

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber at 2:02 p.m.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly has elected me to the office of Speaker.

If, in the performance of my duties, I should at any time fall into error I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the Assembly, whose servant I am. On behalf of the Assembly and its members, it is my duty to claim all their traditional rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all reasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable consideration.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of the Assembly to Her Majesty's person and government. His Honour is confident that the Assembly's proceedings will be conducted with wisdom and prudence and grants the Assembly's claim to its traditional rights and privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to His Honour upon all reasonable occasions and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

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 First Session of the Twenty-Fourth Legislature of Saskatchewan.

A Brand New Day

Today marks an historic new beginning – a new dawning of optimism and hope.

In September, the citizens of this province decided they wanted a fundamentally new approach to government.

They said they want their representatives to stop shouting, to come to this place with open minds, prepared to work together again in the great tradition that built Saskatchewan.

A great writer once said, "The real voyage of discovery consists, not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

Today marks the beginning of just such a voyage, with the new eyes, the new vision, of a fundamentally new government.

It is an historic coalition, with a four-year mandate to renew and strengthen our province's government. A coalition founded on a new spirit of co-operation and openness.

It is common in a Speech from the Throne to review past accomplishments.

But this is a brand new day.

This is a day to talk about what still remains to be done.

And there is much left to be done.

Because too many of our families in Saskatchewan are still having a hard time making ends meet.

Saskatchewan is blessed with strong economic growth and low unemployment.

But too many of our children are still growing up poor. Too many of our families have waited far too long for a real increase in their take-home pay, and too many of our farm families are back to depression era incomes.

We need to work together to build an economy that works for everyone.

We need to do even more.

Too many of our young people are still concerned about their futures.

We must work to ensure every young person raised in Saskatchewan has fair and equal access to the very best education they can achieve.

And we must work to ensure they have bright futures waiting for them – right here at home – when they graduate.

We need to do more.

Too many of our rural families are victims of a vicious trade war.

We must work together for fairness for our farm producers – and we must work together to build a stronger, more diversified and self reliant rural economy, supporting prosperous rural communities with real futures, standing on their own feet.

We need to do more.

Too many seniors and too many families are still worried that our health care system will not be there when they need it.

We must work to protect and enhance our health system.

Medicare was pioneered in Saskatchewan by a CCF/NDP provincial government. Medicare was turned into a national program by a Liberal federal government. Now medicare needs to be protected and improved in Saskatchewan by a coalition government uniting both parties and working in partnership with Ottawa.

And still we need to do more.

Too many citizens are alienated from our province's public life.

Citizens want the doors of this Legislature to be opened, and their voices to be heard within.

And too many of our Aboriginal citizens remain excluded from our social, economic and civic life.

First Nations and Metis people want to have the educational, employment and business opportunities they need to be full participants and contributors to our province's economy and society, while observing their traditions and culture.

These are the challenges.

HELPING FAMILIES MEET CHALLENGES

The people told my government that its first order of business must be to help families make ends meet.

My government is committed to helping build the economy; to reducing taxes; and to helping families.

Building the Economy

The people said to keep working together to build our economy.

In the coming weeks, my government will spell out a comprehensive new economic strategy, **Partnership for Prosperity**, that will bring working people, businesses, communities, cooperatives and government together to continue building jobs and growth.

This plan sets out a new roadmap – to build on our strengths; invest in research and development; promote better education and training; strengthen community economic development; improve infrastructure; reduce regulation and other barriers to growth; and streamline and improve services that promote jobs.

My government will consult carefully with communities and partners to make sure this plan is right for our province – and then we'll roll up our sleeves and make it happen.

To help us compete in the new economy, my government will introduce *The Electronic Information and Commerce Act* to promote growth in the expanding world of electronic commerce and Internet trade.

Reducing Taxes

The people said they want fair, sensible and sustainable lower taxes.

So, my government will introduce a plan to **reduce personal income taxes** in the next budget.

Our goal is to remove thousands of low income families from the tax rolls altogether – eliminating an important barrier to work, and promoting dignity and self-reliance in the most direct way possible.

Our goal is to give **every** low and middle-income family real

help to make ends meet, and to help all Saskatchewan families save for homes, raise their children, save for their educations, and secure good jobs.

Our goal is a tax system that is fairer; that is simple and easy to understand; and that helps our province stay competitive in the world market.

And tax reduction will be undertaken as part of a balanced approach, investing future surpluses into lower taxes; better services; and lower debt, always in the context of a balanced budget.

We have heard many good ideas on how to improve our tax system.

My government recently received the final report of *The Saskatchewan Personal Income Tax Review Committee*. We will be listening carefully to what the people of Saskatchewan tell us about the ideas contained in that report – leading to a tax reform plan in the next provincial budget.

Helping Families

As part of tax reform, steps will be taken to ensure tax fairness for all families – including those with a single income earner.

My government will introduce legislation to implement **family leave**, to help families find time for necessities like a child's medical needs and school visits.

My government will work closely with other provinces and the federal government to make a **national children's agenda** a reality.

And my government commits today to increase **funds for childcare** in each of the next four years. Amendments will be introduced to *The Child Care Act* to help improve services.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

The people also told us to ensure their children can look forward to a bright future – while staying right here in Saskatchewan.

So, my government will work to provide opportunity for all, by improving education.

Accessible Post-secondary Education for Families

Everyone in Saskatchewan knows that higher education and job training are key to ensuring a bright future for our children in the 21st century economy.

It is time to take the next step towards extending the frontier of accessible public education.

My government will therefore act to make **post-secondary education more accessible for families**.

The Minister for Post-secondary Education and Skills Training and the Minister of Education will consult closely with students, parents, educators and communities on the best way to

implement this commitment in the next provincial budget.

Elementary and High Schools

My government will introduce a plan to place our K-12 education system on a sound and sustainable footing by, over time, **assuming greater direct responsibility for financing education.**

To that end, my government commits today to increase its contribution, in steps, as finances permit, until the province funds its historic share of the cost of education. As the provincial contribution increases, education property taxes should be reduced.

My government is committed to early intervention and support to ensure that our most vulnerable children have the opportunity to benefit fully from their schooling. To that end, my government will support and enhance Saskatchewan's award-winning Community Schools program and our Pre-Kindergarten program.

In order for our students to thrive, they must have access to quality school facilities. My government will provide financial support for school construction and renovation projects across the province.

We will continue to work with school boards to reduce overlap of resources, through initiatives like joint use facilities.

We will work in close partnership with the Labour Force Development Board to ensure students are aware of future career opportunities and trends.

And we will continue to review and improve our exemplary curriculum, to ensure students have the basics and more than the basics – the life skills to make a future for themselves right here in Saskatchewan in the 21st century.

In support of these goals, my government will introduce *The Post-Secondary Education, Training and Employment Services Act* and introduce amendments to *The Education Act* and *The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act*.

FIGHTING FOR RURAL FAMILIES

People across our province want their government to speak with one voice on behalf of our farm families and our rural communities.

Saskatchewan farmers can compete with anyone in the world. Our products are of the highest quality and our practices among the most efficient. In spite of this, many of our province's farm families have hit upon difficult times. They are caught in a battle between two titans – the United States of America and the European Union – who are throwing the might of their treasuries into a fight for control of world markets.

As a result, our farm families find themselves once again being squeezed by low commodity prices – the lowest since the 1930's.

The issues are both complex and daunting. And they go beyond

the power of a provincial government to solve them alone. The federal government must accept its responsibility to stand up internationally for Saskatchewan farmers. But there are steps my government CAN and WILL take to respond to these issues.

Emergency Debate

Tomorrow, my government will propose an emergency debate, in light of the federal government's response to Saskatchewan's farm delegation a few weeks ago.

My government will then move that this Assembly's Standing Committee on Agriculture meet in this Chamber to hear the voices of farmers and rural leaders on this issue, leading to a vote on an emergency resolution.

Provincial Action Committee on the Rural Economy

My government will form a **Provincial Action Committee on the Rural Economy** that will include the rural and farm leaders who made up Saskatchewan's delegation to Ottawa.

World Trade Talks

Clearly, the current round of trade talks will be critical to resolving the problem of international trade distorting subsidies. My government will continue to aggressively press Ottawa to represent the interests of Western farmers at these meetings.

My government will also appoint an eminently qualified and respected Special Advisor on Agriculture to support our province at the next round of trade talks and to help the federal government confront the protectionist policies of our trading partners.

But success in the trade talks will come too late for some of our farmers. Therefore, we will continue to strongly urge the federal government to treat Saskatchewan farmers equitably, and to live up to its responsibilities by providing an immediate trade equalization payment.

Provincial Steps to Help Farm Families

All parties in this Legislature agree that the Province of Saskatchewan cannot compete with the treasuries of the United States or the European Union. However, my government will marshal its resources to do what it can to deliver a package of initiatives to help farm families cope with the worst effects of the current crisis.

We will negotiate with the federal government to withdraw from AIDA, eliminate the federal red tape and put the province's contribution where it belongs – in the hands of farm families. This would provide over \$100 million dollars in immediate relief to Saskatchewan farmers through re-direction of provincial AIDA funds.

My government will work with producers and suppliers to find ways to reduce the high input costs facing farm businesses.

My government will pursue steps to reduce the cost of crop insurance and enhance producer coverage.

We will introduce a farm input costs monitoring program.

And my government will help farm families through this crisis by ensuring that existing programs continue to be available to farmers who have made diligent efforts to meet their commitments.

My government will ensure that farmers are not denied program benefits as a result of the current crisis by extending provincially administered farmland lease backs by three years. We challenge the federal government to do the same for its lease backs.

And we will develop extended payment terms for crop insurance and Lands Branch customers having difficulty paying their bills as a result of the current income crisis.

My government will also work to build a more prosperous future for the agriculture industry.

In addition to negotiating with the federal government for enhanced farm safety net programs in the short term, my government will pursue a long term safety net program that can actually meet farmers' needs in disastrous situations like the one we currently face.

Saskatchewan is making strides in value added processing, specialty crops and other unique and innovative areas of production. My government will support the long term success of the industry by working to extend availability of equity capital for processing and value-added activity in the agri-food sector.

My government will also introduce amendments to *The Department of Agriculture Act* and *The Farm Financial Stability Act*, which will support increased diversification.

Together, we will find a way for older farmers to retire with dignity and for our sons and daughters to take their place on the land and raise the children who will one day follow in their footsteps.

BETTER HEALTH CARE

The people have told my government they want health care services for their families to be protected and improved.

Better Health Services

My government will introduce steps to strengthen **regional hospitals**. These investments will allow citizens access to better health services closer to home – both taking the pressure off health facilities in Regina and Saskatoon, and making health care services more convenient for patients.

Steps will be taken to improve emergency medical services, particularly in rural and northern Saskatchewan. We will also take steps to standardize ambulance fees.

Legislation will be introduced to allow Licensed Practical Nurses to fully use their skills on the health care team.

Steps will be taken to reduce waiting times for key health

services.

My government will work to expand home care services.

An emphasis will be placed on the health of children and expectant mothers.

My government will work in close co-operation with our partners to train, recruit, and hire more health providers.

And we will work to develop clear, measurable, achievable, regularly monitored and regularly reported goals for health services.

Governance

The people have told my government to direct every possible dollar into front line care – and to make sure the health system is being properly run.

To that end, my government will ensure that district boards are properly accountable to this Assembly for funds allocated to them by this Assembly.

My government will work to clarify the roles and responsibilities of our partners in the health system — simplifying governance; strengthening accountability; and ensuring that administrative costs are kept to a minimum.

And my government will assume greater responsibility for negotiating collective agreements with health providers.

In support of its health system priorities, my government will introduce amendments to *The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act* and *The Medical Professions Act*, and replace *The Licensed Practical Nurses Act*.

OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE AND RENEWED GOVERNMENT

I said earlier that the people of Saskatchewan want their voices heard. They want to see their business done differently.

Consultations and Legislative Committees

As I have announced, in the weeks to come my government will be consulting citizens about a new economic strategy; tax reform and other budget priorities; accessibility to post-secondary education; and – through a provincial action committee – about the future of our rural communities.

My government will refer a number of important issues to legislative committees for public discussion and consensus building, followed by action.

- This Assembly's Crown Corporations Committee will be asked to review and recommend legislation regarding a **permanent body to review our monopoly utility rates**.
- My government will ask this Assembly to establish a Special All-party Legislative Committee to recommend government, community and police action to address the issue of **sexual abuse of children through prostitution**.

- Also, my government will ask this Assembly to establish a Special All-party Legislative Committee on **Tobacco Control** to consider and report on the impact of tobacco use, especially by children and youth, and to recommend strategies to protect the public from the health risks of smoking.

Clarifying the Offices of the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate, and Updating the Provincial Auditor Act.

The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act will be amended to clarify their powers. My government will also introduce amendments to *The Provincial Auditor Act* to update this legislation.

Government Accountability

Citizens have the right to know more of what their government is trying to accomplish.

To that end my government will begin to implement a **comprehensive government accountability project**.

Government departments will clearly spell out their goals and achievements in annual reports to the people of this province. They will be accountable for their performance, and their achievements will be measured against key benchmarks.

DIGNITY AND SELF-RELIANCE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

My government is committed to working with First Nations and Metis people so that they will be full partners in our province's economy and society – while preserving and building on their own unique heritages and communities.

Our Saskatchewan is inclusive of all people – from the small northern community of Camsell Portage, to the wider Aboriginal community, and to the province as a whole. A real Aboriginal renaissance is occurring in Saskatchewan. Aboriginal people and institutions are building positive partnerships with businesses and governments. Now is the time to recognize, respect, and celebrate this renaissance and its contribution to our great province.

In recognition and respect for Aboriginal institutions, my government will introduce *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act*.

OTHER KEY PRIORITIES

Here are some other important priorities my government will act on in the coming weeks and months:

- My government will provide funding for **additional police officers** to make our communities safer.
- My government will introduce a **forest renewal program**, to plant at least 100 million trees over the next four years, and will increase its assistance to municipalities fighting Dutch Elm disease.
- My government will begin a careful consultation with

employers and working people on how *The Labour Standards Act* can be improved and updated – including measures to permit people to choose time off rather than extra pay for overtime – giving workers more choices as they balance work and family.

- And my government will commission a **full, independent review** of SGI's no-fault insurance system. Details of this review will be announced in coming days.

A NEW START

The next provincial election is at least four years away.

The people told us on September 16th to set aside the rancour and discord of the election just past; to stop shouting at each other and past each other; and to work together to better serve the people who elected this Legislature.

They told us to work together to make it easier for families to meet challenges.

They told us to work together to provide a brighter future for our children.

They told us to work together to fight for our farm families.

They told us to work together to protect and enhance our health system.

They told us to open up government, to renew it, and to make it a partner with all of the people of Saskatchewan.

And they told us they want First Nations and Metis people to be full partners in our province's economy and society.

Working together to move forward, with balance and common sense, a step at a time – into the 21st century.

I know the elected Members of this Assembly heard the people of Saskatchewan. I know the Members will keep faith with the people of Saskatchewan, and with the mandate that the people have given them.

God speed to you all.

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

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 2:29 p.m.

Prayers

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Notice from the Chief Electoral Officer

The Speaker: — I wish to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer lists of the names of such members as have been returned to serve in the legislature.

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 at this time inform the Assembly that our pages for this session are with us today and you will recognize some of them, and it's my pleasure now to introduce them to you. First of all, Dean Mulhall. I'd ask them to stand. Daniel Abramson, Jill Fraser, Melanie Bratkoski, and Tanya Weber. Ladies and gentlemen, hon. members, these will be your pages for the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker: — I wish to also 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 Tuesday, December 7, 1999.

Motion agreed to.

Printing of *Votes and Proceedings* of the Assembly

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, the member from Saskatoon Northwest:

That the *Votes and Proceedings* of this Assembly be printed under the authority of the Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

Members to Compose Lists for Standing Committees

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now move, seconded by the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development, the member from Saskatoon Idylwyld, by leave of the Assembly:

That members Lingenfelter, Bjornerud, D'Autremont, Kasperski, Van Mulligen, be constituted a special

committee to prepare and report, with all convenient speed, lists of members to compose the standing committees of this Assembly, provided under Rule 94.

That the said standing committees be severally empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters and things as may be referred to them by this Assembly, and to report from time to time their observations thereon; with power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses under oath.

That the said special committee consider the size of the standing committees and to report thereon with all convenient speed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Battered Women's Awareness Week

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I ask for leave to make a statement regarding Battered Women's Awareness Week and my remarks will be followed by a statement from the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and I would then ask for a moment of silence.

Leave granted.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House. November 30 to December 6 was proclaimed Battered Women's Awareness Week in Saskatchewan, and this week is proclaimed annually by the Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan. It brings into focus public attention of the issue of women who are abused by their partners, by those closest to them.

This week concludes today, December 6, a day proclaimed by the Canadian parliament in 1991 and is Canada's national day of remembering and action on violence against women. And that day was chosen because it was 10 years ago that 14 young women were killed in Montreal at École Polytechnique. What happened on December 6, 1989 sent shock waves of horror in disbelief throughout the country. And while the deaths of these young women is commemorated on this day, December 6, it has also become an occasion to raise awareness of violence against women in our society.

And as much there are those who don't want to acknowledge this, violence continues to be a reality for far too many women and children in our province. And we know that education and prevention are the most effective ways of breaking the cycle of violence and there are community-based programs throughout the province that are working towards that goal. But as individuals we can also take steps to change attitudes and behaviours and I think this week recognizes that we all have a responsibility to take action to stop violence and abuse.

And if I could say that our goal would be to create a society where nurturing takes precedence over conquering, where healing takes precedence over punishment, and where the energy spent on anger is redirected towards creativity in all of our work, we can teach our children both through our words

and actions and supervision of their play that violence is unacceptable and we can commit to non-violent problem solving and discipline. We can support those in our communities who are dealing with a violent relationship and ensure that we don't blame the victim.

Battered Women's Awareness Week is a time to reflect and take action, and I thank all of those who are showing their personal commitment today through the wearing of the ribbons and the buttons. Today at the University of Regina, 14 young women in the university each took the voice of one of the 14 women killed in Montreal, and it was a very powerful visual representation of the young and innocent women that were killed at that time.

And now I will ask that the member from Kelvington-Wadena would make a statement. After that, that we would rise and join legislatures across the country organized by the federal minister responsible for the Status of Women, Hedy Fry, to observe a minute of silence and remember those who have lived with violence and consider what we can all do personally to end the violence against women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today marks the final day of Battered Women's Awareness Week. It is also the 10th anniversary of the terrible tragedy that took the lives of 14 young women in a Montreal university.

I'd like to draw your attention to some numbers, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada, over 50 per cent of women have experienced at least one incidence of physical or sexual abuse since the age of 16. One in four women is or has been abused by the man they live with. In Saskatchewan, over 4,000 women and children are admitted to safe houses every year. And more disturbingly, over 2,000 are turned away.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence is a crime in every province in this country and it must be stopped. Victims of abuse need to know that they are not alone, that it is not their fault, and that there is help available.

Saskatchewan has a network of transition and interval houses, safe homes, and shelters. But this is not enough, Mr. Speaker. There is so much more that needs to be done. More funding is needed to provide counselling, legal aid, food, clothing, and financial assistance. Our children need to learn that abuse they may see at home is wrong. Our education system must take a leading role in preventing further abuse.

It is up to all of us, Mr. Speaker, to put an end to domestic violence. I encourage everyone here today to think about what they can do as a person to help victims of abuse everywhere, and I encourage everyone here today to work together to make this world a better place for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, would you please rise and join us in a moment of silence. Thank you.

The Assembly observed a moment of silence.

The Speaker: — Thank you.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, the Premier, that by leave of the Assembly:

That this Assembly, notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* shall reconvene at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, December 7, with routine proceedings commencing at 1:30 p.m.; and further the sitting day shall continue until the Assembly is adjourned.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

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

The Speaker: — If I may, by leave of the Assembly, before putting the question on the adjournment motion I just have a couple of announcements to make.

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank the First Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, a Regular Force unit from Shilo, Manitoba for participating in the ceremony on the arrival of the Lieutenant Governor for the opening, as well as the 10 Field Regiment, the Reserve unit from Regina and Yorkton for the 15 gun salute. I also extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Ed Lewis for playing the Vice-regal salute during today's ceremonies.

And I would also sincerely like to thank all our guests and members of the public who have joined us here this afternoon for the observations.

Ladies and gentlemen, following the ceremonies here I would like to invite everyone to join their Honours, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, 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.

The Assembly adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

