

The Assembly met at 2:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — I wish to inform the Assembly that I have received a communication from the private secretary to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor stating that His Honour will open the fourth session of the twenty-third legislature at 2:30 p.m. today, the 15th day of March, 1999.

2:32 p.m.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was then pleased to open the session with the following speech as tabled:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

It is my pleasure today to welcome you to the fourth session of the twenty-third Legislature of Saskatchewan.

It is once again my pleasure to begin by welcoming all those citizens of our province who are observing these proceedings, both here and in their homes.

THE SASKATCHEWAN WAY

As we gather here today, with spring less than a week away, we might consider the wise counsel of the Saskatchewan poet Vesta Althea Pickel, who wrote,

**‘There is no spring, though all the world is greening,
‘Unless you see through eyes renewed with hope.’**

So let us renew ourselves with hope, as we join for what will likely be the last regular sitting of this Legislature before the year 2000.

With spring in the air and a new century dawning, it is a good time to reflect on the basic values that have built our province. The values of balance, and common sense, and hope.

The women and men of Saskatchewan have used these values to build our province. Working together, with balance, hope and common sense, is “The Saskatchewan Way.”

In the Saskatchewan Way, we came back from the 1980s, that dark winter of division and deficits, and into the bright greening springs of co-operation and prosperity.

In the Saskatchewan Way, we pulled ourselves free from the perilous quicksand of financial irresponsibility, and stepped onto the firm bedrock of financial balance, allowing us to invest in our most precious resource, our people, by providing the families of Saskatchewan with the jobs, health care and education they need.

Those women and men responded by building a province that is the best place in the world to live.

A province that is home to artists like Vesta Pickel, the longtime Saskatchewan poet with whose words we began today. Mrs. Pickel is with us here in the chamber, and it is my pleasure to ask her to rise to accept our welcome.

A province that is home to entrepreneurs, to dynamic companies and co-operatives. Home to innovations, in technology and social programs.

And most importantly, a province that is home to some of Canada’s best communities, where the women and men of Saskatchewan are raising their families and building our common future together.

We can be proud that we have come a long way in a short time. But we have much work left to do, to build our future the Saskatchewan Way.

So while the women and men of Saskatchewan expect lively debate in this session, they expect my government to attend to the people’s business – to the real issues that are important to them.

And my government will do just that.

My government will attend to the people’s agenda:

- Jobs and our economy.
- Our schools.
- Our health care.
- And our community safety.

We meet here to resume the people’s work as the last shadows of winter dissolve in springtime’s hopeful sun. To keep “renewing our eyes with hope,” so that we might continue to enjoy the full greening of each Saskatchewan spring.

JOBS AND GROWTH

The first step is job creation and continued growth.

Together, we have created 30,000 jobs. We will do more.

Step by step, through balance and common sense, we will keep building the new Saskatchewan and its growing, prosperous, diversified full-employment economy.

A new Saskatchewan that builds on the innovation that is the trademark of our province. Where a vital new rural, small-town Saskatchewan is breaking new ground in value-added agriculture, in forestry, in tourism, in energy and in information technology.

A new Saskatchewan where young people stay at home to do high-skilled, high-paid work. Where everyone has access to the opportunities of economic growth. And where our economy thrives on the creativity and knowledge of all its workers.

We’re on the way there. And we’ll get there, with hope and common sense, a step at a time.

We must not act recklessly. We have learned through bitter experience that we cannot afford to buy our future with borrowed money.

The Saskatchewan Way is the balanced way. The sensible way.

The people of Saskatchewan recovered from billion-dollar deficits in the 1980s and balanced the budget.

And building on that foundation, we are achieving some remarkable things together:

- Our population is steadily growing.
- Between 1992 and 1997 Saskatchewan led the nation in economic growth, and is still growing today.
- We're paying down debt, from 70 per cent of GDP to 40 per cent today.
- More people are working in good, full-time jobs in Saskatchewan today than ever before. Unemployment is at a 16-year low.
- A recent Alberta study ranked Saskatchewan number one in youth employment for three years running.
- Through initiatives like the Northern Dialogue, we are building partnerships with Northern and Aboriginal communities, working together to open the doors to full participation in our economy, and to realize the vast untapped economic potential these women and men represent.
- And capital is being invested in our economy. We saw \$7 billion in new investment in 1998 alone – a fundamental declaration of confidence in Saskatchewan by the business and co-operative community.

Our rapidly diversifying economy is allowing us to weather a worldwide economic storm – a decline in prices for oil and farm commodities, and an international subsidy war that depressed farm prices even further.

Earlier this year, my government acted to help farm producers affected by these events.

My government brought in a bridge support program at a critical time to assist our hog producers.

A few weeks ago, my government committed \$140 million to assist producers. We will pay 40 per cent of the proposed federal program, to cover 40 per cent of Canada's farmland, financed by just 3 per cent of Canada's taxpayers.

And my government also announced an \$85-million "top-up" for NISA accounts.

My government will continue to fight for a national response to a national problem — for a national program that will help our producers, and is fair to our taxpayers.

These challenges remind us of a hard and sobering fact: Our old economy – built on the export of raw unprocessed commodities – will always be at the mercy of prices we don't control.

That's why we must continue to diversify, into new crops, into new resources, and into new value-added services, production and manufacturing.

We will not turn our backs on the past. But we must look ahead to our future.

The Saskatchewan of today is wheat fields. But it is also agricultural biotechnology and food processing and implement

manufacturing and knowledge export.

It is mining, but it is also robotics and information technology. Forestry and forest products processing. And tourism. And all the enterprise that our clever and capable people can imagine.

We are building on the old to create a new Saskatchewan economy that gives us a fighting chance to ride out boom and bust cycles – at last.

In this session of the legislature, my government will continue this important work:

- My government will continue to work with the business and co-operative community to create jobs, to promote investment in diversification, to further reduce the cost of doing business in Saskatchewan, and to expand trade and tourism.
- My government will make education a renewed priority, to ensure our young people learn the skills they'll need to find their place in the new economy.
- My government will continue to work with industry and with researchers to expand and diversify research and development.
- And my government will maintain Saskatchewan's balanced budget and balanced approach. Further measures to promote growth, diversification and job creation will be announced in this year's budget, and during this session of the Legislature.

Finally, since co-operatives are one of Saskatchewan's most important building blocks in our new economy, my government will introduce *The New Generation Co-operatives Act* to help them in their work.

EDUCATION

The next step is education.

My government's goal is to keep building an education system that gives our children and youth the tools they'll need to "learn a living".

They'll need a new set of basic skills – how to use emerging technology, and how to be comfortable using it to keep learning.

They'll need the full support of our communities.

And they'll need to be ready to learn, in safe and healthy schools.

Our teachers and parents are already making real progress meeting those needs:

- Our province last year completed a top-to-bottom review of our Saskatchewan school core curriculum.
- Twenty-six schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods already have pre-kindergarten programs, helping our youngest students to be ready to learn.
- Computers are already almost as familiar as blackboards in our schools. More than 90 per cent of our schools now have an internet connection.
- Saskatchewan's Community Schools are helping local

neighborhoods and communities fully support their students in their schools – and received a national award from the Canadian Association of Community Education last year in recognition of their work.

- Schools are being upgraded and renovated, and new modern schools are being built in growing communities – like Lloydminster, Biggar, and Yorkton.

This afternoon, one-fifth of the population of Saskatchewan is in school. All of our school-age children will spend their entire adult lives in the twenty-first century. Next September, 12,000 more students will enroll in kindergarten.

They are our province's future. And as we approach the 21st Century, now is not the time to freeze investment in our schools and our children's educations.

My government today renews its commitment to quality education in Saskatchewan – and to investing appropriately to ensure our children get the excellent, accessible, world-class education they will need.

During this session of the Legislature, my government will work closely with parents, teachers and school boards, to move forward on some of the key priorities facing our school system:

- Making sure vulnerable children get the best possible start, through stronger pre-kindergarten programs.
- Making sure children get full benefit from their schools, by implementing Saskatchewan's core curriculum and making it more accessible to parents and teachers.
- Making sure students can handle the basic tools of tomorrow's economy, by providing broader access to computers and new technologies.
- And investing appropriately to ensure all our students learn in good, safe schools.

As we prepare our classrooms and students for the new century, the time has also come to ask what is next for our schools themselves in our complex and challenging times.

More than ever, we must see our schools not just as repositories of learning for our children, but as social, cultural and educational centres for our communities. The local school can become the heart and soul of every neighbourhood in Saskatchewan.

So, in the same co-operative, collaborative way we have built our schools, we will launch a Role of Schools Task Force. My government will engage in dialogue with teachers, trustees, and our other partners, to define the changing purposes of our schools, and to determine how we can best achieve those ends.

In this sitting of the Legislature, my Government will introduce amendments to *The Education Act* to help school boards serve families better.

But education and training go beyond our kindergartens, elementary and high schools.

Saskatchewan's universities and colleges are as crucial to the future of our children as their elementary and secondary schools. My government is committed to working with the

university community to provide world-class post-secondary education – and to making sure our students have fair and equal access to that education.

And my Government will introduce *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act* to fundamentally reform and improve Saskatchewan's apprenticeship program.

The goal is an apprenticeship system tightly integrated into our province's economy, helping students get directly into jobs. Employers and labour representatives will be given a much bigger say in management of the program. Over 5,000 apprentices will benefit from this reform.

We must make learning a lifelong pursuit, and my government is committed to making learning a way of life.

HEALTH CARE

The next step is health care.

My government's goal is to keep building a strong, sustainable health system. Health care that is there when people need it, and that helps people stay well in the first place.

Our province founded Medicare. In Health Region One in southwestern Saskatchewan, people and communities decided to work together to provide themselves with the kind of health care they needed.

They were determined that no family should go without medical care because they lacked the money to pay for it. And their determination lives on in us.

We've tackled a lot of problems in that same spirit of co-operation and common sense. Our people are justly proud of Medicare.

Now is not the time to abandon the principles of our health system, nor to freeze our investment in our people's health.

Instead, we are renewing health care The Saskatchewan Way, working together with common sense and balance.

And we have made good progress:

- By building better clinics and health facilities, that communities and citizens need and use.
- By reorganizing 400 local health administrations into just 32 regional administrations.
- And by investing in new, better community care – like home care, community nutrition programs, ambulance services, first responder programs, and other initiatives.

At the same time, we have been moving ahead with advanced care:

- By investing in new, better acute care facilities, like the General and Pasqua hospitals, providing world-class hospital services for southern Saskatchewan.
- And by investing in the latest miracles of modern technology – additional MRIs and state of the art nuclear medicine facilities in our major hospitals, CT services in Prince Albert, and satellite renal dialysis in Tisdale and

Yorkton.

None of this has been easy. Mistakes have been made. But it has been worth it.

Now we must move forward, and address the continuing challenges in health care.

In this session of the legislature, my government will introduce measures designed to tackle some of the key priorities still facing our health system:

- **Waiting times.** A comprehensive plan will be introduced to reduce waiting times for key procedures.
- **Cancer treatment.** Important improvements will be made to our province's cancer care.
- **Women's health.** A multi-year plan will be introduced to address critical needs for women's health needs – including prevention and better treatment for illnesses like heart disease, osteoporosis, and diabetes among women.
- **Health providers.** My government will work closely with health providers to make sustainable improvements to working conditions and terms of employment, so they can provide better care. We will work to reach agreements that are fair to both health providers and to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.
- **And even less spending on administration.** In the for-profit American health industry, more than twenty per cent of health spending goes to administration. Our public Medicare system spends a mere fraction of that on administration – and my government is going to reduce that spending even more, by working with health districts to further economize on health administration.

This has been an important year for the Canadian Medicare system.

For four years, provinces have tried to cope with deep federal cutbacks to health care and other social services.

And for four years, provinces have argued that health care should be a greater national priority.

As chair of the provincial Premiers for the past eighteen months, our Premier helped lead this national fight. And a few weeks ago our efforts were rewarded, when Ottawa announced it will at long last begin to reverse its health cuts, and make a significant national reinvestment into Canada's Medicare system.

Every penny of that new federal investment in Saskatchewan will go to improve front-line health care.

And my government, which replaced every lost federal dollar over the years and more, will continue to invest substantial provincial funds in front-line services as well – shorter waiting times, better cancer treatment and women's health care, and better working conditions for health providers so that they can provide better care.

This Legislature can make a further contribution – by reaffirming and enshrining the principles of Medicare, and by strengthening the rights of patients.

To that end, and as a first step towards implementing the recently negotiated Agreement on Canada's Social Union, my government will introduce *The Saskatchewan Medicare Act*.

This Act will lock in our province's unconditional support for *The Canada Health Act* – both its principles, and its continued application as a national statute.

This Act will also give citizens the right to be informed about the quality of their care and how it compares to other provinces; and it will give citizens the right to be heard when they don't receive the care they need.

While debating these measures, my government will challenge everyone in this legislature – and those hoping to join you here – to explain the public positions they have taken on *The Canada Health Act* and our national Medicare system, Saskatchewan's greatest gift to Canada.

The people of Saskatchewan believe in Medicare. My government believes in Medicare. Together, we will protect and build Medicare, and we will ensure our citizens have the services they need and deserve.

JUSTICE

The fourth step is safe communities.

My government's goal is to ensure that citizens are safe on their streets and in their homes, by working together with police, prosecutors and communities to crack down hard on the handful of criminals who cause most of the crime.

Saskatchewan's Serious Crimes Task Force is targeting organized criminals and gangs, and the Serious and Habitual Youth Offender Comprehensive Action Plan is targeting violent and repeat young offenders.

To support these initiatives, my government has pressed for important amendments to the federal *Young Offenders Act*, with reforms including adult trials for young offenders accused of murder, attempted murder, sexual assault and armed robbery, and more appropriate sentencing rules for serious offences.

Some progress has been made on these issues last week. But a great deal of work remains to be done to strengthen federal law on young offenders.

My government will vigorously pursue these efforts, and will support them by introducing measures designed to further improve police and emergency services.

My government will continue to work with people and communities to turn around the causes that lead directly to crime: Unemployment and poverty, lack of education, family violence, poor childhood nutrition, and tragedies like fetal alcohol syndrome.

Replacing poverty and hopelessness with independence and hope are noble causes in their own right. They are also key elements of any comprehensive crime reduction strategy.

Important initiatives like my government's fundamental reform of the welfare system, *Building Independence*, and my government's award-winning *Child Action Plan*, are restoring hope to vulnerable families and building safer communities from the ground up.

In this session of the Legislature, my government will press on with the *Building Independence* welfare reform, the *Child Action Plan*, and other initiatives designed to build healthier and safer communities.

And my government will introduce *The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (1999)*. This important measure will improve services to rescue children enmeshed in the sex trade. And it will substantially toughen penalties for those who sexually abuse these children.

OTHER PRIORITIES

Jobs, education, health care and safe communities are the people's agenda and my government's priorities in this session of the Legislature.

There will be several other important pieces of public business brought before you.

My government will introduce an important measure to protect the integrity of Saskatchewan elections by introducing *The Respect for Constituents Act (1999)*.

This act will require Members elected under the banner of a party recognized under *The Elections Act* to resign their seats, and to obtain the permission of their constituents in a by-election, before they may sit in this House with another party.

Citizens have the right to expect that the decisions they make in elections will be honoured until they get to vote again.

Other legislation planned by my government for this session includes:

- Several municipal bills to improve provisions relating to property assessment.
- *The Local Government Election Amendment Act*, to further improve the framework for municipal and school board elections.
- *The Animal Protection Act*, to improve enforcement and provide for the humane care of animals.
- And *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act 1999*, to enhance wildlife in this province by building upon the more than ten million acres protected through the existing act, our Parks, and our growing Representative Areas Network.

BUILDING OUR FUTURE, THE SASKATCHEWAN WAY

Friends, Saskatchewan is a place we all know and love, a place we are pleased and proud to call our home.

But Saskatchewan is also an idea.

It's the idea that families – whether they live an arm's length

apart in the city, or miles apart in the country – can call each other “neighbour.”

It's the idea that all our people should do their very best for themselves and their families – but that we must also work together, to accomplish those things we cannot do alone.

It's the idea that come what may, we'll get through it if we pull together. That today's problem is tomorrow's opportunity.

It's the idea that we can build our future, a step at a time with optimism, balance and common sense. And that our future can offer something to anyone who wants to pitch in.

It's the idea that there is a way. The Saskatchewan Way.

We can build our future the Saskatchewan Way, because the Saskatchewan Way is about faith – in ourselves and in one another.

The Saskatchewan Way is about hope – that the seeds we plant, the businesses we open, and the families we nurture will grow, and prosper, and bloom. That the cold and dark of winter will give way to the warmth and promise of a new spring.

In her poem *Spring In Saskatchewan*, Vesta Althea Pickel urges us all to keep that faith and to live with that hope:

**‘Reach out and feel the air and smell the earth,
‘For Springtime here is life, new hope, rebirth.’**

Good luck, God bless Saskatchewan, and God save the Queen.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 3 p.m.

Prayers

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Pro Forma Bill

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that a Bill respecting the administration of oaths of office be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction of Pages

The Speaker: — I wish to introduce the pages for the session to the members of the Assembly. I'll ask that the pages will each stand as I introduce them: Sheena Simonson, Melanie Bratkoski, Kris Parker, Darcy Criddle, and Dean Mulhall. Hon. members, your pages for the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: — I also wish to inform the Assembly that in

order to prevent mistakes I have obtained a copy of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor which I now lay on the Table.

MOTIONS

Speech from the Throne

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, the member from Regina Elphinstone:

That the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration on Tuesday, March 16, 1999.

Motion agreed to.

Printing of *Votes and Proceedings* of the Assembly

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development and House Leader, member for Saskatoon Idylwyld:

That the *Votes and Proceedings* of this Assembly be printed after first having been perused by Mr. Speaker, that he do appoint the printing thereof, and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Before putting the question on the adjournment motion I have a few announcements to make.

First I would like to thank all the guests and members of the public for joining us here today.

And now I want to welcome the Central School choir from Swift Current. I will be calling on them in just a moment to sing for us immediately following the adjournment.

Following the choir selections I would like to invite everyone here to join their Honours, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party, and members of the Legislative Assembly at the Speaker's tea which will take place immediately following the Chamber ceremony. The tea will be in two locations — room 218 in the west wing and room 255 in the east wing.

It has been moved by the Premier that this House do now stand adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I would now like to welcome Central School's grades 4 and 5 choir from Swift Current, under the direction of Marilyn King and accompanied by Mildred Friesen. The choir will sing two selections for us this afternoon — the first appropriately entitled, "Legislature Has Opened". They've been waiting for years to perform that I believe. And then

"Music in My Life". Ladies and gentlemen, the Central school choir.

(The choir sang.)

The Speaker: — Well friends, I had the opportunity and the pleasure of meeting this very talented and very polite group of young men and women earlier this afternoon. On behalf of all of us present, I would like to thank the choir, Marilyn King and Mildred Friesen for the very fine performance.

Students you bring here this afternoon an extra touch of class and remind all of the hon. members of the Assembly of the importance of considering future generations in their deliberations and we thank you for your performance today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The song so beautifully performed by our choir "Music in My Life" reminds us that the theme of Commonwealth Day celebrated one week ago on March 8 with a celebration of music.

I invite members and guests to view the Commonwealth Day display in the rotunda today. Along with the poster displays, there is a collection of musical instruments from various Commonwealth countries. The musical theme was chosen as a fitting way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth.

In her Commonwealth Day message, Her Majesty the Queen noted that:

"... music knows no difference of language, no national boundaries. And because it has become such an important part of our cultural lives, it is a universal means of communicating with each other. The variety of music illustrates our diversity; its common tones and harmonies brings us together. Just like the Commonwealth."

And so it is that Central School Choir has done today. The choir will also be performing for us later this afternoon in the rotunda and please take a moment to listen to them again at that time.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

