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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 36e | 4e | Discours du Trône | 26 février 1975 | Gordon Arnaud Winter | Lieutenant Gouverneur | PC |

I have the honour to welcome you to the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Sixth General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland.

In addressing you for the first time, I should like to say how honoured I feel to have been chosen Her Majesty's Representative in this Province. The office which I have the honour to hold has a continuous history of more than three centuries, and I follow a long line of distinguished predecessors.

As I said at the time of my investiture, I am conscious of my duties and responsibilities to all the people of Newfoundland, no matter where they are or what they do. I anticipate with much pleasure my travels in my native land. I look forward to going to Labrador and to visiting the many settlements, large and small, from whence have come the men and women who have made our Province what it is today.

In 1972 my Government indicated new policies for improvements throughout our Province to be implemented over the subsequent four to eight years. In just three years the majority of these commitments have been implemented.

The past three years have seen priority action in assistance to the consumer through considerable protective legislation, in the reorganization of Government and the restoration to the Honourable House of Assembly of the powers to control the expenditure of Government. The expenditure on resource development has substantially increased during the term of office of my Government, and it is its firm determination to continue its main thrust in the development of the resources of our Province.

SOME BASIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES A. Natural Resources:

It is the conviction of my Ministers that they are trustees for the natural resources owned by the people of the Province of Newfoundland, and my Government adheres to the view that such natural resources fall within provincial jurisdiction and must be exclusively preserved for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders -- to do otherwise would constitute an unforgivable breach of trust for future, done whilst, at the same time, my Ministers reaffirm their commitment to provide jobs for those who are ready, willing and able to work.

FISHERIES

One of Newfoundland's great and traditional resource industries is the fishery. Our people are aware of and gravely concerned over the declining price in the market place for our fishery products and the frightening depletion of fish stocks off our shores. It is the unshakeable conviction of my Government that the Government of Canada must act decisively and unilaterally in gaining control of the fish stocks on our continental shelf. The time has come for decisive action on the part of our National Government.

The fishing industry will continue to play a major role in plans for the economic development of Newfoundland. Whilst my Government recognizes that the market for our frozen ground fish has been seriously weakened by foreign competition, particularly in the United States, it is felt that there still exist many opportunities for the expansion of the fishing industry.

My Government reiterates its conviction that the most fundamental problem affecting the fishing industry relates to the generally depleted state of the resource. The extent of this problem varies but is particularly acute for those species, primarily ground fish, which are subject to heavy fishing effort from foreign fleets. This has had a serious effect on the economic position of our processing plants, where less than optimum production at a higher than desirable fixed cost per pound of finished product have prejudiced their competitive position in our main markets. My Government will continue to make representations to the Government of Canada to implement unilateral enforcement of quotas or harvesting restructuring based on Resource Capital Management Regimes by the Federal Government.

In recognition of the problems of the fishing industry my Minister of Fisheries, in November, 1974, requested that the Federal Government work with my Government in developing programs for the benefit of the ground fish industry and to keep our ground fish fleets in operation during the winter months to the end of April, 1975, whilst longer term solutions were being sought.

The first program is designed to lessen the immediate impact of the rapidly rising costs faced by the frozen ground fish industry. Assistance under this program applies to all freezing plants in production between January 1st and the end of April, 1975. The second program is to assist the reopening of seasonal plants next spring in North-Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. These seasonal plants suffered serious losses in early 1974 because of severe ice conditions. Work Capital Loans are to be made available to those plants which have exhausted their financial resources. My Department of Fisheries has embarked upon a program to examine new markets for our fishery products and to assess the advantages to be derived by developing new products.

My Government takes the position that the fishing industry merits our support during this difficult period and has clearly and definitively affirmed to the Government of Canada its interest in a new Income Support Program which will eliminate the many inequalities for fishermen presently within the scope of the existing Unemployment Insurance Program. My Government has expressed its concern, however, that the Fishermen's Income Support Plan has not been acted upon by the Government of Canada.

Industrial grants will be made to assist with other improvements and innovations on inshore, middle distance and offshore fishing vessels. These include mechanized long lining and hand lining as well as conversion of side trawlers to mid-water trawling.

Since the fiscal year 1972-73 the gross program expenditures of my Department of Fisheries have more than tripled.

The new Fishing Gear Subsidization Program which became effective in May, 1974, was substantially increased in terms of funding, and will be continued during the coming season.

In the area of capital works, the construction and upgrading of community fish handling facilities will be undertaken. Slipways and haul outs at various locations will be constructed to assist fishermen with Increased emphasis is to be placed on the assessment and development of the Labrador fishery.

Programs will include assessment of inshore resources, potential, introduction of new fish harvesting technology, and continued evaluation of a mobile support facility, all of which were recommended by the Royal Commission on Labrador.

Increased technical assistance to inshore fishermen to diversify their fishing operations with special emphasis on herring, mackerel and caplin, will be one of my Government's development thrusts for 1975.

My Department of Fisheries will also provide technical assistance to small and medium sized companies in the area of product development, product promotion and market research.

Under a third subsidiary agreement on fisheries with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion presently under negotiation, important programs for the continued development of offshore, middle distance and inshore fish harvesting technology, fish handling, unloading and transportation system, and curing facilities for pickled fish are proposed.

My Government's belief in the future of our fishing industry is such that it has committed itself to a course of continued development which presupposes the successful overcoming of the present manifold difficulties besetting the industry.

My Government is determined to re-establish the opportunity for our fishermen to wrest a full living from the seas and to harvest our marine resources to their fullest potential.

HEALTH

My Government's commitment to the provision of comprehensive accessible health services for the people of this Province is well known. This commitment is well illustrated by massive new hospital construction programs, not alone those underway but also those for which planning is now in train.

However, my Government is well aware that bricks and mortar, important and expensive as they are, represent only part of the fabric of health services. Measures to build up adequate numbers of skilled manpower, particularly in rural areas, are equally important.

Accordingly, my Government plans to introduce a new incentive program to attract and retain dentists for rural areas. In addition, a mobile dental clinic will be set up this spring as a pilot project for the provision of dental services to scattered and relatively isolated communities. If this proves successful, others will follow.

An area of high priority for my Government is that of nutrition. This is a complex subject, involving several jurisdictions. An Interdepartmental Committee has been established to produce specific recommendations for effective and realistic measures to improve the nutritional status of the people of this Province.

EDUCATION

During the past three years, serious and continuing efforts have been made to encourage the development of our natural resources, to maximize our industrial potential while safeguarding our unique environment, and to regain control of our economic destiny. Our first commitment, however, has been and must continue to be, the development of the human resource of this Province.

My Government is dedicated to developing and expanding the opportunities for Newfoundlanders to achieve a competence second to none in the vocational, technical and fisheries areas. In pursuance of this goal, it has been decided to establish a Newfoundland Polytechnical Institute, which will provide instruction in all post-secondary, technical, fisheries, marine and related fields. This Institute when completed will have three component parts. A

College of Fisheries, Navigation, Technology and Marine Sciences will give instruction in the area covered by the present College of Fisheries, and will include certain technical, post-secondary courses offered by the present College of Trades and Technology. The Institute will also include a College of Medical Technology, giving instruction in the various para-medical areas, including Pharmacy, X-ray and Laboratory Technology, courses in Nursing Assistants, etc. The third College will be a College of Business Education and Applied Arts giving instruction in secretarial, commercial, and other related courses.

Phase one of the Institute will be the construction of a College of fishing and navigation contiguous to the University in order to make possible the sharing of certain facilities, but that the Institute will be a separate entity with its own Board of Governors. When the Polytechnical is fully operative, the building presently known as the College of Trades and Technology will become a District Vocational School for the St. John's area.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY:

My Government wishes to involve the youth of the Province in the formulation of policy. None has a greater stake in the future of our human, land and sea resources than the young men and women in the cities, towns and communities throughout the Island part of our Province and in Labrador. In late April there will be a series of sixty-two regional youth conferences involving high school students from every electoral district, and also involving the student body of the District Vocational Schools and post-secondary institutions. Later next fall it is planned to have a Provincial Youth Conference as a follow-up to the sixty-two regional conferences. It is envisioned that over 4,000 young people will be involved in the regional youth conferences, with representation from every community in the Province. Following the conferences it is intended to establish a Provincial Youth Commission, with representatives from the young men and women of the Province and the general public. This Commission will have as its mandate to keep Government informed on the views of our young men and women, and to provide a forum for continuing dialogue.

In an attempt to equalize educational opportunities throughout our Province, my Government is giving serious consideration to the greater use of technological media. Because the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has such a scattered population, greater use of technology, especially technological media, should improve means of education and educational opportunities for a greater number of residents of the Province. As an initial step in this direction, it is my Government's intention, through my Department of Education, to enter into a joint study with the Educational Technology Branch of the Federal Department of Transportation and Communications for the purpose of developing a long term and rational plan for applying technology to enhance the educational process in Newfoundland appointed an Inter-Governmental Committee to advise upon the best steps to be taken to implement the recommendations of the Newfoundland Corrections Committee. In accordance with such recommendations, my Government has transferred administration in the field of Adult Corrections to my Department of Justice, and necessary legislation to implement such decision will be introduced. Within the past few days my Government has appointed the first Director of Adult Corrections for our Province and it is the intention to implement forthwith an Adult Probation Program throughout the Province. When my Government assumed office, there was but a token effort in the field of legal aid. In the past three years, the provincial contribution to legal aid has risen from $20,000 annually to $380,000 for the fiscal year 1974-75. My Government will introduce legislation to create an independent Commission to administer legal aid in close co-operation with the Law Society of Newfoundland.

Last year saw the first major re-structuring of the Supreme Court of the Province in over a century, as a result of legislation introduced by my Government for the creation of a separate Court of Appeal for the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and a separate Trial Division. My Government awaits the early passage by the Parliament of Canada of a Bill to amend the Judges Act to permit the Governor-General in Council to appoint Judges to occupy these new Courts.

At my Government's request, the Federal Government has introduced an amendment to the Judges Act which will provide for the appointment of two additional District Court Judges in our Province, which will ensure ready access by all our citizens to our District Courts.

Consideration is being given to a new District Courts Act which will increase the jurisdiction of our District Court Judges and provide for the speedy administration of justice in these courts. This Act, which has to be prepared in consultation with the Federal Minister of Justice, hopefully will be ready for presentation to this Session of the House of Assembly.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

The Report of the Royal Commission on Municipal Government in The Commission appointed by my Government during this past year to enquire into the St. John's Urban Region Study has already submitted its first interim report relating to the regional plan and defining the boundaries of the area to be included. The Commission has now made considerable progress with Part ll of

the Enquiry relating to the level of servicing in the Region and will be completing a third and final report into the forms of municipal government for the area by early summer.

Municipalities can be assured that my Government is most sympathetic towards the problems that confront them, particularly with regard to the rapidly increasing costs of providing essential municipal services and the demands that are being placed upon them by the rising expectations of our people. It was with this in mind that my Government introduced during the past year a new program of road maintenance grants, thereby providing municipalities with substantially more financial assistance than was possible under the previous and outmoded program. Many municipalities have indicated their complete satisfaction with the program which has enabled them to provide a much higher level of service than was hitherto possible. Similarly, my Government has not only agreed to continue the Provincial Municipal Street Paving Program, but has approved in principle an increase in the provincial contribution from 50 percent to 60 percent of the capital cost on approved projects. In other words, commencing this year the municipalities will only have to bear 40 percent of the capital cost of approved street reconstruction and paving projects with the Province assuming the balance.

HOUSING

My Government is continuing to increase its activities in meeting the housing needs of our people. In the year 1974 this Province achieved the greatest number of housing starts in its history; 4,911 units in the face of a substantial decrease in starts on the national scene.

The direct involvement of my Government through provincial funds and through loans and cost sharing from the Federal Government in support of our programs resulted in the commitment of $35,000,000 in the past year. This was in addition to funds from the Federal Government made directly to homeowners and builders.

Communities and rural areas. Good progress was made in the crash program for subsidized rental housing resulting in 426 starts. Residential land servicing has been undertaken on a widespread basis. Supplementary assistance to the Federal Assisted Home Ownership Program has also been introduced.

My Government recognizes that the need for new housing is still great and to this end it intends to increase activities in the year ahead. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has been strengthened in its capacity to plan and implement programs. To the extent that our resources will permit, every effort will be made in direct spending, in the use of available Federal funding, and the funding from other sources to mount the maximum effort attainable. In addition, my Government will review any constraints that may be impairing private sector activity, particularly in the rental field, with a view to encouraging activity in this area.

The level of activity by my Government in the year past had an important impact in achieving the record level of starts, and my Government is determined that in the year ahead activity will be expanded to achieve even better results.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY:

TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

During the coming fiscal year, despite spiralling cost, my Government will continue the program of upgrading and paving the remaining roads in our highways network and is actively preparing a new five-year plan which will guarantee that all main and trunk roads in the Province will be upgraded and paved within five years. It is hoped that this essential and exciting five-year paving plan will be completed in time for tabling during this Session of this Honourable House.

A cost benefit study of the Trans Labrador Highway has been completed and the results are most favourable from a benefit point of view. My Government is making strenuous efforts to reach a satisfactory agreement with the Federal Government and the Government of Quebec to commence construction of this Highway.

Communications, maintains an ongoing dialogue with the providers of transportation services and Government officials of the neighbouring Atlantic Provinces and New England States.

CO-OPERATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

On February 1, 1974, the Government of Newfoundland and the Government of Canada (through the Department of Regional Economic Expansion) entered into a ten-year General Development Agreement designed to improve the economic and socioeconomic development of the Province. This Agreement permits the signing of Subsidiary Agreements covering various aspects of the economy and provides for grants from the Government of Canada for up to 90 percent of the costs involved.

To date, my Government has been able to conclude a number of Subsidiary Agreements and is currently in the process of finalizing a number of additional agreements. Those already signed cover expenditures of approximately $100 million, of which some $54 million relates to the forestry sector (including a recent amendment for $19 million) $18 million for fisheries covering marine service centers and water supplies for fish plants, $15 million for highways and $15 million for the Gros Morne area. The DREE share of these agreements amounts to about $90 million.

There are a number of additional agreements which will soon be signed with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and which will amount to more than $100 million. Agreement in principle has been reached for a Subsidiary Agreement covering the first three phases of the St. John's Region Water Supply and the completion of the St. John's Harbour Arterial. It has also been agreed that the funding for the Harbour Arterial will not detract in any way from funding provided by DREE for highways in the Province. A new Highways Subsidiary Agreement will also be signed soon which will provide funds for further construction and paving of major trunk roads in the Province along with a Planning Subsidiary Agreement which will enable the Province to undertake additional research and planning. There are several other Subsidiary

Agreements which are being negotiated and on which it is hoped agreement can be reached in the coming months.

Amount of activity ever achieved by a very considerable margin. With several major new agreements soon to be reached, DREE activity in the coming year will again increase significantly and will continue to have a major impact throughout the Province. My Government is pleased with the progress made so far, as Newfoundland has been able to finalize more agreements with DREE than any other province in Canada. Every effort will be made to continue the progress achieved to date.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

For some time it has become increasingly evident to my Government that there was need for greater co-ordination of the intergovernmental activities of the Province. The number and complexity of programs and agreements between the Province, the Federal Government and other provinces have been escalating rapidly over recent years which is evidence of the growing economic and social interdependence of the various regions of Canada. It is anticipated that this

trend will continue and several provinces have already enacted legislation concerning intergovernmental relations.

To accommodate this growing need, my Government has decided to establish an Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat which will be under the jurisdiction of a Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs. Legislation on this matter will be dealt with during the current session of this House

LABRADOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

My Government has been giving very careful consideration to the recommendations of the Report of the Royal Commission on Labrador, and is determined to implement, as quickly as possible, the feasible recommendations contained therein. Many of the recommendations are presently being implemented by various Departments of my Government.

Legislation will be laid before you to create a Crown Corporation to be known as the Labrador Resource Development Corporation, charged with responsibility, inter alliance, for the development of the resources of Coastal Labrador. It is my Government's intention as well to charge this Corporation with responsibility for the industrial and commercial supply of fuel for Gander International Airport in the hope that this great International Airport will remain competitive. Such action will promote the continued expansion of the Airport and the orderly growth of the Town of Gander. In this respect, legislation will be introduced to create a Crown Corporation to assume responsibility for these matters in co-operation with the Government of Canada. Negotiations along these lines have already commenced with the Government of Canada which has expressed a sincere desire to assist the Province in this new concept.

REHABILITATION AND RECREATION

This past year has seen an encouraging expansion of programs falling within the jurisdiction of my Department of Rehabilitation and Recreation. In order that the future needs of our province with respect to senior citizens is accurately assessed, a survey will soon be completed which will indicate the areas in Newfoundland and Labrador that still require facilities for the deserving members of our society. A similar survey is underway to indicate what additional facilities and programs are required for retarded adults in Newfoundland. The employment of additional Rehabilitation Officers for Central and Western Newfoundland will result in an expansion this year of services for the physically and mentally handicapped citizens of the Province. It is becoming increasingly apparent that Newfoundlanders are more and more desirous of participating in sports and recreation. In response to this justifiable demand on the part of the people, my Government will expand still further the program designed to provide community sports facilities which received universal acceptance by our citizens during the past year.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY:

FORESTRY

The Forest Land (Management and Taxation) Act has been proclaimed, and the accompanying regulations brought into force on January 17, 1975. In excess of $50 million will be invested in the resource in the next four years through the Forestry Subsidiary Agreements signed with the Federal Government in 1974 design. During the coming year, the balance of the crown-controlled forests will be covered by detailed plans, and it is expected that management plans for the major company holdings will also be completed. The coming year will see the forests of our people finally, after three years of concerted effort, brought under a management system designed to provide maximum sustained benefits to the people of our Province. 1974 also saw the purchase of the Reid lands by my Government, and these lands, now part of the public domain, are being brought under management.

The Forest Access Road Program was substantially expanded last year, and 1975 will see a continued expansion. These roads provide for orderly utilization of our forests and my Government anticipates significant advances in our lumber industry. By the end of 1975, Newfoundland lumber will be able to compete effectively with mainland products as a result of new modern mills brought into operation in the last two years. Our own lumber will be used for provincial construction throughout the Province. If legislation is required to implement this policy, it will be laid before you during this Session of this Honourable House of Assembly.

In the area of land management, my Government continues to develop new systems. A new Crown Lands Branch is being brought into full operation and the frustrating backlog of work for that Branch which my Government inherited will be completely cleared up to date by Spring 1975. Lands Offices are to be established in each of the four regions of my Department of Forestry and Agriculture -- Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Corner Brook, Gander and St. John's. By year's end, our people will be able to settle lands problems at their local offices instead of travelling all the way to Confederation Building.

Planning will be completed in 1975 for a system of leasing, granting and clearing titles for Crown lands that will make our land resource more readily available for housing, cottages, agriculture and commercial endeavours.

The past year, with its rapidly spiralling costs of food, has brought our agriculture program under close scrutiny. The coming year will see my Government respond positively to the increasing interest of our people in growing their own vegetables. A pilot project which will provide small plots our own province. The objective of my Government will be to produce all our own requirements of such things as root crops, hogs and poultry products.

TOURISM

The tourist industry continues to possess great potential for development and is one of the largest employers in the Province. Its several elements have shown steady growth and progress which will continue to a far greater extent during the coming year.

WILDLIFE

A new wildlife program of management, conservation and enforcement will be introduced, aimed at the protection of this great natural resource and of the environment. To achieve this, an enlarged staff of wardens, technicians and biologists will be deployed at various locations throughout the Province to ensure compliance with regulations and to assemble data as a sound basis for the management of the various wildlife species and for the preservation and proper utilization of this resource.

Regulations concerning the operation of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles have now been drafted and will be implemented during the coming year. These regulations are essential to ensure that proper safety standards are met and to ensure also that the environment is adequately protected and that the habitat of all living species is not jeopardized. Such regulations, in draft form, will be tabled in this Honourable House and given wide circulation throughout the Province to enable my Government to receive public reaction and recommendations before they become law.

PARKS

During the past four years there has been an increase of 100 percent in the use and occupancy of our Provincial Parks network. This increase continued in 1974 and clearly indicates the need for expansion of our present parks and the addition of new parks to meet the demand.

The operation of 45 parks and 14 public school beaches will continue for the period May 15 to September 15, 1975. A total staff of approximately 300 will be employed to accommodate an estimated 2,600,000 visitors and 380,000 campers.

A Park Planning and Surveys Program will be launched by my Government to include the development of a new Park classification and…

A program of improvements is planned to existing parks to meet the ever increasing demands for camping and day-use park facilities. Expansion will be carried out in some 11 parks to add an additional 400-500 campsites.

My Government plans to develop additional parks to serve areas not now serviced by adequate Park facilities. Projects include the completion of new Parks started at Chance Cove (Ferryland), Little River Pond (Fortune Bay) and Winter Tickle Lake (Lewisporte) and the construction of new Parks at Stag Lake (Humber West) and in the Bauline--Cape St. Francis Area.

A program of improvement is envisaged for Public Beaches to protect and provide access to some of the more significant inland and coastal beach areas. The 1975-76 program will include development of facilities at Topsail Beach (Harbour Main) Pasadena Beach (Humber East) and Middle Cove (St. John's East Extern).

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Division of Cultural Affairs of my Government will continue to present to the public the best performing arts available in the local, national and international fields, and is constantly searching for attractions that can be presented throughout our Province.

This year will see the opening of a 450-seat Arts and Culture Centre in Stephenville, and construction is progressing on the expansion of the Gander Centre to include a theatre, exhibition area and meeting rooms.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

The general objective of my Government is to develop the historic resources of the Province in order to provide for the preservation of our historic heritage, and also to provide a detailed basis for the study of the social, economic and cultural background of the Province.

My Government will continue its participation in the National Museums Program.

Through this participation, it is hoped to commence major restoration work on the Newfoundland Museum. In addition, travelling exhibits will be provided and circulated throughout the Province.

In the field of labour standards my Government is cognizant of the need to update employment standards for those in the work force who have not always been able to avail themselves of the benefits which accrue to organized groups through collective bargaining. To ensure that the rights of all of the work force are protected, my Government intends to introduce, during this Session

of the House of Assembly, a new Labour Standards Code. This Code will consolidate and update the various pieces of labour standards legislation to provide more uniform and equitable standards of employment with respect to minimum wages, annual vacations, notice of termination of employment, hours of work, weekly days of rest and employment of children. There will be provisions in the new Code for paid statutory holidays, maternity leave and wage

protection.

Reference was made in the Throne Speech in January, 1974, to the fact that my Government had undertaken a careful study of the recommendations of the Cohen Royal Commission with a view to the introduction of new legislation to improve and foster labour relations at a time when labour-management relations have been subjected to greater than normal strains and tensions by ever-increasing inflation. My Government intends that the toils of the representatives of unions and management who have worked with Government on this most important project will be brought to fruition during this Session of the House of Assembly by the introduction of an entirely new Labour Relations Act.

My Government has been most concerned over the extremely high rate of unemployment during the past year and intends to work diligently to remedy this situation. My Government intends to escalate training programs to provide those who are unemployed with a marketable skill and to update the skills of those who are employed to meet the labour market demands in today's rapidly changing world of work.

My Government intends to develop a totally new and definitive manpower policy for the Province so that the development of our human resources may be carried out in the most rational manner.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Steps have been taken to consolidate all existing consumer protection. Government but it will make every effort to assure that consumers are protected against inferior products of workmanship and obtain adjustments under warranties to which they are entitled.

It is my Government's hope to introduce legislation to implement a system of "No Fault" automobile insurance. My Ministers have held several meetings with their colleagues in other Provinces and with the automobile insurance industry in an effort to provide uniform "No Fault" insurance legislation whilst at the same time, along with the other Provinces, attempting to obtain some indication from the insurance industry that the implementation of "No Fault" automobile insurance will not result in a substantial increase in insurance premiums to the Newfoundland motorist. A Committee of my Ministers hopes to submit a final report to Government in time to permit the introduction of legislation to provide for compulsory automobile insurance, either under the "No Fault" concept or otherwise.

My Government has set in motion a plan for the orderly conversion of the Province from the present system of measurements to the international system of units referred to as the Metric System.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY:

MINERAL RESOURCES

In the past the mineral resources of our Province have been disposed of with little direct benefit accruing to our people. Last year, my Government appointed a Royal Commission on Mineral Revenue to bring in recommendations to rectify this situation. The Report of the Commission has now been received and made public.

My Ministers have requested the general public and the mining industry to furnish their comments on the Commission's recommendations and, in particular, the recommendation relating to the rate of tax which should be payable under The Mining Tax Act. After receiving such comments and recommendations, my Government will lay before you legislation designed to ensure that our people receive a fair and equitable return from the exploitation of our mineral resources whilst, at the same time, encouraging further mining development in our Province.

The past two years have seen record amounts spent on mineral exploration in our Province. To ensure that this activity continues and to permit maximum efficiency in exploration, my Government will present legislation for your consideration to replace The Crown Lands (Mines and Quarries) Act with a new Mineral Act. This legislation will improve the efficiency of procedures involved in acquiring mineral rights.

ENERGY

There have been significant occurrences in our Province in the past year relating to electrical energy. My Government has acquired control of Churchill Falls (Labrador) Corporation and the hydro potential of Labrador. Preliminary work was carried out on the development of the Lower Churchill River and the feasibility of transmitting power to the Island of Newfoundland confirmed. Negotiations carried out by my Government led to the Federal Government agreeing to assist in financing the necessary transmission lines and the tunnel beneath the Strait of Belle Isle. The Newfoundland and Labrador Power Corporation commenced expansion of the Bay D'Espoir plant to meet our Province's energy needs until the Lower Churchill River is harnessed.

My Ministers will continue the steps necessary to facilitate the completion of the Lower Churchill River project. My Government is determined to see that the benefits of this and other energy developments accrue to all our people, both on the Island of Newfoundland and within Labrador.

Legislation will be laid before you to reorganize the Newfoundland and Labrador Power Commission, to be known in the future as the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation. The new Corporation will be so structured as to allow for the proper management of hydro and other power in the province.

Newfoundland has long been known for its deep water bays and harbours. In the past they were merely safe anchorage for the thousands of ships that plied the North Atlantic. For decades we have hoped to develop these ports into major industrial centres and we often wondered why such developments did not take place.

Deep water ports, in themselves, are not sufficient attraction to major... The power from Gull Island will stimulate industrial development throughout the Province. The combination of deep water and hydro sourced energy will permit the creation of a variety of large, labour-intensive industries.

The connection of the island grid to the Gull Island site via the Strait of Belle Isle tunnel opens up the entire Labrador energy potential for industrial use. Industry sitting, both on the Island and in Labrador, will no longer be subject to the vagaries of the international oil market.

However, industry will not be the only benefactor of Gull Island and future hydro developments. The people of the entire Province will profit from continued long-term, stable hydro electricity. Because the main costs for a hydro development are reflected in the initial capital investment, only marginal increases in price to consumers can be expected, in line with increases in the costs of labour and maintenance.

OFFSHORE MINERAL RIGHTS

During the past year my Government has continued efforts to reach a negotiated settlement with the Federal Government with respect to control over the mineral resources of the continental margin. At the same time, my Government has continued the preparation of our legal case by extensive research and the retention of the services of eminent international and constitutional lawyers.

Prior to further meetings, my Government will await a response to our last communication of November, 1974, when we requested a commitment from the Federal Government that it was prepared to negotiate a substantial degree of control for our Province over offshore activity.

With two gas discoveries off Labrador this past fall and the likelihood of early commercial developments being confirmed, it should have become obvious to all our people why it is so important that our Province continue to assert its rights to the control over offshore resources. My Government will request the support of this Honourable House for the position taken by my Ministers in protecting these most important rights.

My Government has stressed with the Federal Government the importance, during the Law of the Sea Conference, of preserving our mineral rights over the continental margin not only to the 200 mile limit rights over the margin in order to achieve other objectives at the Conference. My Ministers will be making further representation on this matter to the Government of Canada.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Rural Development Program implemented by my Government is now in its second year of operation and the record to date has been most impressive. There are twenty-three Development Associations presently existing in the Province with ten more in the process of being formed. Seven hundred and thirty-three rural businesses have been assisted by the Rural Development Authority. A $30 million A.R.D.A. Agreement has been signed with the Government of Canada and well over 100,000 pieces of information on various Government programs have been distributed by the Rural Development Authority throughout the Province.

The activities of the Rural Development Program have touched the lives of thousands of Newfoundlanders in every area of our Province; approximately 260,000 through Rural Development Associations alone. The various programs are directed towards responding to the needs of the people in a way which will involve them in the making of the decisions that affect their regions or communities. Basically, the approach is providing local people the wherewithal to plan the development of their own resources, to identify and pursue economic opportunities and to solve their problems. The local people are providing the major impetus to this kind of development. They are in the best position to identify local opportunities and to pursue them to their maximum potential.

OMBUDSMAN

It is the intention of my Government to ask the Legislature during this Session of this Honourable House of Assembly to appoint a Parliamentary Commissioner pursuant to the provision of The Parliamentary Commissionaire (Ombudsman) Act. Before so doing, however, my Government will lay before you legislation to amend the existing Act to make the administration of the Act the responsibility of the Legislature rather than one of my Ministers as is now provided and, to guarantee the total independence and impartiality of the Ombudsman, to tie the salary.

ELECTION EXPENSES

It is my Government's intention to recommend during this Session of the Honourable House of Assembly the appointment of a Select Committee of this House to hear recommendations from Newfoundlanders as to whether or not they wish election expenses to be controlled by the Legislature or whether they wish elections to be financed out of public funds.

CONCLUSION

If the young men and women are to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities in the year ahead, proven, thoughtful leadership will be needed in Newfoundland.

In due course, you will be presented with Budget proposals by my Government to support the programs referred to herein and to endorse a continued program of capital financing for the people of Newfoundland.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HONOURABLE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY:

You will be asked to grant supply unto Her Majesty. I invoke God's blessing upon your labours as you give careful consideration to the matters laid before you for the welfare of our beloved Province.