

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 second session of the twenty-third legislature at 2:30 p.m. today, the 6th day of March, 1997.

2:33 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 an honour to welcome you to the Second Session of the Twenty-Third Legislature of Saskatchewan.

It is a particular pleasure to reconvene the Legislature today — one of the most hopeful times in our province in many years.

Today, through co-operation, community, and shared effort, Saskatchewan is back on its feet.

Our agricultural industry is rapidly diversifying.

Our resource sector is strong; trade is growing; investment in oil, gas, mining and forestry is booming.

The value-added industries of tomorrow, like equipment manufacturing, food processing and ag-biotech, have never been stronger.

We are witnessing a renaissance of Saskatchewan arts and culture. For example, our province is home to some of today's best Canadian writers and poets — including Robert Calder, Maggie Siggins, Anne Szumigalski, and Guy Vanderhaeghe — four recipients of the Governor-General's award.

For the first time in almost a decade, more people are moving to Saskatchewan than are moving away.

It's a remarkable turnaround — a turnaround mirrored in our province's public finances. This year my Government will present for your consideration a fourth consecutive balanced budget.

Thirty-five years ago, Saskatchewan gave Canada public, universal health care.

Today, the people of Saskatchewan are making another, perhaps equally important, contribution to our country.

We are setting a new example — pioneering a new model.

We are showing that a people who hold true to the values of co-operation, community, mutual aid and responsibility:

- can return from the brink of bankruptcy;

- can preserve and renew the foundations of civil society, like Medicare and education; and

- can build a growing, competitive, high-employment economy,

without regressive transfers from the poor to the rich, and without undermining essential supports for our families.

The day may come when this model too — and the values that underlie it — will find its way into our country's national life.

As for Saskatchewan:

- We can build together again.

- We can invest in our province's people, and in our future.

- We can meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

My Government will introduce an agenda during this session of the Legislature which invests in our people, and focuses on six areas:

- Investing in jobs and the economy;

- Investing in the quality of education and training;

- Investing in our children, reducing child poverty — part of a far-reaching and progressive welfare reform;

- Ensuring a secure, stable health system;

- Renewing our highways and transportation system; and

- Preserving a key accomplishment: a return to fiscal responsibility.

THE TOP PRIORITY: JOBS

My Government's top priority is jobs. That means a partnership with working people, business and the co-operative sector on a clear goal: building towards a growing, prosperous, full employment economy.

Our strategy is spelled out in my Government's economic blueprint, *Partnership for Growth*.

Our plan builds on some remarkable opportunities for our province. Food demand from Pacific Rim nations is expanding rapidly. Tourism is now the largest business sector in the world. Demand for our resources, and the value-added products we make from them, is strong and growing.

Our progress in meeting these opportunities is encouraging. There is a great deal more to do.

This year, working with our business and co-operative partners,

my Government will:

- Encourage expansion of trade;
- Promote expansion and diversification of our rural economy;
- Renew Saskatchewan's crown corporations, so they can continue to fulfil their role as vital partners in building jobs and prosperity;
- Work to improve access to capital;
- Pursue key strategic projects like the Synchrotron Light Source project;
- Promote tourism and the hospitality industry;
- Work with northern communities and the forest industry to promote suitable economic and employment growth for northern people and businesses, building on a successful collaboration with the northern mineral sector; and
- Participate in an extended national infrastructure plan.

Building tomorrow's economy is everybody's business. Hundreds of communities are taking their own futures in hand.

For example, at the Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development in Swift Current, community leaders, business people and Government are working together to encourage young entrepreneurs – the future owners and operators of the region's businesses.

All across our province, our agricultural economy is modernising and diversifying. Saskatchewan will implement a new crop insurance system this year; we will introduce a major new hog marketing strategy; we will continue to invest almost \$100 million in the rural economy through the Agri-Food Development and Equity funds; and my government will continue an unyielding defence of a modern, responsive Canadian Wheat Board.

In the North, a major milestone was reached last year. Over 1,000 northern residents were employed in northern mining – the result of true partnership between Government, industry, training agencies and northerners, including First Nations and Métis people.

Initiatives like these are a big part of the reason why this is such a hopeful and optimistic time in Saskatchewan.

My Government will present the following bills for your consideration. *The Trust and Loans Corporations Act* is the first step in modernising financial services legislation in Saskatchewan. My Government will lay the groundwork for a single arts agency in *The Saskatchewan Arts Board Act*. *The Condominium Property Amendment Act* will give developers more flexibility and enhance consumer protection.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: BRIDGES TO EMPLOYMENT

The people of Saskatchewan are building jobs and a prosperous economy. Our young people – and our workforce as a whole – need the skills to fill those jobs. My Government is therefore committed to providing the best possible public education and training, at every level.

In elementary and secondary education, this session my Government:

- Will work to provide educators in our schools with better tools to support learning in the classroom; and
- Will encourage school division restructuring as the needs are locally determined, to improve the efficiency and quality of our education system.

A few examples of how we are supporting learning in the classroom: My Government is implementing a new English language arts curriculum for high school. For the first time, our curriculum will include, acknowledge and celebrate Saskatchewan's own writers, authors and poets. And this year my Government will fully implement innovative pre-school programs in our province's twenty-six community schools.

In this session of the legislature my Government will present for your consideration *The Education Amendment Act* to respond to evolving circumstances and needs in the school system.

In post-secondary education and workforce training, my government:

- Will work with businesses, educators and communities to implement a made-in-Saskatchewan training strategy – building on the strengths of SIAST and Regional Colleges, and our highly successful JobStart and Future Skills programmes; and
- Will work with the universities to implement joint proposals as outlined in the MacKay report.

My Government will submit for your consideration *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Amendment Act* to better respond to the needs of our economy.

REDUCING CHILD POVERTY

In 1995, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops said this: "To think that almost one Canadian child in five lives in poverty in one of the richest societies in world history is nothing less than a damning indictment of the present socio-economic order."

They are right. This year is the time for the federal Parliament, Legislatures across Canada, and this Legislature to take action.

- My Government will continue to make economic development its top priority. Jobs are the best way to address child poverty, and to enable people to escape welfare;

- My Government will work energetically on the national scene to implement a new, integrated National Child Benefit this year. If we succeed, we will have helped launch the first new national social programme in **30 years**;
- Pending the National Child Benefit, my government will act now, in this session of the Legislature, to further strengthen Saskatchewan's nationally and internationally-recognised *Action Plan for Children*-targeting child poverty; investing in child care in inner city neighbourhoods, rural communities and the North; and strengthening child nutrition programmes;
- My Government will introduce amendments to *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* to accommodate a **Saskatchewan Employment Supplement**. This will provide an incentive to parents to increase their earnings and pursue child maintenance; and
- My Government will begin to implement two new measures to help youth and low income people to get the training they need. **Youth Futures** will assist young people to complete their education and make the transition to the work force. A **Provincial Training Allowance** will help low-income individuals enrolled in adult education programmes.

There are many good people across Saskatchewan hard at work helping their fellow citizens:

- Like the people who work in Shelwin House, in Yorkton. Through rural outreach and child support programmes, they are providing prevention, intervention and bridging services to children and families who are victims of violence;
- Like the people who work in the wonderfully named Grinning Lizard Teen Wellness Centre in Moose Jaw, offering health and social services to young people aged 12 to 19 years;
- Like the people who work in the Souris Valley Child Care Centre in Weyburn – providing innovative and accessible child care for rural and working families, during harvest, during night shifts, and all year round.

These people and thousands like them deserve our support. They deserve more. They, and the children they work with, deserve to see this Legislature, and Governments across Canada, do our part to address the blight of poverty.

My Government will introduce *The Family Maintenance Amendment Act* to strengthen provisions for child support. *The Young Offenders Services Amendment Act* provides liability protection to volunteers who serve on youth justice committees.

A STABLE, SECURE HEALTH SYSTEM

For five years my Government has worked with health professionals and communities across our province to renew our health system; to modernise it; and to refocus it on real needs.

Saskatchewan is years ahead of other jurisdictions in renewal – and we can therefore now focus on stabilising and securing our health system, which is solid on its new foundations.

A strong economy and fiscal stability mean stable and adequate public funding for health care. We can work on improving health services.

In this session of the legislature, my Government:

- Will work to improve services and health security for seniors;
- Will work to strengthen partnership with health professionals, and will work with them on better models of care; and
- Will work closely with communities to ensure a stable, secure health system. As communities and technology change, so will health care, but in a balanced, locally-responsive manner.

Communities all across our province are renewing our health system, and people are increasingly using it for its best purpose – to stay well. Just a few examples:

- In Esterhazy, health, wellness and fitness events bring out the entire community;
- In Regina, the Four Directions Health Centre, located in an inner-city neighbourhood, is providing milk and vitamins along with counselling and support through the Healthiest Babies Possible programme;
- In the Prince Albert Health District, home care nursing services have tripled, and other home support services have doubled. These new services have nearly eliminated waiting lists for nursing home care in this community.

Renewing our health system has not been easy. But we are nearing our goal – a caring, stable, secure health system there when people need it – ready for the 21st century.

Among other bills, my Government will introduce *The Dental Disciplines Act* and *The Occupational Therapists Act* to improve the framework governing health professions.

AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY

Our transportation system faces unprecedented pressures – from the elimination of the Crow benefit, rail line abandonment, new inland grain terminals, changes in trade patterns, and our growing, diversifying economy.

In this Session, my Government will address these challenges by introducing a comprehensive, integrated transportation strategy.

An important part of our strategy will be planning our transportation system in partnership with industry, communities and local people, to ensure we have a system that will meet our

needs well into the future.

This partnership approach is working well in the province's southwest and west central regions. Area transportation planning committees are hard at work defining the transport needs of these regions, and ensuring all partners are working together. My Government is working to expand this initiative where there is local interest.

The Transportation Act will be presented for your consideration.

A COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNMENT, AT EVERY LEVEL

Saskatchewan people have plenty of experience with bankers and moneylenders. One of the hard lessons of our province's pioneering days – and, sadly, of the recent past – is that big debts mean the bond dealers call the shots. That's not healthy in any democracy.

My Government will therefore continue its commitment to efficient good Government at every level, provincial and local; to responsible public finance; and to the orderly reduction of the public debt.

CONCLUSION

My Government has put before you the key priorities of the upcoming Session: action

- to create jobs and build the economy;
- to strengthen education and training at every level;
- to reduce child poverty, and radically reform welfare;
- to build stable, secure, high-quality health care;
- to implement a comprehensive transportation strategy; and
- to maintain our commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Futurist John Schaar once wrote: "The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made."

We are making our path – to a prosperous, just, co-operative, modern Saskatchewan.

Our province is on the move again. We are investing in people, jobs and communities. We are building Saskatchewan together.

I leave you now to the business of the Session, with full confidence that you will favourably discharge your duties and responsibilities. May Divine Providence continue to bless our province and guide this Legislature in all its deliberations.

God save the Queen.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:50 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 this session to the members of the Assembly. I will ask that the pages stand as I introduce them: Michael Dowie, Claire LaBelle, Guy Turton, Daniel Abramson, and Lyle Cowles. Your pages for the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: — I 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, 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 Friday, March 7, 1997.

Motion agreed to.

Printing of Votes and Proceedings of the Assembly

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. House Leader, the member for Regina Northeast:

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 I would like to make.

I would like to thank all the guests and members of the public, including the students from Wetmore School in Regina and Stoughton Central School, who have joined us today. You help to remind us for whom decisions in this Chamber are made and we welcome you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I want to also welcome the A.E. Peacock Collegiate vocal jazz choir from Moose Jaw. I will be calling on them to sing for us immediately following the adjournment and we will also hear from them again later this afternoon.

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

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I now welcome the A.E. Peacock Collegiate vocal jazz choir and invite them to perform under the direction of Allison Litt. The choir will sing two selections for us this afternoon — “Riv Riv Chiv” which is Spanish for call of the nightingale, and their second number will be “Witness”. The A.E. Peacock Collegiate jazz choir.

(The choir sang.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank you for that excellent performance. We are going to adjourn in just a moment and we'll allow you to join the tea for a while but we will look forward to you performing in the rotunda in about a half-hour or so from now.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

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