,000 to \$100,000, which will increase the capital available to small and medium sized businesses.

Building on recent successes, such as assistance to Atlantic Advanced Power Technologies at Poole's Corner and Master Packaging in Borden, Government will continue to pursue business expansion in rural Prince Edward Island. Announcements can be expected in the near future for Montague and Summerside.

Government will also continue to assist our primary industries through loan programs and other incentives, with preference given to infrastructure projects such as the increasing of freezer capacity at Royal Star Foods in Tignish.

Much has been achieved in the lobster sector with provincial government investments in low interest loans, rationalization of licenses, a program for young fishers, and the development of new markets. Research and testing being carried out by Bio/Food/Tech on the pasteurization of lobster is innovative and promising.

Two studies undoubtedly will form the basis for future change in the lobster sector – the report from former Auditor General Colin Younger, and the just released report of a Maritime Lobster Panel.

The lobster industry is the backbone of the Island fishery and is positioned for economic growth.

Government's commitment to the sector will remain strong. Seafood products will form a major focus within the Food Innovation Strategy.

Other areas of the Island fishery show promising growth and development. Island oysters are a quality choice product and other varieties of shellfish such as mussels and clams are gaining new markets.

Over the coming year, Government will focus on Canadian markets for Island shellfish. A recent seafood promotion in Calgary proved very successful and a national food distributor has partnered with the province to market our shellfish products.

Manufacturing and Small Business

Expand the Entrepreneur Loan Program

The Fishery

Maritime Lobster Panel

The lobster industry is the backbone of the Island fishery

Focus on Canadian markets for Island shellfish

Tourism and Culture

Our Tourism industry is healthy and growing

This 2 plus acres of undeveloped land next to the Convention Center offers a unique and spectacular access point to the historic Charlottetown waterfront

The business of tourism has deep roots and a long history on Prince Edward Island.

For example, in 1872, a year prior to Prince Edward Island joining Confederation, merchant James L. Holman built a 125-room “American style” hotel on a small island in Summerside harbour. The Island Park Hotel had a full range of amenities and hosted international conventions.

Today, tourism is a sophisticated and vital industry that employs thousands of Islanders and generates approximately seven percent of the provincial GDP, the highest percentage of any Canadian province.

Government would like to acknowledge the work currently being carried out by the Tourism Industry Association of PEI to “look inward” and to engage its members in helping to determine future direction.

Our tourism industry is healthy and growing, and Government remains committed to working in close partnership with the industry to develop new products through public and private investment, and to market Prince Edward Island as a destination in a fiercely competitive marketplace where even Antarctica is growing tourism.

The Atlantic Canadian Tourism Partnership will turn its attention in 2014 to the larger urban American markets, as well as to Europe and China.

In the Charlottetown capital area, completion of the new Convention Centre on the waterfront has ensured that Prince Edward Island maintains a strong place in the convention business.

The Province will advance two very special cultural tourism projects in 2014.

The first involves the former Queen’s Wharf, a strategically located and culturally significant piece of waterfront property at the foot of Queen Street in Charlottetown. This 2 plus acres of undeveloped land next to the Convention Center offers a unique and spectacular access point to the historic Charlottetown waterfront - the same waterfront where our nation’s forefathers landed for their 1864 Conference.

One option under development as means to determine eventual use of the property is a National Design—Build Competition led by the province but with the involvement of invited partners ACOA, CADC, MCPEI and 2014 Inc .

While there is enormous potential for varied forms and types of development on this land, the rare vistas and public accessibility features that exist will be highly valued and respected in the process used to make that choice.

Further to the East along the waterfront, planning and preparations for relocation of the Government Garage will also be completed to make way for more appropriate future use of that strategic gateway property.

Another cultural tourism project has to do with an undisputed Canadian and Prince Edward Island legend.

*"It's Bud the spud from the bright red mud
Rollin' down the highway smiling
The spuds are big in the back of Bud's rig
And they're from Prince Edward Island
They're from Prince Edward island."*

Those are the immortal song lyrics of Stompin' Tom Connors who died in March of this year at his Ballinafad, Ontario home.

Thomas Charles "Stompin' Tom" Connors was born in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1936, and adopted at a young age by the family of Cora and Russell Aylward of Skinner's Pond, near Tignish. He left home for the highway at the age of fifteen and travelled his beloved country from east to west, writing and singing about ordinary working Canadians.

Stompin' Tom Connors occupies an exalted and unique place in the legion of Canadian folk poets and singer-songwriters, and as Islanders we are proud to claim him as a native son.

The Province aspires to work with the Connors family and federal partners to honor and commemorate the life and music of Tom Connors by establishing a lasting and living memorial to this great Canadian.

*A lasting and
living memorial to
"Stompin' Tom"
Connors*

Social Action Plan

New PEI Home Renovation Program

Increased Social Assistance Food Rates

Gender Equality

Greater representation of women on appointed provincial boards and commissions

Social Responsibility

A chain is only as strong as its weakest, most vulnerable link. We need to ensure that our Island community is strengthened by enhancing support to those who live in poverty or struggle with disabilities.

My Government continues to implement the province's first Social Action Plan.

In November, Government increased shelter rates by three percent (3%) for social assistance clients.

As part of the Plan, a new PEI Home Renovation Program will be implemented before the end of this year, and twenty new rent supplements will be implemented for Island families and persons with disabilities.

Government recognizes that Islanders with low income struggle to purchase healthy, nutritious food. As a beginning, in January 2014 social assistance food rates for single persons will increase by five percent (5%), and over the coming year a multi-year plan will be put in place to further increase social assistance food rates.

My Government has been a strong advocate for gender equality in the workplace. We also believe that more women should seek elected public office and not be deterred either through systemic discrimination or other obstacles from contributing their talents and leadership.

In addressing this issue, Government can lead by example, and while it is true that the democratic electoral process imposes certain limitations on what is possible, new steps towards gender equality nevertheless can be taken.

Therefore, Government is making a commitment to achieving greater representation of women on all appointed provincial boards and commissions, and achieving overall parity within five years.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of my remarks, I spoke about the need to look within for leadership and strength.

Prince Edward Island is blessed with extraordinary resources, the most important being the hard work, talents, and creativity of Islanders themselves.

Drawing upon that inner strength, and the experience of our rich history as an Island community, the course ahead is certain to be a secure and prosperous one.

During this sitting, members of the Legislative Assembly will be asked to consider a number of Government Bills.

Among these will be a Bill to recognize Charlottetown and Prince Edward Island as the Birthplace of Canadian Confederation.

Other Bills will include:

- *Workers Compensation Act*
- *Drug Cost Assistance Act*
- *Civil Service Superannuation Act*
- *Teachers Superannuation Act*
- *Mental Health Act*

Madame Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, may Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

Drawing upon that inner strength, and the experience of our rich history as an Island community, the course ahead is certain to be a secure and prosperous one.