|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 40e | 4e  | Discours du Trône | 10 mars 1988 | James McGrath | Lieutenant Gouverneur | PC |

I. THE MONARCHY

The Province of Newfoundland has an old and tremendously rich history. It has been many things, fishing station, settlement, colony, nation and province, but throughout it has never wavered from a loyalty to and affection for the Crown that has no equal. I sit here today as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen; as an active participant in the Constitutional Monarchy by which we are governed.

This loyalty of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to the Monarchy is both institutional and personal. No other people have a greater love of the Queen nor a higher appreciation of the role of the Crown in our democracy. It is with great pleasure that we anticipate a visit by a member of the Royal Family in this year, the one hundredth anniversary of Municipal Government in

Newfoundland and Labrador.

II. THE COUNTRY-CONSTITUTION

In the past year the Nation of Canada engaged in a process of constitutional reform leading up to the Constitutional Amendment of 1987, known in popular parlance as The Meech Lake Accord.

This Accord completes the 1982 constitutional process and allows Quebec to become once again a full participant in the Constitution of Canada, possessed of all the privileges, and duties, that our Constitution brings. Recognizing the principle of equality of all Provinces and affirming a balanced federation with strong Federal and Provincial Governments, the Accord, beyond its unifying measures, holds much specific promise for the people of this Province.

There is provision for annual First Ministers' Conferences to deal with the Economy and Constitution. Included on the agenda of the next constitutional round is THE FISHERY -- Roles and Responsibilities. My Government is pleased that all first ministers agreed that this subject was worthy of constitutional discussion. The Accord has bestowed upon Provinces, for the first time, the formal right to participate in the process of judicial appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada and the Senate. I am pleased that My Government has already been able to utilize this process, to nominate a list of candidates to the Senate of Canada, from which came the appointment of the Honourable Gerald Ryan Ottenheimer, whose service to this House and to the people of our Province, had few equals. There are key changes to the constitutional amending formula that require the consent of all provinces for certain fundamental amendments, reflecting the principle of equality of all provinces. There is recognition that in the usage of the federal spending power by the Government of Canada to promote national objectives, there must be a sufficient role for the provinces to ensure that such objectives are implemented in a manner responsive and sensitive to provincial needs.

This Accord succeeds in healing the divided nature of Canada following the 1982 reforms and My Ministers are committed to implementing its procedures by means of the Requisite Resolution in this session of this Honourable House. It will be the first legislative action My Government will take in this Session.

III. FREE TRADE

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

Another major achievement at the national level which shall prove of a great benefit to the people of our Province was reached on January 2nd this year by the signing of The Canada - United States Free Trade Agreement by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and President Ronald Reagan.

This historic treaty crowns months of negotiations, which included extensive consultation and participation at all levels by My Government. Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians support this Agreement in light of our historic need to ensure markets for our export dominated economy, as well as the benefits of less expensive consumer goods.

My Government expects that the Free Trade Agreement will improve the climate of investment in Newfoundland and Labrador by firms which hope to serve the entire North American market. Without doubt, however, the single most important part of the Agreement is the market security that it grants us in the country to which the majority of our produced goods are sold. All of our export products, fish, oil and gas, forest products, minerals, and hydro will benefit as a result of the Agreement.

IV. JOBS

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The task which has occupied My Ministers more than any other has been the creation of employment for our people. The results that they have achieved are dramatic and consistent. During the past three years, employment in Newfoundland and Labrador has increased by at least 10,000 jobs on a monthly average basis. These gains, resulting from the strong economic performance of the Province, have reduced the unemployment rate by 2.7% points over this period. Indeed, the decline in the past year of 1.4% was the largest absolute decline recorded for any Canadian Province. No single geographical area benefitted exclusively from the creation of these jobs, which were distributed throughout our Province, benefitting both male and female workers.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The creation of these jobs is due in no small measure to the economic development policies that have been pursued in a clear and consistent manner. My Government's Economic Development-Job Strategy Policy is firmly based on a number of principles:

1. Resource Based Industries

My Government has been emphasizing our traditional resource based industries of fishery, forestry and mining and attempting more secondary processing of products from these industries whenever possible. A number of dramatic success stories in pursuit of this goal have been achieved.

In 1987 Fishery Products International Ltd. was successfully returned to the private sector. Since 1985 this giant corporation has been immensely profitable returning close to fifty million dollars to the Province as a result of the Privatization Program. The doom and gloom that pervaded the offshore fishing industry just a few years ago has been replaced by a restructured offshore fishery that is dynamic and forward looking. Many fish plants have been upgraded all around the Province and a new modern trawler fleet is being constructed at Marystown. The company is engaged in aggressive marketing of its product lines and diversification into secondary processing markets.

My Government recognized that the revitalization of the offshore fishery, important as it is to our economy, was by itself insufficient. Consequently, My Government insisted as a condition to the restructured offshore fishery that new and innovative actions must be pursued in the Inshore Fishery. The new sixty million dollar Inshore Fishery Agreement with the Federal Government is the result of this action. This Agreement will improve and expand our basic inshore infrastructure, provide money to improve fish quality, and provide money to increase fishermen's harvesting capability.

A third component of our fishery policy has been the introduction of the middle distance fleet. When first announced there were many who were critical of this new program. However, the results of this initiative have been very encouraging providing increased volumes of fish to our inshore plants while introducing another technology to the industry. My Government is pleased with the progress made and is pleased to announce that it will be reviewing further expanding our capability in this area of the fishery.

My Government's fourth initiative in the fishery has been launching a full range of programs in aquaculture. In the last Session of this House a new Aquaculture Act was passed. In the last few weeks a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between My Government and the Federal Government. With these two areas now in place My Government will proceed aggressively to

expand our Province's aquaculture capability. Several areas of the Province have already benefitted from My Government's actions in this field.

Underlying these four policy directions in the fishery is My Government's unwavering commitment to sound management of our fish stocks. Recent actions by France and other Canadian provinces to access additional quantities of our fish stocks starkly demonstrates our vulnerability -- a lesson that history continues to teach us. My Government will continue its efforts to protect this valuable resource for our people and will this year be presenting to all the Governments of Canada its position on this vital area in the next round of Constitutional discussion.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The past year has been a successful one for our mining and minerals sector. A great deal of money has been spent on exploration and development work for future mine operations and stability has returned to the iron ore mines in Wabush and Labrador City.

The Cinq Cerf Brook Gold Mine on the South Coast of the island portion of our Province, was developed by Hope Brook Gold Incorporated with provincial assistance. This operation is employing 325 people during the construction phase, and will have a permanent workforce of 280 jobs upon completion, anticipated by November 1988.

The St. Lawrence Fluorspar Mines have been re-activated by St. Lawrence Fluorspar Limited with provincial assistance. This mine, now in production, employs 90 people in the St. Lawrence area, and will finally employ 100.

At Baie Verte the asbestos mine has been re-activated by Baie Verte Mines Incorporated with provincial assistance. This operation presently employs almost 400 people, engaged in both re-development and mining operations, and after the conclusion of the major Waste Removal Program, employment will stabilize at approximately 230 people.

At Daniel's Harbour the zinc mine has been reopened by Daniel Harbour Mines Incorporated with provincial assistance. This mine employs 150 people.

At Port au Port, a new limestone mine will be opened by year's end by Newfoundland Resources and Mining Company without provincial assistance, and create 35 jobs.

My Government believes that this coming year will be another record year in the mineral exploration field and is optimistic that the ore deposits recently discovered at Tally Pond will see commercial production.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The forest industry in Newfoundland and Labrador performed extremely well in 1987 with newsprint demand and prices at record highs. As a result of the modernization programs at Grand Falls and Corner Brook, to which My Government contributed substantially, Newfoundland mills are producing top quality products competing successfully in the most demanding and lucrative markets. My Government takes considerable pride to see the confidence and optimism that now exists in the communities depending upon the newsprint industry, especially considering the precarious position of operations in certain areas only a few short years ago.

Government is determined to continue its work to ensure a strong future for the forest industry. In 1987, twelve million new trees were planted in this Province, about half as many as had been planted in the previous ten years, with hundreds of jobs created in thinning and other forest work. In 1988, a similar number of trees will be planted. It is our duty to protect this vital inheritance for the generations that follow from fire, insects and other threats. While 1987 was a very dry season, with nearly 300 fire starts, losses were kept to a minimum because of quick attack capability as our enhanced water bomber fleet was strategically stationed around the Province.

2. Diversification

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The second principle which underlies our Economic Development-Job Strategy is the diversification of our economy whenever feasible to do so. The revitalization of the Come by Chance Refinery is a classic example of this policy.

Since the Come by Chance Oil Refinery was acquired by Newfoundland Energy Limited in November 1986, privately financed refurbishing has been substantially completed, and the flame over the refinery relit for the first time in years.

At full capacity, in 1988, the refinery will employ 200 persons and process 100,000 barrels of crude oil per day.

This undertaking, perhaps more than any other, symbolizes the turnaround in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. My Government is proud of this achievement, given the troubled past and that the facility was about to be demolished days before My Government attracted new investors. My Government is in active discussions with the owners in an attempt to ensure the maximum utilization of the facility and its products so more new jobs can be created.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

A second example of this policy of diversification is in enviroponics.

In the past year a new and innovative enterprise has come to our Province with the development of the Sprung Enviroponics facility.

Recognizing the potential for market growth in this Province and elsewhere, and with an appropriate level of Provincial Government participation for less per job than other government investments, this dramatic application of biological technology leads the way into a new era for our agricultural sector. While we have seen the potential for aquaculture and other enhanced production systems, this is a first for our Province, and will provide 150 permanent jobs to our economy.

At the outset this project was viewed with great scepticism in some quarters.

While these sceptics viewed Government involvements in our traditional industries of fishing, forestry, mining and the service sector both large and small, acceptable, they did not approve of such involvement by Government in a new innovative technology, which both put this Province at the leading edge of a new technology and creates new permanent jobs, as appropriate action by Government.

The project has now begun to produce and our people are purchasing these fresh wholesome products with enthusiasm. My Government believes that this project will prove its viability in the next few months and will join with Kruger, Come by Chance, FPI, Hope Brook Mines, and others as a major economic success story in addition to the technology transfer and research opportunities it is providing to our people. My Government is eager to see expansion in this area -- to create new jobs around our Province and to give our young people another opportunity so that they will remain in our Province and assist in its development.

My Government is eager to pursue with the Sprung Group other products that can be developed using this new technology and other areas, like forestry, that may benefit from its application.

A third exciting example of My Government's diversification efforts has been its support of Terra Nova Shoes Limited of Harbour Grace. This company made an important decision in 1987 that is somewhat unique in recent Canadian economic history. The company wished to expand its manufacturing capacity and chose to expand its Harbour Grace facility over expansion of its facility in an Ontario location. My Government supported this decision and with some financial support the expansion is near completion with new jobs being created.

3. Labrador Hydro Power and Other Labrador Resources

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government's third economic development job strategy is the use of Labrador Power. The key to both providing stable electrical rates to all our people and further Labrador and Provincial Development and Provincial Job Creation is Labrador Hydro Power Development. My Government has been unceasing in its efforts to correct the Upper Churchill inequity and develop other sites on the Churchill River. As is well known, all our efforts to date have not seen a change to the situation. My Government is moving on two fronts to try and see development occur:

(l) We are working with the Federal Government and Quebec at the highest level to see whether solutions can be found with Quebec.

(2) We are continuing our efforts to attract industry which would be a catalyst so that the hydro potential of the Lower Churchill River may be developed.

4. Offshore Resources

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The fourth lever of My Government's Economic Development Job Strategy Policy is the rational development of our offshore resources. My Government is continuing its efforts in concert with the Federal Government and the oil companies to negotiate an Agreement for the development of the Hibernia Field. The uncertainty of world oil prices has been the single most important factor that has delayed an Agreement to date. We will do all that is possible to have this matter resolved before June of this year.

My Government is encouraged by the recent developments at the Terra Nova and Whiterose Oilfields and indications point to ongoing positive exploration results. Petro Canada will be awarding pre-engineering world for the development of the Terra Nova Field next month.

5. Consultation - Royal Commission

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

A fifth action in the Job Creation - Economic Strategy was to obtain the views of our people. As a result, the House Royal Commission was established. Its report has been exhaustively studied by My Government and responses provided on a department by department basis. It is the intention of My Government to table in this House an overview comprehensive response in the next few weeks. My Government accepts the underlying theme of a balanced approach to our development and has been pursuing this goal for a number of years as is evidenced by the initiatives already mentioned in this Speech. My Government believes, however, that there are two large areas mentioned by the Commission that are critical to our development, Education and Training / Research and Development and Small Business / Entrepreneurial Action. These two areas form the sixth and seventh policy directions of My Government.

6. Education and Training/Research and Development

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In the last several years My Government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars upgrading our educational infrastructure and providing improved wages to our teachers. It is a fact that as our student population has gone down our student-teacher ratio has improved. In addition, My Government has reorganized the high school system at considerable cost. Consistent with the House Royal Commission My Government launched a program of restructuring the post secondary vocational school system to a community college system and the identification of three provincial institutes. This dramatic change at the post secondary level which is now well underway is intended to ensure that our Province responds to the latest technological advances and provides our young people with education and training which is responsive to the needs of our ever changing society, that is relevant and provides the best chance to obtain meaningful employment. The physical achievements in education and training are impressive.

(1) Hundreds of new schools

(2) The new Institute of Fisheries and Marine Technology

(3) The establishment of the Institute of Marine Dynamics at Memorial University

(4) The new Music School Building at Memorial University

(5) The new Pharmacy School at Memorial University

(6) The new Fine Arts School at the Sir Wilfred Grenfell Campus at Memorial University in Corner Brook

(7) The new Earth Resources Building at Memorial University

(8) The new Marine Emergency Training Building operated by the Marine Institute

(9) A new library at Memorial University.

These actions, coupled with the reorganized high school and the new Community College System, demonstrate My Government's commitment to education and training.

However, My Government is still not satisfied. Last year in My Speech to you My Government called for a study on teacher training in our Province. That study is well underway and My Government looks forward to the recommendations that will result. In My Government's continuing review of education and training a number of disturbing trends have been revealed. In spite of the many and varied actions I have listed today that have been undertaken, My Government has discovered from discussions with our post secondary institutions that the failure rate of our high school graduates in first year mathematics and science has increased to alarming proportions. In one institution the failure rate in mathematics has almost tripled from 1972 to 1987. Statistics reveal that one third to one half of all our high school graduates fail in mathematics and science in first year courses at our post secondary institutions. It will be impossible to advance our development and pursue excellence through research and development if these trends are not reversed.

My Government will immediately establish a Task Force to identify the causes of this critical problem and it will be empowered to make recommendations as soon as possible of ways to correct and reverse this disturbing trend.

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

The financing of our total education system has always been a priority of My Government. In the past few years it has been at the secondary and post secondary levels that major structural changes have occurred which have also involved large sums of money. Yet, at the same time, significant new money has been spent in elementary and secondary education. In 1971-72 approximately $72 million was spent. In 1986-87 that amount had risen to $416 million. To put it another way, the per pupil cost has risen from $460 to $3,273 from 1971-72 to 1986-87.

Teachers' salaries and benefits have risen in that period of time from $46.4 million to over $300 million or a 536% increase. To further assist the financing of our basic education system, My Government has in recent years introduced additional measures to assist school boards. For example, a tax equalization grant was put into effect to help some of our less fortunate boards. This plan has met with favour by all our educators and requests are being made to further enrich this plan. Additional teachers have been provided for small schools and districts as well as to assist boards facing high declines in enrolment. These and other such programs have assisted our school boards to cope with the financial realities which they face. Yet, because of the rural nature of much of our Province, which leads to wide disparities in the prosperity of one region as opposed to another, the financing problem still exists. This has been exacerbated by declining enrolments over many years.

My Government realizes that declining enrolment does not mean declining costs to administer our school system. Statistics show the opposite is true. Recognizing this, a full review of financing the operation of our elementary and secondary education system will be undertaken to seek ways to make the system more equitable. This undertaking will require the participation of all those involved and it is hoped that it can be completed this year.

Sweeping changes are being made to our post secondary education system and they will continue. However, My Government believes that we must be ever mindful of the total formal education process from preschool to the university graduate, post graduate level. Without a strong and dynamic foundation in our primary, elementary and secondary level, the post secondary level, regardless of the amount of money spent, cannot be successful and lead to a more prosperous and happy society. Because of the present study on teacher training and the other studies announced today and because we wish to assess the first year university program presently being offered at Lewisporte and Grand Falls, My Government will defer any expansion of first year university to other centres until the present studies are completed. My Government wishes to continue this expansion but it must be confident that our basic foundation of the day school system is healthy and strong.

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

Hand in hand with education and training goes research and development, science and technology. My Government has pursued a centre of excellence policy over the last several years which has seen the proliferation of agencies both public and private especially in ocean science. The Institute of Marine Dynamics, C-Core and NORDCO are examples of the results of this policy. My Government is eager to continue this thrust. A special cabinet committee has been formed to oversee this vital area of policy making. Through the Offshore Development Fund a new Science Advisory Council will be formed to advise Government on all Research and Development/Science and Technology matters. My Government will be seeking advice on appropriate co-ordination between various agencies and to establish priorities for all Research and Development/Science and Technology efforts in the Province. The composition of this Council will be announced in the next week. My Government is convinced that our Province must move decisively in this field and that we must pursue areas of excellence that are both appropriate and natural and that are of a world class stature. My Government welcomes the Federal Government's recent announcement on Science and Technology and is determined to ensure that our Province receives its fair share of National Programs in this field. In this regard, the role of the New Science and Technology Council will be invaluable.

7. Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

The seventh direction of our Economic Development-Job Strategy Policy is Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development. The House Royal Commission was of invaluable assistance to My Government in this regard. For several years support to our small businesses centered around our loan boards in the fishery, farming and rural development sectors. Beginning last year My Government began emphasizing the business side of these endeavours of whatever type for themselves. Therefore My Government last year introduced several new initiatives:

(1) Enlarging the mandate of the Rural Development Authority and increasing the maximum that can be borrowed.

(2) Greatly increasing the mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation including Equity Financing, Youth Entrepreneurial Program, and the sale for the first time of Development Savings Bonds that were guaranteed by My Government.

(3) A Public Sector Employment Program in Fisheries, Tourism, Culture, Parks, Forestry and Aquaculture.

(4) A Government Private Sector Program that shared the wages of new jobs between both groups on a fifty/fifty basis. Two thousand jobs were thereby created.

My Government is pleased to report that these programs were welcomed by our people and that job creation programs will be instituted again this year using the results of last year's success.

My Government is especially pleased with the success of the Newfoundland and Labrador Development Corporation. Many enterprises have been assisted. For example, assistance has been provided to the fur farming industry, secondary processing of our forestry resource, and high technology firms. The success of our Development Savings Bonds demonstrates that our people are ready and eager to invest in our own development.

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

To further cultivate this entrepreneurial spirit My Government will introduce as the second legislative action of this Session, a stock savings plan which will give our people an opportunity to invest in local firms on the one hand and our local firms the much needed financial assistance to get their enterprise operating on a sound business footing. Individuals investing in local firms will be eligible to deduct for income tax purposes the investment they have made up to a prescribed amount and local firms will be assisted in preparing their business plans so that investors will know the nature and level of risk involved in the various enterprises.

To quote the Royal Commission "It is mainly through the self help efforts of thousands of Newfoundlanders in hundreds of communities that new initiatives can be taken and new jobs created".

My Government believes that a clearly defined integrated approach to small business development -- rural development must be pursued. There is still a need for the Federal / Provincial Subsidiary Agreement to provide the fundamental infrastructure that is taken for granted in many other parts of the country. My Government is optimistic that it will conclude agreements with the Federal Government in Agriculture, Rural Development and Tourism in the near future. These ongoing agreements, however, must be harmonized with ongoing small business and rural development activities. Additionally, with the new role of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, care must be taken to ensure that overlapping of programs from various agencies does not occur. Aware of this potential problem My Government established a Task Force last year to study all the various business support programs to recommend ways to streamline our provincial activities in concert with the new Federal Government Programs. The report of the Task Force has been received and Government will be acting upon its recommendations as soon as possible.

My Government believes that pursuit of these seven objectives of Economic Development-Job Strategy is consistent with the House Royal Commission and other recommendations that have been received from the Economic Council of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government has always been extremely sensitive to the need for honesty and integrity in Government and for politicians and public servants to exemplify a high standard of conduct and morality.

The first conflict of interest legislation in this Province's history was introduced in 1973 and strengthened in 1982 through amendments to the Act and the issuance of regulations and guidelines governing the conduct of ministers and public servants in their official duties. Further amendments to those regulations in 1984 served to clarify and reinforce the prohibitions of the earlier rules.

There has now been 14 years experience with conflict of interest legislation, and the issue of honesty and integrity in Government is as important today as it was 14 years ago. Recent revelations on the national and international scene affirm the imperative that our politicians and public servants be seen and recognized as adhering to the highest ethical standards of behaviour.

Accordingly, My Government is now embarking on a two-tiered program to ensure that conflict of interest legislation is enforced fairly and equitably and to see if there are ways it can be further improved.

In recent weeks, the first phase of this review was announced consisting of the establishment of a conflict of interest tribunal to review administrative decisions relating to conflict of interest situations of public employees. This will ensure that the highest standards are uniformly applied to those who serve the public of Newfoundland and Labrador. An internal committee has been appointed to review the Act and the legislation pertaining to public servants and to recommend necessary legislative or regulatory changes.

The second phase of the program is a review of the Act as it relates to all members of the House of Assembly, both Government and Opposition. To effect this, I am announcing the appointment of a tribunal to advise Government on all situations which may involve conflict of interest on the part of Ministers. This tribunal will be asked to review the Conflict of Interest

Rules as they pertain to Ministers to ensure they are as comprehensive and effective as is possible, to reflect the expectations of our citizenry. The tribunal will also review the entire Conflict of Interest Act as it relates to members of the House of Assembly.

The basis of the Conflict of Interest Legislation is disclosure of a member's interests that pose real or potential conflict of interest. My Government will implement the advice of the tribunal on measures whereby full disclosure of all interest is required, without leaving the determination of the existence of a conflict up to the individual involved. No excessively legalistic exceptions will be permitted not in keeping with the fundamental premise of the legislation.

My Administration is fully dedicated to the highest standards of conduct in Government and is asking these two tribunals to review our Conflict of Interest Legislation and the associated guidelines to ensure that politicians and public servants adhere to, and are seen to adhere to, the highest ethical standards.

V. LEGISLATION

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

This Session of the Honourable House will prove to be a very busy one. You will be asked to grant supply and My Government will be introducing a large number of amendments to existing acts and introducing new legislation. My Government will, in the opening weeks of this session, provide a listing of the measures that will be introduced. Almost every Department of Government is involved in these measures, but I am pleased to single out a major reform in the field of Family Law and Family Matrimonial Orders.

My Government continues to recognize the importance of improved Family Law. Several years ago, The Matrimonial Property Act was introduced and provided for an equitable sharing of matrimonial property. Continuing social change and contemporary circumstances place a responsibility on the Government to now address other areas of Family Law within the jurisdiction of the Province. In continuing our initiatives towards human betterment, and mindful of the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, My Government will be introducing legislation addressing such issues as family support obligations, domestic contracts, status of children, custody, access, guardianship and automatic maintenance enforcement.

Most importantly, My Government recognizes the growing problem, and regretful social consequences, associated with the alarming number of debtor spouses failing to fulfill their obligations under court-issued family support orders. Government has an interest in ensuring that families receive a stable level of economic support, and a further duty to ensure that court orders, especially those concerning children, are enforced. Family support orders being ignored may also eventually lead to disrespect for the administration of justice. My Government will therefore be introducing legislation to provide for the establishment of a Province-wide Automatic Maintenance Enforcement Program.

Complemented by Federal Funding for Systems Development, the Maintenance Enforcement Program under this new legislation will provide for improved collection remedies and related penalties where there is an ability to pay. My Government believes that it has an obligation to ensure that beneficiaries of family support orders receive the economic support to which they are entitled.

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

The commitment of My Government to enrichment of individual and community life in our province has been evident during the past year in the support given to a program which I was privileged to initiate -- the Lieutenant-Governor's Institute on Family Life. The founding conference of this organization was held in October past, and brought together acknowledged international authorities with representatives of church, social agencies, government departments, and concerned citizens from all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador to identify and examine the issues which impact on the modern family. It gives me great personal pleasure to report that the Family Life Institute is now fully operational, with a distinguished provincial board of directors and a professional staff complement supported by My Government. This institute will play an important role in our future as a Province. As it will meet existing needs for new research into family life issues, development of a body of knowledge pertaining to family living in Newfoundland and Labrador, and co-ordination of organized programs to protect and enhance the fabric of our society.

VI. CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker and Members of The Honourable House of Assembly:

The basic themes of My Government's policies are inextricably linked in a vision of Newfoundland and Labrador that we all must share. It is a vision in which the whole of our people have equal access to the material, intellectual and spiritual benefits which our culture can provide. These benefits can only be made available when our people have meaningful employment and this will not be achieved without great effort and dedication. It is through the application of research and technology to our workplace, and the provision of the best available education to our people, that we will seize the necessary tools to forge ahead, and to ensure for ourselves and our children that the vision we hold is a true one. There is no more arduous task, nor one of greater worth.

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence your labours in this Fourth Session of the Fortieth General Assembly.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.