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| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 40e | 2e | Discours du Trône | 18 mars 1986 | William Anthony Paddon | Lieutenant Gouverneur | PC |

I welcome you to this Second Session of the Fortieth General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland.

As we progress through 1986, it is helpful to briefly reflect upon recent events.

Perhaps one of the most positive events to occur has been the significant change in attitude brought about by the election in late 1984 of a new Government in Ottawa. A new spirit of federal-provincial understanding and cooperation has clearly emerged across the Nation since that time. We now have a Federal Government that is sensitive to the circumstances, needs and aspirations of all regions and walks of life in the Country. Acrimony has given way to harmony, flexibility has replaced resistance, and cooperation characterizes this new "rapprochement" with the Federal Government. This bodes well for the future, especially for Newfoundland which, in the past, has been unjustly relegated to second class status in the Canadian Confederation. There will, of course, continue to be differences of opinion with the Federal Government, but a new perspective has been gained and a new relationship prevails.

Over the past several years, my Government has grappled with the effects of a serious economic recession. Particularly hard hit were our major resource industries -- the fishery, forestry and mining sectors. However, the total output of the Province's economy has now recovered to its pre-recession level and I am pleased to announce that recent measures implemented by my Government, in concert with national and international economic trends, point to a period of sustained provincial growth.

The challenge facing us, and the continuing focus of my Government, will be to avail of the economic opportunities which exist and to create meaningful employment for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. In short, the creation of new jobs is the prime objective of my Government.

To this end, my Government has already embarked on a number of initiatives and will implement others this year to ensure that the groundwork we have laid provides a solid base for a healthy and dynamic economy. Our initiatives in the area of trade, so important to all of our resource-based industries, will continue. The Atlantic Accord, a milestone in the Province's history, will generate wealth and much needed jobs to improve the quality of life of our people. In the fishery, the fruits of industry restructuring are beginning to provide stability and jobs so vital to our rural communities, and the efforts of my Government in the development of a fleet of middle distance vessels will provide added supplies of raw material and many new jobs for inshore plants.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

One of the major opportunities for improving the Province's economic position lies with increased international trade. The importance of trade to Newfoundland must not be underestimated. From its first discovery, the wealth of Newfoundland's natural resources was fully recognized and the value of these resources to the international marketplace well understood. Our first settlers realized the great wealth in the fishery and harvested this resource for the growing markets in Europe. With further settlement and development, our wealth in minerals and forest resources became evident and at this moment the Province stands on the threshold of a new era based on the extraction of oil and gas reserves for international consumption.

Today, exports account for over a third of our total economic output and contribute about one and a half billion dollars to our provincial economy. A full ninety percent of all goods produced in Newfoundland are shipped outside the country, mainly to the United States. In fact, the United States currently purchases over seventy-five percent of our fish, sixty-five percent of our iron ore and sixty percent of our newsprint. This makes Newfoundland the single most export-oriented province in Canada. Clearly, international trade is the essence of our well being. Our economic destiny always has been, and will continue to be, determined by our capacity to trade, with expanded market opportunities providing the key to sustained economic renewal and future growth. We are, in short, critically dependant on an open international trading environment.

In this regard, Newfoundland is poised at an historic crossroads. For most of Canada's history, long before this Province joined Confederation, the Government of Canada followed a selective protectionist path with respect to trade. Although this trade policy was successful in building a manufacturing base in central Canada, it frustrated the efforts of those provinces that sought to build a strong resource-based economy focused on exports. The process of trade liberalization has come a long way since that time, but we must now complete the process of reducing as many barriers to trade as possible and develop a policy that is of benefit to all regions of Canada.

To this end, my Government is encouraged by the new initiatives of the Government of Canada to liberalize trade relationships with all parts of the world. Over the next year, it will be the responsibility of my Government to ensure that national policies in this area are sensitive to and meet Newfoundland's needs.

In particular, my Government's efforts will be directed in support of comprehensive bilateral trade discussions with the United States and the liberalization of multilateral trade through the renegotiation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Indeed, we must look to new, dynamic international trading arrangements if we are to secure and expand our markets for both primary and secondary processed goods and to improve our investment potential.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

While my Government looks forward to participating in these trade negotiations, we must also continue with ongoing programs to assist our exporters in finding new markets and investment opportunities.

As was evidenced in the recent trade mission to parts of Asia, opportunities exist in China, Hong Kong and Japan for the sale of Newfoundland fish products, minerals and newsprint, and for the transfer of marine-related technology and services. Trade missions such as these represent one of the most effective mechanisms to promote Newfoundland products and to capture opportunities which exist for diversifying our economy and improving our overall economic performance. International business is done as much on the basis of the relationship developed between people as on the value of the products to be exchanged. Face to face meetings with key decision-makers in foreign markets set the stage for economic cooperation and facilitate further investment possibilities for our private sector. My Government is committed to these missions and will launch new ones wherever viable opportunities exist. Aggressiveness and perseverance are the key ingredients to improving markets for our exports, to seeking capital investment for our industries, and to exposing our capabilities and comparative advantages to potential investors and entrepreneurs worldwide. It is up to us to open doors, to promote new opportunities and to secure trade ties. My Government remains confident that we will find renewed growth and prosperity through this approach to international trade.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In my address to you on April 25th of last year I took great pleasure in being able to inform this Honourable House of the signing of an agreement between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada with respect to the offshore. This agreement, The Atlantic Accord, provides the basis for legislation which has been introduced to this Honourable House and which is before the Parliament of Canada.

This legislation will allow the Province of Newfoundland to garner the economic benefits and revenues which will accrue from oil and gas production on our continental shelf. The equal partnership between the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is cemented by the wording of the legislation, which clearly states that it may not be amended without the consent of the other Government. This will ensure that no succeeding governments can abandon the course that we have elected to follow.

Even further, the Government of Canada has agreed with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enact a constitutional amendment to forever enshrine the basic principles of this legislation once the requisite number of other provinces concur.

My Government is therefore actively seeking the support of the other provinces of Canada to ensure that this consent can be obtained. With The Atlantic Accord serving as a model for an increasing number of similar agreements, it is anticipated that this constitutional amendment shall be achieved. Indeed, within the past year, the report of the Federal Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, citing the example of The Atlantic Accord, has called for an amendment to the Constitution of Canada which would generally recognize the constitutionally binding nature of such agreements.

We stand on the threshold of true prosperity as a result of this legislation and the spirit of co-operation that now permeates our relations with the Government of Canada. The task my Government now faces is to ensure that all our citizens can share in these benefits and are prepared for the challenges which will follow, while at the same time minimizing any social disruptions that may result.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

On February 11, 1986, the first anniversary of the signing of the historic Atlantic Accord, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada signed an agreement to formally establish an Offshore Development Fund. The purposes of this Fund are "to defray the social and economic infrastructure costs related to the development of oil and gas in the offshore area before production begins and to ensure that the provincial economy is well positioned to reap the economic benefits of offshore development". The Fund consists of three hundred million dollars and is cost-shared seventy-five percent by the Federal Government and twenty-five percent by the Province.

My Government's broad strategy for use of the Offshore Development Fund will be to assign priority to projects which are designed to give major long term economic benefits to Newfoundland in line with the Province's offshore development policy. Generally, this will include education and training programs aimed at providing better opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to participate in oil exploration, development and production activities. It will also encompass research and development projects in petroleum-related fields which will lead to the development of greater local technical expertise. Infrastructure required to enable a specific industrial site to be utilized in support of oil development shall also receive strong consideration where its absence would preclude the Province from being considered as a site for that particular petroleum-related industrial activity.

Other project areas will be given careful consideration as well. It may be desirable, for example, to provide industry grants or incentives to increase local industrial benefits associated with offshore activity. Certain social infrastructure projects in the health care or social service sectors may also be legitimate areas of expenditure if they are required as a direct result of specific onshore petroleum-related developments. Additionally, municipal and transportation infrastructure projects not solely related to a specific industrial site, but required to support population growth and economic activity directly generated by offshore development, could be candidates for funding.

My Government is very sensitive to the need to establish programs throughout all areas of the Province where oil and gas related development will occur. This issue is an important one and will be given a high priority in the overall utilization of the Offshore Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

It was with great pleasure that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada recently announced the approval of thirty four million dollars worth of projects under the Offshore Development Fund. Also, the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board was fully activated a short time ago and held its first formal meeting on February 11, 1986. At present, negotiations are proceeding with Mobil Oil and its partners with respect to a development plan and a fiscal regime for the Hibernia Project. Successful conclusion to these negotiations is a prerequisite to the release of the Hibernia Project. My Government is hopeful that an agreement will soon be reached on these matters.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The resource sector of the Province is the cornerstone of our economy. The policies of my Government with respect to fisheries, forestry, mining and agriculture have and will continue to recognize this basic and important fact.

In the fishery, my Government is convinced that 1986 will show a marked improvement over the difficulties that have prevailed in the past several years.

Strong signs of success from restructuring of the Province's offshore fishing industry are now emerging. Fishery Products International has embarked upon an aggressive five-year business plan involving major new product development and promotional activities. These programs are expected to bring the Company to a profitable operating position in 1986. In addition, its plant divestiture program is proceeding well through the enthusiastic response and participation of the private sector. This will ensure the future of many inshore plants around the Province and those communities dependent on them for their very livelihood.

My Government is particularly pleased with the success of the Burin operation. The secondary processing facility is now operating at full capacity and major inroads in the development of new products have been made. Expansion of this facility is planned for the near future and engineering and other feasibility studies for both the secondary processing facility and the trawler refit centre at Burin are continuing. In total, approximately twelve million dollars has been allocated for these projects, eight million dollars of which will be provided from the Canada-Newfoundland Burin Peninsula Development Fund.

The prospects for the inshore fishery also are stronger in 1986 than they have been for some time. Market conditions have improved and we are hopeful that landings will rebound from the disappointing seasons of the past two years. In addition, my Government is prepared to launch new policy and program initiatives wherever possible to resolve the structural problems of seasonality and production imbalances plaguing the inshore sector.

In this regard, the Resource Short Plant Program is being refined and improved to more effectively distribute raw material to inshore plants. This Program is aimed at extending the operating season of these facilities, thereby providing additional employment and increased income in the industry. A recent change made to this Program by the Federal Government, at the urging of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, will ensure that all future fish quota increases under this plan are made available to Newfoundland plants on a right of first refusal basis. This is a most significant change in policy and will provide for improved stability, greater investment and increased jobs.

To complement this initiative, my Government recently embarked upon a new program aimed at the development of a fleet of middle distance vessels. This fleet will enable our fishermen to harvest quotas which have never been caught and which, if not harvested, may be allocated to other provinces or other countries. My Government is also hopeful that additional fish will be made available to this new fleet as foreign fishing efforts are displaced and as stocks increase. Collectively, these actions will provide many new jobs and at the same time enhance the viability of those processing facilities which now have an almost total dependence on highly seasonal landings. The fact that some of the vessels making up this fleet will be designed and built in this Province is a further source of pride for my Government.

My Government also remains committed to an aggressive aquaculture development program for the Province. Expansion of research and development initiatives in this area and the opening of an ultra-modern two million dollar salmon hatchery at Bay D'Espoir mark significant achievements over the past year. In recognition of the role that commercial aquaculture can play in improving employment and incomes in rural areas of the Province, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is also actively pursuing, with the Federal Government, the establishment of a comprehensive Aquaculture Assistance Program. This Program will focus on our comparative advantage in cold water species, such as scallops and mussels, which are currently in production at a number of small scale commercial fish farms in the Province.

Notwithstanding these important program initiatives, my Government will continue to press for greater participation in the management of the fisheries resource. We have already taken advantage of opportunities in those areas under our control, but it is critical that we obtain a greater responsibility in determining how and by whom our fishery resource is harvested. In 1985, for example, we saw the advent of factory freezer trawlers in the Canadian east coast fishery and we continue to see the allocation of fish stocks to foreign interests while we struggle to ensure sufficient allocations to our inshore processing plants. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has made these views known to the Federal Government, particularly with regard to the northern cod stock, approximately 50,000 metric tonnes of which are allocated to fishing interests outside this Province every year. We were recently successful in gaining an additional allocation of cod for the Harbour Grace plant and my Government will continue with representations to ensure that priority of access to this important resource is provided to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In the mining sector, iron ore is expected to be a strong performer in 1986, with the mines at Wabush and Labrador City ranking among the most productive in North America. My Government also looks forward to the completion of the newly reactivated fluorspar mine at St. Lawrence, which, unlike the previous operation, will include a modern processing mill on-site. As well, my Government has recently made a decision to provide a much needed equity investment of twelve million dollars in Baie Verte Asbestos Mines. This investment, which is conditional on certain arrangements being agreed to by the company, the municipality and the workers, should provide long term stability for the mining operation. I am also pleased to report that the discovery of gold on the southwest coast of the island spurred mineral exploration activity to unprecedented levels in 1985 and promises to provide a strong impetus for further exploration in 1986. My Government plans to do its utmost to see that this significant gold find results in the development of a new mine this year.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government takes satisfaction in recent and expected developments in the forest industry and in the management of the forest resource itself. The extensive modernization programs underway at the paper mills in Corner Brook and Grand Falls are progressing smoothly, while the modern technology employed at the Stephenville mill allows production of one of the highest quality papers in the world. My Government is especially pleased that our efforts in Corner Brook have proven successful. Kruger Incorporated, the new owner of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Company, has made a long-term commitment to the operation of that mill, including implementation of a two hundred million dollar capital development program. Modernization of number four paper machine was completed under this program earlier this year and number one paper machine is scheduled for completion in late March. Next in line will be number two paper machine, along with modernization of the woodroom and various other improvements to the mill. A decision was also reached recently to reactivate, in the near future, paper machine number seven, which was "permanently" shut down in 1983 by the previous owner.

My Government is further pleased to inform this Honourable House that substantial progress has been achieved toward greater development and utilization of the vast forest resources of Labrador. Serious interest has been expressed by both Canadian and European pulp and paper companies in the establishment of a pulp facility at Goose Bay utilizing a new chemical production process. Negotiations with these companies are continuing and my Government is hopeful that an agreement to proceed with this project can be finalized.

In the area of forest management, my Government, in co-operation with the pulp and paper industry, will continue its major initiatives in silviculture. In this regard, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador anticipates the signing of a new Forestry Subsidiary Agreement with the Federal Government in 1986, which will provide a basis for maintaining and expanding our forest management programs and contribute to the creation of many new jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

My Government is pleased to announce, as well, that a new one million dollar Forest Protection Centre at Gander will officially open this year and will significantly improve both the Province's firefighting capability and its facilities for combating forest insect pests. A firm stand has been taken on protecting the forest resource against insect pests, and I am pleased to announce that the spruce budworm has, for all practical purposes, now been returned to an endemic state.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government recognizes the important role played by agriculture in the rural sector of our economy and will continue to support the development of this industry so as to reduce our dependency on imported food products. The value of farm cash receipts in 1985 increased by six percent over 1984 and continued growth is expected in 1986.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government is committed to the development of a strong, vibrant small business sector. While the contribution to the provincial economy by this sector is already very significant, there remains substantial opportunity for expansion. In recognition of this, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recently entered into negotiations with the Federal Government to establish a joint Agreement on Initiatives for Industrial and Small Business Development. As a further measure of support, my Government intends to provide increased loans to small business through changes to financial assistance programs administered by the Rural Development Authority and the Farm Development Loan Board.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government has recently intensified discussions with the Province of Quebec over the long standing differences between us on the Upper Churchill power contract. We are optimistic that this new round of discussions will culminate in a mutually acceptable agreement which will see the further use of existing Labrador power for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as well as lead to the development of additional hydro projects in Labrador. Attainment of these goals will ensure a long term supply of a relatively inexpensive source of energy for this Province, thereby providing stability in domestic and industrial power costs.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government regards defence spending as an important tool in regional development and job creation. To this end, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has been actively promoting, in concert with the Federal Government, the designation of Goose Bay as a site for a NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Center. Such a facility would involve a capital expenditure of about two billion dollars and would support approximately three thousand permanent and transient military personnel. With an annual operating budget of about three hundred million dollars, the project would also create five hundred to one thousand permanent jobs in the civilian workforce. While anxious to capture these economic benefits, my Government also welcomes an increased military presence in Labrador as a means to preserve the security and sovereignty of Canada and of our allies.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In my address to you last year, I announced the establishment of a Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. In this regard, I wish to inform the House of Assembly that the final report of the Royal Commission will be submitted in the near future. To assist the Commission in identifying the various causes and contributing factors of unemployment in Newfoundland, my Government has provided it with the resources and manpower necessary to ensure that its investigations are comprehensive and that the opinions and concerns of the general public are fully aired. We anxiously await its findings and I can assure you that my Government will be sensitive to the recommendations arising therefrom.

The Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment was also instructed to examine the debilitating effect of the high rate of unemployment among our young people. Its findings related to this persistent problem will be of great interest to my Government as we develop mitigative measures for this very vital segment of our society.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The creation of new jobs is the prime objective of my Government. That is what economic development and growth is all about. The creation of new employment opportunities will not in itself, however, benefit Newfoundlanders if our people are not equipped with the knowledge and technical skills to enable them to capture these opportunities.

My Government recognizes that this will not happen automatically. For this reason, we have been very active in formulating new initiatives relating to manpower training and development. Implementation of projects recently announced under the Offshore Development Fund will put in place education and training infrastructure to enable our public institutions to deliver the specific type of training that will be required by the offshore industry. Additional projects focused along similar lines will be announced during the coming months.

Last year, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador also concluded a very significant Federal-Provincial Agreement on Training and Employment under the Canadian Jobs Strategy Program. Millions of dollars are being spent this year and more will be spent in future years under this Program.

I am pleased to mention, as well, that my Government is proceeding with changes to our public training institutions to make them more responsive to today's needs. A network of progressive and innovative post-secondary training institutions is the objective of the White Paper on the Re-Organization of the Vocational School System. This plan will be finalized shortly and announcements can be expected in the very near future. My Government is confident that this approach will enable the people of this Province, but particularly the young people, to reap maximum benefits from economic growth that lies ahead.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government is aware that as the economic development of the Province proceeds, the creation of jobs for our people must be accompanied by realistic and enlightened social programs. Indeed, the social needs of our citizens cannot, and will not, be neglected in the Province's quest to develop its natural resources and the economy as a whole. My Government is convinced that without an educated and secure citizenry, the development of our material resources will not result in a fulfilled society. Consequently, we will continue our efforts, wherever fiscally possible, to provide better health care, education and other critically important social services.

In this regard, my Government is conscious of the need to enhance the quality of education of our children from the time they enter the school system through to completion of high school. In order to make the Department of Education more sensitive to this ever demanding challenge, a major functional realignment of responsibilities was recently implemented within that Department. This initiative will assist in maintaining a balance between the need for careful financial management and the increasing need for contemporary education programs in response to public interest and concern.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In my address to you last year, I was pleased to inform the House that the Report of the Task Force on Affirmative Action had been received and that my Government was actively considering its recommendations. Since that time, my Government has introduced a number of policies designed to remove any barriers which might prevent women from full participation in the Public Service. As well, representation of women on Government appointed Boards, Agencies and Commissions is being increased and the Accelerated Management Development Program for women is continuing. Also, my Government recently reactivated the Task Force on Affirmative Action to address the needs of the disabled and native peoples.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The area of chronic care continues to be a complex and changing phenomenon and one that will increase in importance as the number of elderly requiring care increases. My Government established a Royal Commission on Hospital and Nursing Home Costs to advise on the service needs of our citizens in this respect. The recommendations of that Commission have now been addressed by my Government and we are moving as expeditiously as possible to implement the

highest priority items. Already, the Lions Manor Senior Citizens Home in Placentia has been completed and seventy-five citizens will be accommodated in that most contemporary facility. To assist in further allocating beds for this special group, the Department of Health embarked upon a study of regional needs in chronic care last year. A final report is due for completion this

spring. In the interim, federal-provincial funding in the order of six and one-half million dollars will be made available in 1986 to construct facilities for one hundred and fifty new chronic care beds in the Province, most of which will be established at Agnes Pratt Nursing Home in St. John's and Golden Heights Manor in Bonavista.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government's Five-Year Plan for hospital construction is proceeding well. This past year has seen the completion of a modern hospital facility in Clarenville to service the needs of that area. Another new hospital, located in Salt Pond on the Burin Peninsula, is due for completion this year and construction on the extension to the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Care

Centre is to continue this summer. The past year has also seen the beginning of a concerted effort to rationalize health services in the Province. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Hospital and Nursing Home Costs, my Government has initiated a study into the development of health care services in the St. John's region. A final report is expected shortly on the redevelopment of the St. John's hospital system. These initiatives are evidence of our commitment to provide a full range of quality health care services to all regions of the Province.

During the past year, my Government also developed a Green Paper on Health Care Expenditures which addressed issues relating to the cost and financing of health care. We have encouraged public reaction to this document as a means of receiving innovative and cost effective ideas for the future. This is essential given the reduction of federal financial support for health care and in recognition of the large percentage of the Provincial Budget already dedicated to it. We will weigh very carefully the views of our citizens in formulating a base for future spending in this area. Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government is committed to breaking the dependency of the less fortunate in society on the public welfare system. To this end, we allocated twenty-seven million dollars in 1985 to the Community Development Program within the Department of Social Services in an effort to provide employment opportunities for people rather than obliging them to rely on traditional forms of welfare. This Program has enhanced the income and quality of life of eleven thousand five hundred families and has funded many useful public services throughout the Province.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recently announced, with the Government of Canada, a major new Federal-Provincial Agreement on Social Housing. Under previous arrangements, both the Federal and Provincial Governments had been responsible for delivering housing programs in this Province, and this resulted in certain duplications and inefficiencies. The new arrangement will consolidate the delivery of most housing programs within the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, thereby simplifying the bureaucracy and providing "one-stop shopping" for those seeking help from government. Additionally, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will now cost-share all housing programs to be administered in the Province. These steps should lead immediately to improved services and assistance for those most in need. In this regard, my Government is pleased to announce that over two thousand four hundred new families will receive housing assistance in 1986, with over twenty-five million dollars to be spent on housing construction alone.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

During the past year we have seen the revitalization of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council with its membership being brought up to full complement. We are confident that the Council's vital role of ensuring the maximization of Government's funds to both amateur and professional artists of Newfoundland will be wisely and effectively carried out. In this regard, the Council is presently undertaking a major review of its mandate and objectives with a view to being more responsive to the needs of the arts community and to ensure that the vitality displayed in the past by our very talented Newfoundlanders is sustained in their future endeavours. My Government will cooperate with the Council and provide financial support wherever possible.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In addition to The Atlantic Accord, my Government plans to place a number of important pieces of legislation before you this Session.

Significant amendments will be introduced to a number of aspects of The Workers' Compensation Act. An external appeal mechanism to hear the concerns of workers regarding decisions rendered by the Commission will be established; workers' compensation coverage will be extended generally; and the internal administrative procedures of the Commission will be streamlined to provide a more responsive service to the public.

Amendments to The Consumer Protection Act will be introduced which will permit an increase in the range of services offered by finance and trust companies and which will also provide greater protection to the general public in the area of consumption.

An amendment to The Municipalities Act will also be introduced to improve the operational structure of municipalities in such areas as borrowing, taxation and election procedures.

In an effort to increase student participation in the decision making process at Memorial University, my Government will be introducing an amendment to The Memorial University Act to increase student representation on the Senate from eight to twelve members.

Amendments will also be proposed to The Public Service Pensions Act to ensure equitable treatment of all persons under government sponsored pension plans and to eliminate the existing minimum entry age.

Amendments to The Electric Power Control Act will be proposed to ensure that an appeal may proceed to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland from the findings in a Public Utilities Board report on a Hydro or Power Distribution District referral.

My Government also proposes to amend The Department of Environment Act to substantially increase the penalties imposed on those who are responsible for pollution and to ensure that, where Government must initiate clean-up efforts, the cost is ultimately borne by those responsible for the pollution in the first instance.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

With the prospect of a revitalized inshore and offshore fishery, with increased exports of fish products, with stability in our forestry, mining and agriculture sectors, combined with the prospects held out by the development of the Hibernia oil field, my Government is confident that the necessary steps are being taken to break the unemployment problem in this Province. Growth and balance, however, must be our watchwords: growth in our economy and growth in employment opportunities for our people, tempered by the balanced perspective necessary to ensure the provision of vital health care and other social services.

As well, my Government is ever cognizant of the need to ensure and protect the unique culture of Newfoundland. It is said that Newfoundlanders, when they leave the Province, never put down roots anywhere else. Rather, they simply drop anchor, ready always to return. It falls to the Members of this Honourable House to ensure the creation of a climate of confidence so that our people may leave their roots deep in the soil and bedrock of this Province.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

During the course of this Session, you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence your labours in this Second Session of the Fortieth General Assembly.

May Devine Providence guide you in your deliberations.