

**The Honourable Danny Williams**  
**November 25, 2010**

Thank you all so much for being here this morning.

Today is one of those surreal days that you think about from time to time out of curiosity, but you never really allow your mind to go there fully because the reality is just too overwhelming.

And I do in fact feel somewhat overwhelmed at the enormity of today, in particular as I reflect over the past ten years. But in every person's life there comes a time when the tough decisions have to be faced head on, no matter how difficult they may be.

Orson Welles once said that if you want a happy ending, know where to end your story. And so, I have called you all here to announce the end of my story as the 9th Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will be stepping down on December 3 to allow my Party the time to elect a new leader. In the interim, my Deputy Premier Kathy Dunderdale will become the tenth premier of this province.

It was November 2000 when I decided to run and a decade is a long time. At that time, I reflected upon the words of JFK who said "anyone can make a difference and everyone should try." And I am glad that I did.

And I was quite prepared to stay on for another term if some of my greatest challenges still lay ahead of me, but with the completion of the Lower Churchill deal it is time for new leadership and new ideas within the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Being Premier of this great province is a job that I have been so privileged and honoured to have for the past seven years.

It is a job that was given to me by the extraordinary people of this unique, proud and bloody awesome province.

It is a job that I have never ever for one moment taken for granted; and it is one that I have dedicated my mind, heart, body and soul to every day I have been in office.

And let me assure you all that this decision has not come easily to me. How does one walk away from the best job on earth? How does one walk away from a team of people who stood by me through thick and thin, good and bad and through fights that our critics said we couldn't possibly win?

I was told that public life will give you the highest highs and lowest lows you have ever experienced, and it has indeed been all of that - a roller coaster. But the well wishes, the smiles, the hand shakes, the genuine expressions of thanks, the pats on the back have made it all worth while.

I will dearly miss being motivated daily to make our province "better than the best" and I will miss the strategizing to make sure that all those who impeded the progress of Newfoundland and Labrador are no longer successful.

I will miss the camaraderie and talent of my colleagues and staff who were singularly focused on our dreams, our vision and our goals and sacrificed personally everyday to make it happen.

I, like all of us, dearly love this smiling land and would love to stand on guard for it forever. It is a place like no other with its rugged climate and beauty, fenced by a fierce ocean which provides us wealth and bounty but extracts its pound of flesh from the brave souls who venture upon it for a living.

It is a place whose people are a rare breed. Tough and strong and resilient but proud and passionate and determined.

We are a sensitive and fun loving people and considered by many to be the most generous and friendly people in the country.

It is a place whose culture and heritage runs through the veins of everyone fortunate enough to be born here or chooses to become one of us. Our songs, our music, our poetry, our artists are the best because they have a tremendous sense of place and privilege to belong to this special location on earth.

With confidence and belief in ourselves, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can move mountains limited only by the boundaries of our imagination. That confidence, optimism and determination when combined with our new economic self sufficiency makes us a formidable force in this country, continent and indeed the world.

We are now held up as a shining example to others and our decision and resolve to become masters of our destiny has proven to be the right one. We can now make choices in our best self interest without depending upon the hand outs from others who deemed us unworthy of great success and chose to restrict us.

But above and beyond all else, I am most proud of our renewed pride as a people. The looks on the faces of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who hold their heads high in this great Canadian federation. I am proud of the young children who come up to me and say "hi Danny", because they are engaged in the exciting things happening in their province.

I am proud when I travel the country and meet expatriates who tell me what a difference it is now to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian living on the mainland; how people now respect them and inquire about what's happening at home. Because those people who once thought we were the poor cousins of Confederation now see us as the place to be; a province on the move!

I am proud to meet tourists who run across the street to say hello and to tell me that they came here because of our incredible new tourism ads. And I am proud when - without fail - they marvel at the stunning beauty of the province, but even more so at the outstanding people who they meet around every corner.

I am proud of the investments our government has made in the arts and cultural community to support those folks who are our greatest ambassadors. Bands like Great Big Sea and The Once, shows like Republic of Doyle, writers like Kevin Major. These are the people who tell our stories better than any politician ever could.

I am proud when I sit in a room with people like Arnold Schwarzenegger, world leaders and international business leaders, and they genuinely want to hear about our province and what we have to offer.

You know, I laugh when critics and some reporters say that I am nothing more than a fighter; someone always looking for a racket and never happy unless I'm taking someone on.

Well folks, I am here to tell you today that those people are right. Because there has never been one thing that I can think of that hasn't been worth fighting for in this province.

There has not been one battle too great or too small for me, if it meant a better life for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Even if it meant taking on my idol Paul McCartney on international TV.

In 2003, when I first ran to become your Premier I promised you that I was going to fight for you. I was going to fight against the give-aways. I was going to fight for our rightful place on the national stage. And though it hasn't always been popular with some, I haven't regretted one moment.

It is who I am, it is who you elected me to be and I promise you even after I am gone from the Premier's chair I will always fight for this province.

And I am certainly proud when I think back on the battles we have fought and won together as a people. Because although yes, I am your Premier and your leader, make no mistake that none of those battles could have been successful without your support.

We fought the Federal Government for equity under the Atlantic Accord and we won.

We fought the big oil companies for more benefits and we won, and today we share a tremendous partnership and mutual respect with them.

We fought for improvements to the Voisey's Bay deal, and we were successful.

We fought the critics and ignored those who said we must go to Quebec, and we successfully negotiated an outstanding agreement to develop the long-awaited Lower Churchill project.

I took great pride yesterday when a national broadcaster referenced the "birth of a green energy super power in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Including the Atlantic Accord, with projected revenues for Hebron, White Rose extension, Hibernia South and Lower Churchill alone will bring an estimated 70 billion dollars to the province and thousands upon thousands of jobs. And as a result of these successfully fought battles, our government has been in the position to put in place many other incredible initiatives that have advanced us as a society and a people.

We have substantially lowered personal and business taxes; we have stimulated economic activity in everything from aquaculture to mining and tourism.

We have built school, hospitals and long term care facilities; we have put dialysis throughout the province, given insulin pumps to children and young adults; and we have increased the provincial drug program.

We said we can no longer rely upon others to tell us what's happening in our fishery and we went out and leased our own vessel for fishery research and science to chart our own course.

Make no mistake; this is a place that has been rejuvenated and re-energized in the past few years. And we must continue to work as one to ensure it continues.

If you step outside and breathe in the air you are secure in knowing that you are breathing in success; the success of being a have province.

Our fiscal house is in order and is a model for the rest of the country.

I am not here today to say that everything is perfect. I am not saying there are not challenges left to be faced. There will always be challenges.

What I am saying is that I truly believe in my heart that Newfoundland and Labrador has never been better positioned to face our challenges and to seize our opportunities.

Our time has come. Our future is being shaped by our own hands. We are the master sculptor holding in our own hands the clay that will form our destiny.

Someone once said "How lucky am I to have had something that makes saying good bye so hard."

And I have indeed been so, so lucky.

When I entered public life I knew it would be difficult. I knew there would be challenges. I knew there would be those who criticized just for the sake of criticizing or just to be seen on the evening news.

What I didn't know at the time was how inspired I would be by the people of this province. I didn't know that there would be days that I would feel so frustrated that I wanted to give it all up.

But what I also didn't know was that on those very days, without fail, I would receive an e-mail or a hand written card from someone I had never met thanking me for my work, or just uplifting me with a kind word.

I didn't know that there would be times that I was rushing through the airport, late for another flight and dead tired from the all of the travelling; and suddenly I would hear "Hey Danny, keep up the good work"!

It gave me the strength many days to go on. It gave me the will to keep on fighting. And it made me so, so proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

The sky is the limit in this land of opportunity and that renaissance has been worth the effort. It has indeed been an honour to serve as Premier of Canada's youngest and coolest province and I am deeply indebted to the people of Humber West for placing their support and confidence in me from the beginning. I hope I have not disappointed them, and I want to thank my Executive Assistant, Linda Roche, for her unwavering and constant support in my district.

I also want to sincerely thank my talented and passionate colleagues in Cabinet and Caucus. Without their hard work, efforts and undying love for this place we could never have achieved what we have in just seven short years in government.

You have all brought your unique experiences and skills to the table and you have all been an integral part of the transformation of this province. I have been so, so proud to be your leader.

Your loyalty and friendship has carried me through the tough times and your experience and track record will ensure that the people of this great province continue to have faith in your ability to take us to even greater heights. Tory times are indeed good times!

To my staff, Brian, Elizabeth and the rest of the team, your commitment and loyalty and genius was second to none and I am proud and honoured to have worked with you. At times when we were under siege you held the fort with confidence, poise and your resolve carried me through the tough times.

Your advice was impeccable and your contribution to your province and its future is unequalled.

Your careers will continue upwards because you are all a talented class act and any organization will be uplifted by your presence.

Thanks to the members of the public service and the outstanding leadership of Gary Norris and Robert Thompson. We are blessed with a professional group of people who are second to none in the entire country.

Their heads down and nose to the grindstone approach has been a tremendous support to our government and this province is blessed to have them.

To the PC Party - you have given me purpose and direction since I was a very young boy and it has been an honour to be a part of this great party. The support of the executive under the exceptional leadership of John Babb and grassroots has been solid and unshakable from day one and I never ever had to worry about you having my back.

I thank you for allowing me to be your leader during the first decade of a century that has written a whole new legacy for Newfoundland and Labrador.

To my family and in particular my mother who has always been such an inspiration to me.

She has been the ultimate advisor, the political matriarch, my role model and more than anything she is just the best mom.

To the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, when I needed you most you were there.

You saw the vision; you agreed with no more give aways; and you wanted to be masters of our own destiny. You knew what we were fighting for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have come this far together and the best is yet to come. The rays of sun have crowned our pine clad hills.

I will miss you.

God guard thee Newfoundland and Labrador.