

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 third session of the twenty-third legislature at 2:30 p.m. today, the 9th day of March, 1998.

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 third session of the Twenty-Third Legislature of Saskatchewan.

I would also like to extend welcome to all those citizens of Saskatchewan who are observing these proceedings, both here and in their homes.

**Winds of Change**

We meet here to chart a course for Saskatchewan's journey into a new year, and beyond into a new century, and a new millennium.

Our future is bright and full of promise.

But it is your responsibility as leaders to keep in mind the hazards we do not yet see and the capricious winds of change, blowing across a world where very little is certain.

Many other people and many other governments are trying to manage the uncertainties of today's world by defining people and their worth solely in terms of their capacities as individual consumers.

They argue that the rich should get richer, the poor should get poorer, and that their own local economies ought to be run from boardrooms in New York City, on Bay Street, in Zurich.

Our citizens and my government do not agree.

My government believes that while the Saskatchewan economy must look outward, it should be run from Saskatchewan, for the benefit of Saskatchewan citizens.

That's the Saskatchewan way.

The Saskatchewan way is to work together as a community -- a community that has always taken "quiet pride" in our own blessings and our own energies, in the qualities that have always marked this province and its people.

The Saskatchewan way is to make change work for us, to use the new international structures of commerce and trade to sell not only our goods and services but our democratic ideals.

The Saskatchewan way is to build on the values of our people --

community, equality, co-operation, compassion, and common sense.

Those are the values of my government.

To fulfil them, my government intends to help build Saskatchewan -- by investing in people.

**The Saskatchewan Success Story**

My government believes in the strength of Saskatchewan people.

We see and celebrate those contributions in every walk of life.

I spoke earlier of quiet pride. I am sure every Member of this Assembly shares my quiet pride in the performance of our athletes at the Winter Olympics in Japan.

Our Olympic medal winners -- Catriona LeMay Doan, Sandra Schmirler, Jan Betker, Joan McCusker, Marcia Gudereit, Atina Ford, Shannon Miller, Clare Drake, Fiona Smith and Hayley Wickenheiser -- proved that the people of this province are world-class winners. Recognizing these achievements couldn't be a better way to mark International Women's Day in Saskatchewan.

We recognized achievement as well late last year, with the most recent inductions into the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

We honoured Boyd Anderson and Ross Pinder for their visionary risk-taking within our entrepreneurial private sector.

We honoured two teachers, Margaret Belcher and Dr. Stirling McDowell, who are fine examples of the people who make up the best public service in Canada.

And we honoured Carol Gay Bell and Victor Cicansky, celebrating the great tradition of excellence in our arts community, those writers, film-makers, painters, sculptors, and musicians who contribute so much to Canadian culture.

My government had the pleasure of hosting an evening at Government House in honour of the University of Regina Chamber Singers last month -- back from winning a remarkable first prize at an international choral festival in Wales. When you can sing as well as the Welsh, you've really arrived as a province. The Chamber Singers are here with us today.

In a word, we celebrate Saskatchewan people. The fountain of our pride and the source of our strength as we look to the future.

That is why investing in people is my government's priority.

**The Challenges to Come**

The past is no guarantee of the future; Shakespeare advises us, "What's past is prologue."

We can take pride in our accomplishments, but we dare not rest

upon them. There is much left for us to do together, and a long way for us to go.

Therefore, in this year to come my government will continue to invest in people, as they build their local communities and the larger community of Saskatchewan.

### INVESTING IN FAMILIES

My government will invest in people, by investing in families.

As communities are the bedrock of Saskatchewan, our families are the bedrock of communities.

My government will make it a priority this year to address issues that affect Saskatchewan families -- and, especially, Saskatchewan children.

The centerpiece of my government's agenda in this session will therefore be the introduction of a new strategy that provides hope and a better future for thousands of low-income families and their children.

- My Government will introduce amendments to *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* to implement the **Building Independence – Investing in Families** strategy. Through this fundamental reform of welfare, we will be creating:
  - a new **Child Benefit**, starting July 1998, that will have both provincial and national components. This Child Benefit will be the first new national social program in 30 years;
  - a new **Saskatchewan Employment Supplement**;
  - new supplementary **Family Health Benefits**;
  - and **training programs** that create bridges to employment for Saskatchewan people.

Our province will continue to act on our compassion for those who are genuinely in need. That is what friends and neighbours do in a community. We will also continue to work to ensure that no one takes undue advantage of friends and neighbours who have sincerely offered a helping hand.

Investing in families is also about investing in **safe communities** for them to live in.

- My government will continue its work to implement a **province-wide 9-1-1 system**;
- My government will implement a **number of other important initiatives** this session at the provincial level, in partnership with police officers and prosecutors, to help protect citizens from serious and violent offenders;
- And my government will continue to speak for the people of Saskatchewan at the national level, pressing for **reform of the young offenders' system**.

Our watchword, in this area as in all others, is balance.

The people of Saskatchewan expect us to maintain our common sense and our compassion, especially for children and youth who impetuously and impulsively do thoughtless things, but are willing to learn from their mistakes.

The people of Saskatchewan also expect us to be — and my government will be — tough and determined about protecting society from repeat and violent offenders.

- Among other measures related to this priority, my government will introduce *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 1998*, *The Enforcement of Judgments Conventions Act*, *The Automobile Insurance Amendment Act, 1998*, amendments to *The Wildlife Act, 1997*, and *The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 1998* — all aimed at updating or strengthening elements of provincial law enforcement and corrections.

### INVESTING IN JOBS

My government will invest in people, by investing in jobs.

My government will continue to work on job creation with the same determination it applied to balancing the budget.

So far, together, we have done well.

Here is a simple fact:

More people are working in Saskatchewan today than at any time in our history.

A simple fact that speaks volumes for the determination of the people of Saskatchewan. They have overcome a dark period of our history, and inaugurated one of its brightest, in a few short years.

My government will fulfil its role, as one of the partners to this success, in building on this success.

The key to future job creation is innovation. My government will continue to support research and development.

- A tribute to our success was the awarding of Canada's only **synchrotron research facility** to the University of Saskatchewan. We will continue to work with the federal government to secure national funding for this project;
- Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation will invest \$15 million in a **new research and development park** in Regina.

World-class research and development leads to competitive, world-class products. Saskatchewan no longer competes on cost alone. We compete on quality. Innovative, high-quality products are the future for our whole economy, including our foundation industry — agriculture:

- *The On-Farm Quality Assurance Programs Act* and amendments to *The Animal Products Act* will be introduced to help give Saskatchewan producers an important competitive advantage in export markets.

Security permits innovation.

- My government has contributed to **reducing the cost of crop insurance** for Saskatchewan producers by **one-third** over the past two years, in order to ensure as many producers as possible have protection against the risks of nature.

Resource industries are leading the way in job creation all across rural Saskatchewan. Many of our communities are facing the kinds of problems they like to face these days: getting new housing built fast enough; working to find enough skilled workers to fill new jobs.

- My government recently announced **improvements to the province's resources royalties** – underlining its commitment to the future of our rural communities, by supporting jobs in resource industries.

My government believes that economic strength in all local communities underpins our strength as a province.

- There will be renewed support for **Community Economic Development** in the inner cities, and enhancements in the Regional Economic Development Authorities;
- My government will continue working with the province's **co-operatives** at the community level, continuing its efforts to support and strengthen this time-honoured system of creating wealth in the province -- and keeping it here.

My government, acting on the advice of the Provincial Action Committee on the Economy, will **market Saskatchewan more aggressively** here at home and beyond our borders.

Finally, my government will continue to implement the key recommendations of an extensive review of **Crown corporations** -- working to ensure these publicly-owned assets remain productive engines of our economy, and benefit all Saskatchewan citizens.

### INVESTING IN EDUCATION & TRAINING

My government will invest in people, by investing in public education and training.

It is not enough to have a growing economy. We must have growth that includes all our citizens, or our success is hollow.

My government will make further efforts to extend our economic and social successes to our young people.

The poet Emerson wrote that it is characteristic of young people to meet challenges by saying, "I can."

We believe our young people can and will. It is up to us to provide the opportunity.

My government wants our province's young people to have a future, and we want that future to be right here at home.

The same is true of Saskatchewan's aboriginal communities, with their limitless potential to be a powerful economic force, contributing to the well-being of Saskatchewan and the world.

Saskatchewan has a unique opportunity to act, because 1998 is the year the federal government transfers responsibility for workforce training to the provincial government.

My government will therefore build upon the success of the **Saskatchewan Training Strategy**, with its many fruitful partnerships among government, training institutions, trade unions, and employers.

The key elements of our approach include:

- Strengthening our **universities and post-secondary institutions** through partnerships with the community and industry;
- Expanding **JobStart/Future Skills**;
- Building on and renewing **The Multi-Party Training Plan** and **The Aboriginal Employment Development Program**; and
- Reinforcing and broadening **apprenticeships** – a cornerstone of our plan.

While we take these steps to deal with our training in the near term, we must also look further ahead, to prepare Saskatchewan young people for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

The key is in our public education system. My government intends to continue its commitment to high-quality public education, and to life-long learning.

- My government is working to support learning in the classroom. This year Saskatchewan announced a Math Action Plan to help educators improve math skills. Pre-kindergartens and special education are also priorities this year.
- My government will introduce amendments to **The Education Act, 1995**, and will continue to provide the necessary leadership and support for locally determined school division restructuring of the kind we saw last year.

### INVESTING IN HEALTH CARE

My government will invest in people, by investing in health care.

With most of the hard work of reform behind us, my government will work with its many partners to move health care forward.

The bedrock of Saskatchewan's health care system is the people who work in it. My government is committed to a close, productive, and co-operative partnership with health care providers – in the common cause of building a stable, secure health care system, there when people need it.

- My Government has **forged a renewed partnership with our province's doctors** this year. In the words of Dr. Rob Weiler, president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, these agreements ". . . will help to achieve a more stable and secure working environment for physicians and also **improve patient access to quality care.**"
- **These agreements are only the beginning.** My government is committed to a similarly close partnership with nurses, advanced clinical nurses, nurse-practitioners, homecare aides, x-ray technicians, lab technicians -- and all of the other world-class health care workers in our system.

We have some of Canada's best health care workers. They deserve to work in some of Canada's best health care facilities. Much progress is being made. A few examples:

- Across rural Saskatchewan, community-led health boards are tailoring regional facilities to meet local needs. For example, an eating disorders centre is operating in the old Mildred Hospital. Residents of Wilkie and Macklin can now receive diabetes counseling in their health centres. And people in the community of Vanguard can see a public health nurse closer to home;
- In Regina, the consolidation of facilities into two strong, effective 21st century base hospitals will serve the people of southern Saskatchewan for decades. The new Regina General will feature a new MRI unit, and state-of-the-art neurology and cardiology departments.

New technology is part of health care's future.

- Our health system will move into the information age with the continuing development of **The Saskatchewan Health Information Network**;
- My government will introduce **The Health Information Protection Act** to safeguard all personal health information.

#### INVESTING IN TRANSPORTATION

My government will invest in people, by investing in transportation.

Our goal is a system that is ready for the increasing demands of the new century, particularly the need to get our goods to the global market.

But our transportation system faces many difficulties today.

Rail line abandonment and changes to the grain-handling system have meant increased loads on our highways.

Federal de-regulation has led to decisions by the railways that pose a fundamental threat to our existing grain handling system and to the economic well-being of Saskatchewan grain producers -- and offload traffic onto our rural road network.

My government will vigorously assist the federal government to

rediscover its responsibilities towards Canada's national transportation system.

In the meantime, our province will tackle this challenge OUR way.

Faced with similar challenges in the past, the people of Saskatchewan built the Wheat Pool, the co-ops, the credit unions, and publicly-owned utilities.

Faced with this challenge, the people of Saskatchewan are coming together to once again take charge of their own economic future.

It starts with the roads.

- My government will continue with its commitment to invest **\$2.5-billion** over 10 years to maintain our roadways.

It includes the rest of our transportation system.

- My government will work in close partnership with the rest of our community -- including farmers, local governments and councils, rural businesses and other concerned parties -- to wisely invest the funds we have, and to explore our alternatives -- like **short-line railways, alternative routes and corridors, and other strategies.**

#### OTHER INITIATIVES

Finally, my government will invest in people in many other ways.

- At a special session last December, this Assembly passed a unanimous motion speaking to the **Unity of our country**. My government will continue to speak clearly and energetically for the people of Saskatchewan, who expressed their views so clearly during public consultations on this issue last fall. The people of Saskatchewan want our nation preserved. My government will do everything in its power in that cause;
- As further progress towards democratic reform, my government will introduce legislation to make the **Chief Electoral Officer** an officer of the Legislature, appointed through a non-partisan process;
- In keeping with its commitment to the idea of community, and in response to the requests of representatives of Saskatchewan municipalities, my government will initiate a process to **renew municipal legislation**;
- Workers expect and deserve safety in the workplace. My government will strengthen **The Workers' Compensation Act, 1979**.
- We must never lose sight of our responsibility to invest in the environment we will leave to our children. Last month my government announced the addition of 2.4 million acres to the representative areas network. Building on this initiative, my government will introduce **The Parks**

*Amendment Act*, which will add land area to the provincial parks system.

Prayers

## FINANCIAL COMMON SENSE

All of these efforts, all of these initiatives, all of these plans, programs and proposals are possible because we will maintain our hard-won financial freedom.

My government is determined that this province will never again return to the days of carefree fiscal irresponsibility. My government will not borrow from our children's future.

Together we are still managing a bitter inheritance from the recent past. The third largest expenditure of our provincial budget is still wasted on interest payments on inherited debt.

But things are getting better. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the Saskatchewan people, we are on the path of declining debt.

Earlier this year, my government had the pleasant duty of consulting the people of Saskatchewan on how they would like the province to reinvest our modest projected future surpluses. My government has listened carefully, and will respond in the upcoming provincial budget.

## CONCLUSION

Our province is sound and strong as we look forward into the year to come.

And as we look out a little further, we can see on the horizon our province's 100th anniversary.

That is a grand old age for any person, but it is young for a province.

We are a young and growing province, vigorous and poised to take our place as a leader of our country and an example to the world that there is strength in community.

In these next weeks and months, I expect all the Members of this House will engage in spirited debate on the matters I have mentioned here today and such others as may arise in the course of the year.

As we chart our course into Saskatchewan's future, we must recognize that our landscapes change, and we cannot steer by even our most sturdy landmarks.

We must instead steer by the bright shining stars that have always been our truest guide: Our unvarying common values of compassion, common sense and community.

Godspeed to you all.

God bless Saskatchewan, God bless Canada, and God save the Queen.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:59 p.m.

## 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:** — Hon. members, I wish to introduce to you the pages for this session and I'll ask that the pages will stand as I introduce them: Barton Draper, Pamela Kovacs, Angela Smalley, Jason Trost and Cara Renkas. Hon. members, 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 member from Regina Elphinstone, my seat mate, by leave of the Assembly:

That the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration on Tuesday, March 10, 1998.

Motion agreed to.

### Printing of *Votes and Proceedings* of the Assembly

**Hon. Mr. Romanow:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member from Saskatoon Idylwyld by leave of the Assembly:

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 of all, I would like to thank all the guests and members of the public for joining us here today. There has also been a long-standing tradition to invite students from Saskatchewan schools to attend the opening of the Legislature representative of our future generations. Our students today are from Herbert School, Kipling High School and Dr. Martin LeBoldus High School in Regina. All of these students have participated in an essay-writing contest sponsored by the Saskatchewan Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The subject area for the contest was Canada and the Commonwealth Today.

In honour of Commonwealth Day which is celebrated today around the world, there will be a presentation to the contest winners later this afternoon at approximately 3:45 p.m. in the rotunda. I ask all the students to stand and be recognized.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, Hear!

**The Speaker:** — I want also to welcome the University of Regina Chamber Singers. I will be calling on them to sing for us immediately following the adjournment.

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 Legislative Assembly at the Speaker's tea which will take place immediately following the ceremony in this Chamber. 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 adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — I would now like to welcome the University of Regina Chamber Singers. The choir, under the direction of Kathryn Laurin, recently won first place honours at the International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales in the Chamber Choir category. The choir will sing two selections for us this afternoon — "O Come Let Us Worship" and "Retorna." Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Regina Chamber Singers.

(The choir sang.)

**Hon. Members:** Hear, Hear!

**The Speaker:** — On behalf of all of us here today, I would just simply like to express our pride that we share in your achievement and our appreciation of your performance this afternoon. And I'll ask everyone to show you appreciation one more time.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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