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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 43e | 1ère  | Discours du Trône | 20 mars 1996 | Frederick Russel | Lieutenant Gouverneur | Liberal |

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

I take great pleasure in welcoming you to this First Session of the Forty-third General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland. It is time to change the name of our province to reflect the reality that it is made up of two equally important parts, Newfoundland and Labrador. My Government will bring forward legislation to change the name of the province from Newfoundland to Newfoundland and Labrador. This will require an amendment to the Terms of Union to be approved by the House of Assembly and by Parliament.

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

A New Mandate

On January 29, My Government sought a mandate from the people based on its election platform. On February 22, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador provided My Government with that mandate. My Government is committed to implementing the platform on which it was elected.

That platform sets out a vision of Newfoundland and Labrador where we will create new wealth from the land and from the sea, we will build a new economy based on advanced technologies, we will revitalize our rural communities, and we will meet the needs of our people, particularly in education and health care.

This is My Government's plan for the future. That plan reflects the tremendous new opportunities for growth and development throughout our province. It reflects, as well, the challenges we must overcome. A key element of this plan is partnership. My Government is committed to an open, on-going process of dialogue and discussion in decision-making.

Government must promote new opportunities and provide vital public services. But, growth and development will come from the energy, commitment and talents of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The future is in all our hands.

Full Benefits from Major Resource Projects

Major new projects in mines and petroleum provide exciting new opportunities to boost the provincial economy at a critical time in our development.

These projects can generate enormous growth and new jobs in our economy. These projects can be the basis for the creation of major new integrated industries in petroleum and mining. They can provide increased public revenues to support needed public services and to re-build renewable resource industries.

These projects can be the means to achieve all of these things. But, to do so, we must have the foresight to plan, the entrepreneurial drive to seize new business opportunities, and the commitment as a government to gain the full benefits from these projects for our people.

My Government will gain full benefits from these projects for our people, in terms of direct employment, skills development, support services, processing of raw materials, and revenues for the province.

To gain those full benefits, there must be a Minister and a department that will direct all their efforts and energies to achieving this crucial goal. That is why My Government has established a new Department of Mines and Energy to focus sharply on gaining full benefits from new developments in non-renewable resources.

Voisey's Bay

The Voisey's Bay mineral find, 35 kilometres South of Nain, is one of the richest nickel, copper and cobalt reserves in the world. The Voisey's Bay mine and other projects in Labrador should yield benefits, to the greatest extent possible, for Labradorians, including aboriginal peoples. My Government will gain full benefits from the Voisey's Bay mine, including the construction of a smelter and refinery in our province.

Other Prospective Mines

There are other current mine and quarry development prospects; many of which could enter production in 1996 or 1997. This is in addition to the mines and quarries currently operating in the province. My Government will work in close co-operation with the mining industry to promote the opening of new mines and quarries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mineral Exploration

Mineral exploration on the island is increasing; it has increased dramatically throughout Labrador. My Government will work in close co-operation with the mining industry to encourage exploration for new mineral resources in our province.

Offshore Petroleum

Hibernia

In September 1990, a binding agreement was signed for the development of the Hibernia oilfield. Construction of the Gravity Based Structure began at Bull Arm in 1990. This structure will be towed to the Hibernia site in 1997, after which production will begin.

Pre-production costs alone for Hibernia will total $5.8 billion. During production, expenditures in our province will average $400 million a year for the next 20 years.

My Government will gain full benefits from the production phase of the Hibernia project in terms of employment, services and development of an integrated offshore petroleum industry, in accordance with the Hibernia agreement.

Terra Nova

In December 1995, Petro-Canada (on behalf of its partners) announced that they will proceed with the development plan preparation for the Terra Nova oilfield. Pre-production, capital and operating costs for the project will exceed $5 billion during the 15-20 year life of the project. Production of oil is expected to begin by 2001. Detailed engineering and construction could begin as early as 1998.

My Government aims to complete negotiations this year with the Terra Nova consortium for early development of the project, with the maximum benefits possible for the province, in terms of employment, skills development, services, royalties and other revenues.

Oil Trans-shipment

My Government will ensure that any trans-shipment facility for offshore oil is built in Newfoundland to serve Hibernia, Terra Nova and other offshore developments (such as Hebron, White Rose and Ben Nevis) that will follow.

Further Exploration

My Government will work in close co-operation with the petroleum industry to promote further exploration of our offshore petroleum resources, with full participation by provincial firms and employees.

West Coast Petroleum

Oil exploration on the West Coast continues to increase. Hunt Oil and Pan Canadian Petroleum have drilled two onshore wells and will drill an offshore well this year. Talisman Resources is drilling a well at Cape St. George. Seismic programs are continuing. New areas are being offered for exploration. My Government will work in close co-operation with the petroleum industry to promote continued exploration for petroleum resources on the West Coast of Newfoundland.

Developing Our Renewable Resources

The Fishery

The fishery has been the backbone of our economy for centuries. It is a central part of our future. Aquaculture requires special attention, given its considerable potential to increase employment and production.

To reflect the importance of this industry to our economy and especially the hundreds of our fishing communities, My Government has created a department devoted solely to the fishery, the new Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Our highest priority must be conservation. We must stay the course with the new conservation ethic established over the last two years. My Government will work in close co-operation with the federal government and the fishing industry to ensure that groundfish and other resources are protected, re-built and sustainably harvested for the benefit of present and future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The fishery must be a source of better and more secure incomes for our fishers. Critical to this is the establishment of a balance between harvesting capacity and the capacity of the resource. The core of the new fishery must be full-time, professional fishers, who have made a serious commitment to the industry and, therefore, should have priority of access to resources.

My Government is committed to working with the federal government and the fishing industry to create an ecologically sustainable and economically viable fishery, with better and more secure incomes for harvesters and processors.

Last year, harvests of crab, scallops, shrimp, and surf clams resulted in record export values. This more diverse, multi-species approach to the fishery will be an important part of a more prosperous and stable fishery of the future.

My Government will work closely with the federal government and the fishing industry to promote continued diversification of species and fishing areas, to yield the full benefits for our harvesters and processors from the resources off our coasts.

The processing sector of the fishing industry must become commercially-viable and capable of providing good incomes for its employees. This will require a longer season of operation by processing facilities serving all areas of the province.

My Government will establish a joint government-industry-union task force to develop proposals for dealing with the need to bring processing capacity into line with resource capacity, to ensure that adequate processing capacity is available to harvesting enterprises along all areas of our coasts, and to move toward longer operating seasons and the production of more value-added products.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture has become a major food source worldwide. Norway has set an example of what can be achieved. From 1985 to 1995, their production of salmon increased from approximately 20,000 tonnes to approximately 280,000 tonnes. Most of this production is by commercial fishers and their families.

In 1995, over 1,000 tonnes of salmon, steelhead trout, mussels, scallops and char were produced in our province. This is double the production from the preceding year. Production is expected to double again this year. Other species undergoing development toward commercial production include: cod, flounder, halibut, wolffish and sea urchins. With vigorous development, the aquaculture industry can expand rapidly in our province.

My Government will provide financial and marketing assistance to new and existing aquaculture enterprises, support coastal zone aquaculture planning, education in aquaculture technologies, research and development, and extension services to assist aquaculture operators.

Forest Resources

My Government has created a Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods to focus on these land-based, renewable resources.

Forest industries ... including pulp and paper, sawmilling, wood products manufacturing and fuel wood ... account for 10,000 direct and indirect jobs. More than 80 communities have a moderate to heavy reliance on forestry for their income.

The major issue facing the forest industry is the availability and security of wood supply over the next 10 to 15 years. Ensuring an adequate supply of good quality wood is critical to maintaining viable, healthy forest industries.

To deal with this problem, My Government has entered a five year shared-cost silviculture agreement with Abitibi-Price and Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, and will seek to negotiate a multi-year Forest Renewal Program with the federal government.

My Government will establish a provincial forest research and education facility at Corner Brook. This facility will integrate the research capacity of the federal and provincial governments and the private sector. The Centre will complement facilities in Corner Brook at which Memorial University will offer programs in forestry and environmental science.

Tourism and Culture

The magnificence of our wilderness areas, the rugged beauty of our seacoasts, the richness of our history, the unique character of our communities, the dynamism of our culture and the wealth of our wildlife, are all renewable resources for our tourism and cultural industries.

My Government is moving forward with initiatives to market Newfoundland and Labrador as a tourist destination, improve access to tourism services through a central reservation system, develop the potential of Marble Mountain as a four-season resort with private sector participation, and create and enhance interpretation centres for our sites of historic and natural interest.

My Government will carry forward preparations for the Cabot 500 celebrations. The federal Department of Canadian Heritage will help support the Year of the Arts to highlight our history and culture through a series of artistic events.

Building the New Economy

There are approximately 130 advanced technology companies in the province, employing about 3,400 people, many in the St. John's area. In addition, about 300 smaller firms employ a further 3,000 people that rely heavily on work generated by advanced technology companies. In all, information technology firms generate annual revenues of about $470 million, a major contribution to the provincial economy.

Our advanced technology businesses now form a critical mass for our province to become recognized as a centre for this industry. My Government, in partnership with industry and our educational institutions, will promote our province as a global centre for advanced technologies.

This will require a public-private partnership involving business leaders in our province and in key commercial centres around the world to identify new trends, and resulting opportunities. My Government will create an International Investment and Marketing Council, consisting of key business leaders here and abroad as well as Ministers, to identify and act quickly to capture new opportunities worldwide for provincial businesses.

The Information Highway

Our province is especially well-placed to build industry and deliver services on the information highway. Over the next five years, New Tel will invest $240 million to upgrade its fibre optic network and Cable Atlantic will invest $80 million to upgrade its broadband cable network. With this critical infrastructure, our province is "closer" to users of the information highway globally than almost any other part of Canada or the United States.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology is also the Minister Responsible for the Information Highway... and for the Information Seaway.

My Government will vigorously pursue new opportunities relating to the information highway under the strategy being finalized by the Operation Online Task Force, which is an initiative of the government and the private sector.

Government must set an example in the integration of information technologies in its operations, especially in delivery of services to the public. My Government will work closely with Memorial University, educators and health care providers to promote the use of the distance education and tele-medicine networks in our province.

Revitilazing Our Rural Communities

My Government is committed to the rural areas of our Province. The economic backbone and the cultural wellspring of Newfoundland and Labrador has been our coastal communities and resource towns.

To foster development throughout the province, My Government has established a new Department of Development and Rural Renewal. This new department will focus on the 19 economic zones, as outlined in the report of the Task Force on Community Economic Development in Newfoundland and Labrador. To further advance this goal, a Committee of Cabinet on the Revitalization of Rural Communities is being formed.

Manufacturing and Processing

Manufacturing and processing, outside of the fishery, forestry, mining and agrifood sectors, is carried out by 350 businesses, employing 6,000 people and generating $550 million in annual sales. My Government will take a leading role in attracting new investment and promoting the expansion of manufacturing and processing enterprises, especially in rural areas.

Small Business

Small business is taking the lead in diversifying our economy. It is expanding into new areas such as advanced technology, aquaculture, tourism, manufacturing and processing, and various forms of specialized services.

My Government will foster the entrepreneurial spirit through enhanced access to small business training and counselling services, particularly in rural areas. My Government will support the development of mentoring by experienced business persons to advise those operating new businesses. And, My Government will support efforts by small and medium-sized businesses to establish cooperative networks with businesses in other markets.

Aboriginal Peoples

Economic and social issues relating to aboriginal peoples require priority attention. The land claims process must be made more effective to provide for the earliest possible agreements. Settlement of land claims is critical to the effective advancement, socially and economically, of aboriginal peoples and our province as a whole. My Government will give priority to negotiation of aboriginal land claims.

Integrating Social and Economic Policy

The Strategic Economic Plan is a valuable blueprint for developing the economic potential of our province. My Government will continue the implementation of the Economic Plan and will integrate this with a Strategic Social Plan.

Strategic Social Plan

A Strategic Social Plan is needed to meet the basic human needs of our citizens and to advance the economic development of our province. My Government will develop a Strategic Social Plan following the process used to develop the Strategic Economic Plan. My Government will release a Consultation Paper for a Strategic Social Plan within 60 days.

An independent Social Policy Advisory Committee will then be formed made up of persons drawn from social action groups, the voluntary sector, educators, health care providers, environmentalists, women's groups, persons with disabilities, aboriginal peoples, business, labour and the academic community. My Government will draw on this report to complete the development of a Strategic Social Plan by early 1997.

Meeting the Needs of Our People

The Fiscal Situation

1996 and 1997 will be difficult years for our province's economy. They will be difficult years for the provincial government's finances. The outlook for the years that follow is for a much improved economic and fiscal situation. However, the provincial government's overall revenues will grow more slowly than the economy, in part because equalization payments go down as receipts from taxes and royalties go up.

My Government will maintain a sound fiscal position in 1996 and 1997 and will continue to move toward a balanced Budget during its term of office.

The Budgetary Process

Traditionally, the making of Budgets is shrouded in secrecy. Budgets involve critical choices that affect all of our people. They should have the opportunity to participate more fully in these important decisions.

As promised, My Government has released a pre-budget consultation document setting out fully the state of the provincial government's finances. As well, the Minister of Finance is holding public meetings across the province to receive the public's views. The consultation process will be completed, as promised, within 60 days of the February 22nd election.

Public Service Workers Make a Valuable Contribution to the Quality of Life in Our Province

Our public service makes a valuable contribution to the quality of life in our province. Our province needs the commitment, the energy and the dedication of those who provide services to the public. Those who serve the public have borne the burden of restraint and have continued to perform their duties in a diligent and professional way.

The time has come for a new partnership with those who serve the public, to draw on their talents and their ideas to maintain and improve service delivery. In making reforms to public services, notably in education and health, My Government will fully involve those who provide these vital public services in a process of dialogue and partnership.

Partnerships to Protect the Environment

Environmental assessment is critical to ensure the environment is protected in a way that allows full public participation. However, unnecessary expense and delay can arise where the federal and provincial governments carry out separate environmental assessments for the same project.

My Government will seek arrangements, wherever possible, with the federal government whereby environmental assessments in the province are carried out under a single, joint, federal-provincial process.

Health

Government has no greater responsibility than to provide quality health care to our citizens. New methods of treatment, an aging population, a new emphasis on prevention and the difficult fiscal situation of the provincial government all point toward changes in how health care is provided.

Change and reform do not threaten the health system. A far greater threat would be not to pursue change and reform. We should not focus on maintaining health care infrastructure. Rather, we should focus on the quality and accessibility of health care, particularly in rural areas. My Government will continue to work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association to provide physician services in rural areas.

We need a new partnership involving health care providers, hospital boards and interested members of the public, to fully discuss alternative approaches to providing quality health care to our people. My Government is committed to dialogue and partnership to provide quality health care for our people.

Educational Reform

Our educational system is a vital public service, key to the future of our province. Our educational system faces major challenges, among them a declining number of students and the very difficult fiscal situation of the provincial government.

Last year, a referendum was held on the important question of denominational schools. The people have spoken. Educational reform will proceed. My Government awaits the passage by Parliament of amendments to Term 17 of the Terms of Union. This is a necessary step for educational reform to proceed. It is important that Parliament, after carefully considering the matter, give its approval in a timely way so that reforms can proceed and savings be achieved for the 1996 school year.

My Government is committed to dialogue and discussion on implementing educational reform. We need a new partnership involving educators, school boards, the churches, parents, students, other interested members of the public and the provincial government.

Reform will mean some consolidation of schools in the next few years. As this occurs, there will be special cases, such as isolated communities, where schools must continue to operate. Any plan for consolidation of schools must meet the test of public scrutiny and common sense. There will be no new school viability rules for September 1996. There will be extensive public consultation before any new school viability rules are adopted.

A Strong Canada for a Strong Newfoundland and Labrador

According to the United Nations, Canada ranks number one in the world as a place to live. According to the World Bank, Canada is the second wealthiest country in the world. Our country is not perfect, but Canada has done more as a nation for its people than any other country in history.

My Government's vision for Canada is one of unity, progress and growth ... growth economically and growth in fairness and opportunity. That is the kind of country that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want. That is the kind of Canada that will make our province a better place in which to live.

We cannot build up our province by weakening our country. We strengthen our province and better our future by maintaining a strong and united Canada. The solution to national unity is not simply to devolve more and more federal powers to provincial governments, as some have suggested.

All governments, including the federal government, are seeking to reduce expenditures and eliminate deficits. This effort by the federal government must not, however, shift financial burdens unfairly onto those provinces that are least able to bear those burdens.

My Government will continue to press for federal-provincial fiscal arrangements that recognize both this Province's needs and its fiscal capacity.

My Government supports dialogue and discussion to achieve the greatest possible efficiency in Canadian federalism. We have no money to waste on duplication and overlap. My Government will take an open, pragmatic approach to reforming federalism, to maintain a united Canada and a strong national government that helps meet the needs of all Canadians.

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

Voluntary Sector

The people of our Province have a strong tradition of volunteerism. The hours of volunteer work that our people give is well above the Canadian average. This volunteer service would cost in excess of three hundred million dollars annually if the various agencies and organizations had to pay for these services.

My Government wishes to recognize these outstanding Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Therefore, I am pleased to announce today that My Government will create a Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer Medal to recognize those citizens who render outstanding service to our Province in the area of volunteerism.

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 First Session of the Forty-third General Assembly.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.