

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

It is with great pride that I rise today to move acceptance of the speech from the throne for the third session of the 56th legislature of the province of New Brunswick.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member for New Maryland Sunbury West on his election to this house. Having the opportunity to represent people here in the legislature is a great honour and a great responsibility.

Also, congratulations to the member from Woodstock for his election to leader of the opposition. I was happy to hear him talk about taking a cooperative approach here in the legislature to working together for the benefit of the people of the province. We look forward to hearing his ideas and constructive proposals on the issues facing New Brunswickers, and those ideas from his caucus members as well.

I would also like to congratulate my three colleagues who are new to cabinet. They are eager to bring their ideas to the cabinet table and I know their experience and knowledge will serve the province well as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will help guide us through this next session, which comes at an important time for New Brunswickers. The world is facing some serious economic challenges and New Brunswick is not alone. Now, more than ever, it is important that we as a government act to build the foundation of a self-sufficient province. There are issues that require our immediate attention but we must keep our focus on the long term goal of creating a province that can stand on its own two feet.

The people of the riding that I have had the honour to represent since 2003, Miramichi Bay-Neguac, share this belief that here in New Brunswick we can be better.

The riding itself stretches from Douglstown, Beaverbrook Station and Bellefond to Brantville and Riviere du Portage. It also includes the village of Neguac, and the communities of Burnt Church and Tabusintac.

The economy of the riding is very much based in our traditional industries of forestry, farming and fishing. These industries are facing challenges in today's world market but I was pleased to hear in today's throne speech that these established sectors will continue to drive our economy in the future. As a government we will be there to assist these industries to make them more competitive in a world market.

It is important that our traditional industries work to position themselves so they have a competitive advantage in world markets. To this end it is good news to see the transfer of certain programs to the departments of fisheries, agriculture and aquaculture. This is being done in response to the industry's wishes. It is another example of how we are listening to New Brunswickers and working together to build a self-sufficient province.

I was also pleased to see progress made on the action plan under the Fisheries Renewal Framework this past year, and I look forward to a new action plan for the coming year. Improvements are also being made in the seafood processing sector. Fishing is the lifeblood of the people of Miramichi Bay-Neguac, and many coastal communities in other ridings around the province.

We have particular changes in northern New Brunswick which is why we have established a \$100 million Northern New Brunswick Infrastructure Initiative. That will continue to be a critical element of the revitalization of the north.

This coming year is particularly important for Francophones in New Brunswick. As a proud Acadien, I am looking forward to preparing to host the 2009 Congres Mondial that will introduce the world to our way of life on the Acadian Peninsula. This government is fiercely proud of our status as a bilingual province, and committed to the protection of the rights of Francohnones. Hearing today in the throne speech that the premier will soon

have finalized an advisory committee on Francophone matters is very good news. The official languages act and Bill 88 are an important part of what defines us as New Brunswickers.

As a professional educator I share this government's belief that education is the key to our future success. A better educated New Brunswick means a better skilled workforce for New Brunswick. It means more opportunities for our young people here in New Brunswick, and more reason for people to stay here or return to New Brunswick.

Education begins early, and it is good to see government acting swiftly in preparing our youngest citizens to be successful. The recent announcement on the development of four new early childhood development centres in the province is another example of how we are building a better education system as we build a better future for this province.

Our goal is to build the best education system in the country. While we have a long way to go, the signs are positive that we are moving in the right direction. Investing in community schools and empowering teachers are two initiatives that are producing results. The priority that we are placing on First Nations education is also very good news in my riding.

I also want to mention how pleased I am that significant progress is being made in the area of pay equity. A new pay equity act is further proof of the importance this government places on the status of women in New Brunswick. I look forward to continuing to work with our caucus and the minister responsible for the status of women on files such as pay equity.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important and challenging time for New Brunswick. It is time for all members of this house to come together and work towards building a more populated, better, self-sufficient province. C'est seulement ensemble qu'on peut réussir à atteindre l'auto suffisance.

Thank you Mr. Speaker and I now move the acceptance of the speech from the throne.