

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
December 2, 1991

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Clerk: — I beg to inform the Assembly that I have received a communication from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor stating that she will open the first session of the twenty-second legislature at 10 o'clock a.m. today, the 2nd day of December, 1991.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber at 10:03 a.m.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to inform you that she does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present legislature until later today, when the Legislative Assembly shall have elected a Speaker according to law.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 10:04 a.m.

Clerk: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that only one candidate has declared his intention to stand for the election of Speaker, pursuant to rule 24.1. Therefore it is my duty to announce that Herman Rolfes, the member for the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana, is declared elected as your Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, I beg to express my grateful thanks and humble acknowledgement of the high honour the Assembly has been pleased to confer upon me.

And while I leave the floor of this Assembly to take the Speaker's chair, I feel that I also leave all political partisan feelings in order that I may discharge with impartiality to all, and to the best of my ability, the various and important duties pertaining to the high office of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan.

As your Speaker, it will be my intention to work with all hon. members to ensure that the dignity of this legislature is protected. Although the Speaker is the servant of the Assembly, you have invested in me considerable authority. I hope to use that authority to protect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly.

The public has a lot of cynicism concerning politicians and democratic institutions. It is incumbent upon all of us as elected individuals to behave with integrity and decorum. I ask for your assistance in this regard.

I want to remind all members of the citations in Beauchesne's, and of our own rules and procedures concerning language and decorum. Heckling and political quips are part of our tradition. Shouting and personal insults are not. One member must never interfere with another member's right to speak in this Assembly.

I therefore intend to be as firm as I can in dealing with members who persist in abusing our rules — especially those that pertain to language, decorum, and freedom of

speech. Behaviour that interferes with the rights and privileges of other members reflects badly on all of us and on this noble institution. Let's work together for the betterment of society.

I ask for your co-operation as we begin the first session of the twenty-second legislature, and invite all members at any time to come to my office to discuss matters pertaining to this Assembly. The Speaker's door will always be open to you.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and all the members on this side of the House — I dare say on behalf of all the members of the House — we want to congratulate you, sir, on the election to this most important position in the Assembly as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

I believe that all of us who have served with you, both in government and in opposition — whatever side of the receiving end we were — know of your experience and your commitment to the institutions of democracy and particularly this institution of the legislature. Your experience will hold you in well stead and in good stead, and we look forward very much to working with you.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second time, as you know, that the Office of Speaker has been elected. The reform was instituted by my predecessor, the former premier and now Leader of the Opposition, and I think it was a significant reform for this House with the election of the hon. Arnold Tusa.

Arnold Tusa had a very difficult job as Speaker of this House, particularly in the period after election, which was the fourth or fifth year of the government's term leading up to an election. That's when always the legislature, in my experience, tends to be perhaps a little more rancorous and the debate a little more emotional and a little more partisan. But Mr. Tusa performed his functions by and large with skill, with aplomb, with decency and dignity, and above all, a sense of fairness.

And I believe he did that not only because he is that kind of a person but he also did this because of the mere fact of election, the fact that now this is no longer an office that is appointed upon the recommendation of the Premier or selected exclusively on the part of the government members. It is now an office which has the approval of all members of the Legislative Assembly. And it is that extra authority, if I will, Mr. Speaker, that extra support which we all give to you, which I know will make this very difficult job of yours just a little bit easier.

We're beginning the first session of the twenty-second legislature right after the election. I might say, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether your task will be much easier in this first period as opposed to the period coming toward the end of the term of the government.

But I would like to just very briefly deviate from my

remarks to say that I welcome, sir, to the legislature, all of the members who have been elected, especially those who are the first-time members in this House. This is a great honour indeed for anyone to have received the trust of the voters and to sit in this Legislative Assembly. Few have this honour and privilege, and we have a responsibility to fulfil our duties in the best ways that we can.

A special word of congratulations and thanks to my predecessor, the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Estevan, for the way in which the campaign was conducted, and I look forward to a spirited exchange in the legislature with him. And a special word of acknowledgement to my colleague, the Leader of the Liberal Party, who is present with us here in this session as well.

To close, Mr. Speaker, we are all of us — certainly I can speak for our side of the House — committed to making your job a little bit easier. We're committed to making this parliament, this legislature, work. Your experience both as a former cabinet minister and as a prominent member of the opposition is going to be of tremendous importance and assistance to you.

I don't pretend for a moment that it's going to be easy all the time. I'm sure that it'll be difficult a lot of the time. But in this regard you can rest assured that we will do our very best to pledge our support and to follow the dictates, the standards which you have set for us.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members of the government side, on behalf of myself, I want to congratulate you and your family on this great honour. It's a great additional new step in your very long and worthwhile career of public service. Thank you, sir.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take the opportunity to congratulate you today on being the second elected Speaker in Saskatchewan's history. I am aware of the fact that you will be the next in line of a history of Speakers in this Legislative Assembly that have done a remarkable job.

Saskatchewan has always been very alive politically, and from your own distinguished career you're very much aware of that. And to now have this position in the Legislative Assembly is important for not only your family, but the tradition of Saskatchewan and our democratic process. The chance to be an elected Speaker is an important one for the principles of our Assembly and I commend you, sir, for your willingness to take on this responsibility.

We have the opportunity to bring forward our ideas in the democratic process, and the kinds of vital responsibilities and the tasks that you have, many times will not be particularly easy, but I know that you're up to it.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you will be a very unbiased Speaker, and I was happy to hear you say that your door is always open to come in and discuss or have a cup of coffee or view or go over anything that this Legislative

Assembly would like to discuss with you.

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Your rulings no doubt will be consistent with the long established and somewhat unique practices of our Saskatchewan Assembly and that is what makes being a Speaker in part, frankly, so much fun from time to time — actually I suspect enjoyable for not only the Speaker but everybody.

For example, we have evolved traditions over the years that have allowed for much longer questions, and I have to admit even much longer answers than many other jurisdictions in the country, and I know that that has tried the humour of many a Speaker, Mr. Speaker.

But I know that you're up to that and up for it. We have the right in the Assembly, unlike many, to ring the division bells for basically as long as we would like, and as you know, that's lots of fun for the Speaker. I'm not so sure how much fun it is for the rest of the people of the province, but again I know that you're prepared for that. And we have rather unique quirks of parliamentary practice, all of which make life very interesting in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly — traditions that have gone on over the years.

We only hope that these will not try you too much, Mr. Speaker. In fact we're looking forward to as much reform as the Premier is prepared to discuss and look at and I'm sure his House Leader and others will be presenting ideas, and we will be, because the productive part of the Legislative Assembly should be that.

As former premier Allan Blakeney said, this is not always an efficient place, but it's a good place to discuss democracy. But it should provide the opportunity for all of us to have our say and do it in a fashion that is seen to be fair. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that you will be instrumental in making sure that that happens.

I want to join with the Premier and congratulate not only you, sir, but the Premier and all the members of the New Democratic Party that were elected, particularly the new members; the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the new Liberal leader — congratulations — and to all members, frankly, for having this opportunity to serve the Saskatchewan public.

You will find this an interesting exercise. You will certainly see that the democratic process is maybe not perfect, but it's a way ahead of whatever is in second place, and we certainly on this side of the House will do everything that we can to uphold the traditions, the valuable traditions of an elected Speaker and our Legislative Assembly here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And finally just let me say to you personally, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we met in the mid-'70s and you have had a distinguished career as a member of the legislature, as a cabinet minister, as a member of opposition, and as a public servant. And to you and your family now to be in this position, I sincerely say congratulations and I wish you the very best.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I want to deviate just a bit from the procedures here and take this opportunity to thank the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for those kind words. I want to reassure the Assembly again that I will be fair, as much as I can be and is within my abilities to be fair. You will from time to time, however, find me to be very tough, to make sure that the rules and the rights and privileges of members are protected.

And I want to reiterate again what the Leader of the Opposition has said. The doors to the Speaker's office is always open to you. Please do come in and chat. I know in speaking to the former Speaker, Mr. Tusa, I went to see him on a number of occasions when he and I had some differences in this legislature, and it was always good to discuss those differences with the Speaker at that time. And I invite all of you from time to time to stop in. And let's make sure that this Assembly is working for the benefit of the people of the province of Saskatchewan who have elected us to this Assembly.

Now this House will recess until 2 p.m. this afternoon when Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor will present the Speech from the Throne.

The Assembly recessed at 10:20 a.m.