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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 41e | 1ère  | Discours du Trône | 25 mai 1989 | James McGrath | Lieutenant Gouverneur | Liberal |

It is My privilege and My pleasure to welcome you to this First Session of the Forty-First General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland.

Let me first congratulate all members, those who are returning as well as first time members, on their recent election to this Honourable House. This venerable institution constitutes the heart of our democratic and parliamentary system. The responsibilities of membership are onerous and demanding. Your deliberations will affect the aspirations of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and will chart their course for the future. I wish you success and personal fulfillment in the pursuit of the people's business.

I would also take this opportunity to congratulate the Member from Bonavista North, the Honourable Thomas Lush, on his election today as Speaker of the House. He joins a very select list of distinguished citizens of this Province who have served in that important office. With his skills and experience as a parliamentarian, and with the co-operation and assistance of all Members, on both sides of this House, I am confident it will operate in a smooth and

productive manner.

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

On April 20th of this year, the people of this Province gave my Government a new mandate -- a mandate for change. Accordingly, there will be a period of transition and reform. My Ministers, led by My First Minister, will place before this Honourable House new directions and alternatives for serving the needs of our people. These will encompass the broadest possible initiatives to revitalize our society, our economy and the way in which Government itself

operates.

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

We have just recently celebrated our fortieth year of Confederation. We have a lot to celebrate and My Government recommends that our people consider celebrating by supporting the fortieth anniversary commemorative medallion programme of the Joseph R. Smallwood Heritage Foundation. Both the medallion and the objects of the Foundation are worthy of the support of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

While we do have a lot to celebrate it is a cause of great concern to My Ministers that after four decades we have yet to succeed in becoming a full participating province of Canada. Our public services, quality of life and economic opportunities are far from being the equal of our sister provinces. My Ministers are particularly concerned that instead of narrowing, as had been the case for the first thirty years of Confederation, the gap between Newfoundland and the Nation as a whole in these vital areas has in many respects been widening in recent years. A similar trend has also been evident between Newfoundland and the Maritime Provinces. What is even more disturbing to My Ministers is the fact that the out migration of our people to other parts of Canada has grown to the point where our population has actually been decreasing in recent years and there are fewer people living in the Province today than there were five years ago.

My Government's over-riding aim during its current mandate will be to reverse these alarming trends and provide an economy that will allow our people the opportunity to earn a good income, without having to leave the Province. In the pursuit of this goal, My Government will ensure fairness, balance and equality of opportunity for all our people, in all regions of the Province. This will not be an easy task and the goal will not be achieved overnight, but My Government is committed to its ultimate achievement -- the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have a right to expect no less.

In addition to economic reform, My Government will be giving the same level of priority to renewal of the educational system and renewal of the health care system during the term of its mandate. Progress in revitalizing these three critically important areas of public responsibility will constitute the building blocks to a physically, socially and economically healthy future for the whole of our society for the next decade and lay the foundation for the next century. Our chance of being successful in any one area is dependent upon being successful in the other two.

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

My Ministers believe that, as Canadian citizens, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have as much right to expect good paying and productive jobs, without having to leave the Province, as do Canadian citizens in other provinces and that both the federal and provincial governments have a responsibility to ensure that the economic climate is such that their expectations can be met. The social and public services our people expect and need, including education and health services, can only be provided through a stronger, more vibrant economy. My Government will take steps to address the disparity in economic competence both between this Province and the Maritime Provinces, and between this Province and the Nation as a whole. This problem has been studied exhaustively over recent years but until now no direct steps have been taken to address the situation and implement solutions.

My Government is, at this moment, in the process of establishing an economic recovery plan, the details of which will be announced shortly. While My Government will continue to seek advice from experienced and knowledgeable persons inside and outside the Province, the heart of the plan will be an action team that will implement the recommendations already in place as well as the vast number of new recommendations expected when the plan is fully in effect.

The economic recovery team will be mandated to work closely with all rural development associations to identify every potential economic opportunity in the Province and promote individuals, partnerships, companies or co-operatives to seize upon and develop every such opportunity.

My Ministers are confident of the fullest level of Federal Government co-operation in this undertaking because the Federal Government stands to gain as much as, or more than, My Government every time the economic recovery team succeeds in promoting an enterprise that creates a job.

My Government will support decentralization of business and industrial activity generally. Government assistance will be provided in such a manner that entrepreneurs will be encouraged to establish in areas of the Province which are in greatest need of help. As the biggest business and largest employer in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Provincial Government itself will be decentralized to the extent that it is feasible and appropriate, so that all regions of the Province will have a fair opportunity to share in economic benefits derived from governmental expenditures, particularly as government activities and services expand and develop in future.

Special attention will also be given to the needs of single industry communities, with balanced diversification programs being implemented as finances permit.

You will be asked to pass legislation to give effect to the economic recovery plan and you will be asked to provide the funding necessary to carry out the plan.

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

Our economic, social and cultural development depends on improving the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities available to all our people in all areas of the Province. Newfoundland and Labrador cannot hope to participate fully in Canada's twenty-first century if we neglect our responsibilities in education. Our ability to achieve future economic success

depends on our commitment to improve educational programming.

Functional illiteracy continues to be a serious problem in our Province. Some studies indicate that it may be as high as 44 percent of our adult population -- 20 percentage points higher than the national average. My Government will establish an effective literacy program using the services of volunteers and professional educators.

My Government will work toward upgrading school facilities in rural areas of the Province in order to eliminate the disparity between the level of services available in urban areas and the level of services available in rural areas, so that our children will enjoy equal opportunities in education regardless of where they live. Much of the existing disparity in educational opportunities between the rural and urban parts of the Province results from reliance on local school taxes to fund a significant portion of the operational costs of education. There will be a full assessment of the school tax system to determine if fairness and equity in the funding of all schools throughout the Province can best be achieved by abolishing the school tax system or by changing its method of operation. My Ministers are determined however, that fairness and equity in educational funding will be achieved.

At the post-secondary level, university and technical training facilities and programs must be linked to the Province's socio-economic direction, and services must be well co-ordinated to avoid duplication of effort and inefficient use of scarce resources. My Government will expand post-secondary facilities to allow more students in rural areas to participate in the development of their careers without being penalized by the high costs of accommodation and transportation. As a start toward this, the curriculum of the Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook will be expanded to include third and fourth year courses as quickly as they can reasonably be added and orderly expansion of facilities will permit. Bachelor level degrees in the basic arts and science disciplines can then be obtained at Corner Brook and Grenfell can, in due course, become a degree granting institution.

As soon as finances permit, a facility similar to Grenfell will be established in central Newfoundland. In due course it too should evolve, as Grenfell is evolving, to become a degree granting institution. Should conditions warrant, a similar approach will be considered for one or two other areas of the Province, as the respective regions of Newfoundland and Labrador expand and grow. In the interim, first year university courses will again be offered in the Labrador West area as soon as possible and in the Burin area.

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

The health care system in Newfoundland and Labrador has been under considerable pressure in recent years. Hospital beds remain closed while waiting lists for elective procedures have increased. Doctors and nurses and support staff perform their duties under difficult conditions. Some equipment and services are strained to their capacity. It is My Government's belief that work must be started immediately to alleviate this situation. While the final resolution to this problem will likely take many years to fully address, and a strong economy will be required to fund all the improvements that are necessary, My Government will not be daunted by the enormity of the challenge facing it. Indeed, the first step in resolving this problem lies in the acknowledgement that it exists.

My Government will, within the limits of overall fiscal responsibility, provide more resources for the health care system. Progress will be achieved in the early years of My Government's mandate. To alleviate some of the pressure on expensive acute care and chronic care facilities, an immediate initiative of My Government will be to provide a cost-effective and efficient community home care program. Other new initiatives are also being developed. Following consultations with appropriate health care groups, My Government will make final determinations on directions to be pursued and they will be announced in this House.

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

While My Government will be pursuing the foregoing matters as urgent and pressing priorities, there are many other areas of grave importance to the general welfare of the Province which also will be addressed by My Government during its mandate.

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

My Ministers attach great importance to bringing in measures aimed at preserving and strengthening parliamentary democracy in the Province and ensuring that Government is held duly accountable for the proper discharge of its responsibilities. It is in this Honourable House where leadership must be demonstrated and where the process of change must be initiated. My Government will act in four major areas of electoral and governmental reform early in its mandate.

First, new legislation will be brought before the House to reform the overall process of election of Members to the House of Assembly and, in particular, the financing of those elections so that the process is fair and open to all who wish to seek public office. An opportunity will be provided for all interested citizens and groups to make representation to a Committee of this Honourable House with respect to the proposed legislation.

Attention will also be given to reforming the procedures and operation of this Honourable House of Assembly, particularly with respect to control of the public purse by the people's representatives. In this regard, legislation will be introduced to:

-strictly limit the use of Special Warrants to emergency circumstances;

-provide for proper functioning of the Public Accounts Committee;

-provide for other Committees of the House;

-provide for a separate and independent Auditor General's Act; and

-provide for television and radio access to all proceedings of the House and the Committees of the House.

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

My Government will be taking concrete steps to ensure that maximum return and benefit is received for the expenditure of all taxpayers' dollars and that waste and unproductive activity are eliminated wherever they may be found. My Government's resolve to serve the people responsibly and efficiently has already been reflected in recent reductions in the size of the Executive Council and in the streamlining of Government Departments.

New conflict of interest legislation will be introduced to reform the present rules and guidelines. The Government must not and will not do business with a Minister or any member of a Minister's immediate family, or any company or firm in which a Minister or any member of a Minister's immediate family has any financial interest whatsoever. There must be no room for suggestion of improper dealing -- real or perceived -- by any Minister of the Crown. To ensure that appropriate checks and balances are maintained, and that suggestions of improper conduct are dealt with openly and fairly, My Government will be proposing the establishment of an Ethics Committee of the House of Assembly to hear any allegations of conflict of interest and to express an opinion thereon. My First Minister, however, will not be relieved of his obligation to be responsible for the standard of ethics of all Ministers, and the decision as to who remains in or has to leave the Cabinet for ethical reasons or otherwise, shall remain the First Minister's responsibility.

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

My Government attaches great importance to the family as an institution in our society and on the need to protect and provide for the basic needs of our children. My Government's approach will be to develop a supportive and positive environment in which to achieve this goal, primarily through the work of "front-line" professionals in the Department of Social Services. Improved counselling, educational and other services for the victims of child abuse and family violence will be provided. Increased support will be given to programs which offer the opportunity to reduce the incidence of child and family violence. Improved facilities ranging from temporary transition houses for victims of family violence to institutions for the longer-term care of children and other people in need of support from the social services system will be given appropriate attention. This will allow people in need of such assistance to achieve basic dignity and to receive active counselling and training as required.

I have a personal interest in the initiatives of My Government in this area and look forward to the continuation of the efforts of the Family Life Institute, which I established, which has as its objective the bringing together of the various organizations in our Province that are involved in

matters related to the institution of the family.

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

My Government believes that the principles of fairness and balance demand immediate attention to and action on issues which affect women.

Women have greater obstacles to overcome in entering the work force and taking an active role in the political process. My Government is committed to providing assistance to assure women of equal opportunities in both these areas.

My Government is also concerned about the lack of an adequate number of child care spaces to allow mothers who wish to seek employment opportunities to do so. Employers, employees and governments at all levels should be partners in ensuring that all parents -- and mothers in particular -- have an opportunity to seek outside employment and children do not suffer from an inadequate child care program. Steps will be taken, as soon as funding permits, to ensure that

the need for good quality day care is met.

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

The most precious resource of Newfoundland and Labrador is its youth. The future of our Province lies in the hands and the hearts of the young people of today. Unfortunately, our youth unemployment rate is significantly higher than that of any other Canadian province. Young men and women who cannot find work have become despondent. There is little incentive to finish school and to seek higher education or vocational training. If this situation is allowed to

continue, we will be sowing the seeds of our own economic and cultural destination.

My Government is committed to launching an aggressive attack on the problems facing our youth today. The great challenge which My Government will address is ensuring an economy that will provide job opportunities when our youth are ready to seek employment.

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

In recent years, economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador has been impeded by an unsettled labour climate. My Government is determined to achieve a more productive and amicable labour relations environment and to deal directly with the issues that are contributing to this situation. These are difficult issues and there are no easy solutions to them. However, My Government commits itself to a full consultative process with both organized and non-organized labour, and with management, to address such issues as double-breasting, industrial standards, essential workers, minimum wages, occupational health and safety, and pay equity.

My Ministers are confident that mutual respect and genuine concern for the welfare and interest of all sectors of society -- employees, employers and the public at large -- will result in a progressive and rewarding relationship over time.

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

We find ourselves increasingly beset by environmental problems at the local, provincial, national and global levels. It is a condition that must be addressed in order to prevent our children from being faced with a province and world damaged beyond repair.

These are issues that cannot be ignored because of our relatively small population and minimal impact on the larger stage. Most environmental concerns are local in origin -- all cumulatively combine to present us with international dangers.

For the sake of our health, enjoyment and safety, and for the sake of the generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that will people this Province into the next century, My Government will develop an effective conservation strategy and will discharge fully its responsibility to protect our environment.

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

My Government's commitment to develop all regions of Newfoundland and Labrador will not be effective without a parallel commitment to enhance municipal government in the Province.

The greatest need in the case of many smaller communities is for a supply of good quality drinking water and a sewage disposal system that will not create health hazards. The Province cannot abandon small communities which do not have the ability to construct and maintain their own facilities. We must all share the burden and help out. It should not be forgotten that all of the municipalities presently enjoying water and sewer systems do so because of financial help from the Province in the past.

My Government intends to undertake an immediate assessment of our ability to establish a provincial water and sewer utilities corporation that would take over and operate as a public utility all existing water and sewer facilities in the Province. It could then use its revenues to borrow capital and build new systems for areas not now served, in much the same manner that Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro expanded electrical services to all parts of the Province under the Rural Electrification Program. If the assessment indicates that it is a viable proposition, as My Ministers expect will be indicated, you will be asked to pass legislation to create and provide for the corporation.

Smaller communities need access to other basic municipal services such as fire protection, road maintenance and snow clearing, garbage disposal, ambulances, recreational facilities and municipal planning. Because of the large number and wide dispersal of communities in our Province, such services can only be provided in the near future if groups of adjacent communities are prepared to co-operate in the provision of such services on a shared basis. My Government will work with all communities to foster a better regional perspective and administrative structure at the local level to provide such services on a regional basis.

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

My Government intends during the currency of its mandate to introduce measures to strengthen our agricultural sector and to reform our land use and forest management practices.

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

Hydro electric power continues to be a vexing problem for My Government. There are two major aspects to the problem in relation to the development and use of hydro power in Labrador. One is the Province's inability to deliver the hydro power that could be developed in Labrador to its ultimate market in a manner that will provide this Province with the benefit of the development and sale of that power. Secondly, Newfoundland and Labrador has so far been unable to access the power that has been developed within the Province, to meet the needs of our own people and as a result we are faced with serious future supply problems.

It is well recognized that one of the responsibilities of the Parliament of Canada is to ensure that free international and interprovincial trade exists in this country. Parliament must see to it that there is no impediment to international or interprovincial trade and that there is no barrier to the free flow of goods and services between provinces. The authority, the jurisdiction and the responsibility of the Canadian Parliament to protect these rights are clear and indisputable.

My Government will therefore be taking the necessary steps to ensure that the Federal Government fulfills its obligation to Newfoundland and Labrador in this area. Canada must either provide this Province with the right to get its power to market or compensate the Province for the consequences of Canada's failure to provide us with that right. My Ministers believe that this principle applies to power already developed and power yet to be developed.

Accordingly, it is My Government's intention to seek an arrangement with the Province of Quebec to further develop the water powers of Labrador and to sell such power, as may be surplus to our needs, westward through Quebec, and ensure that the profits from such development will, in fact, come to this Province. Failing this, however, My Government will take steps to ensure that Canada discharges its constitutional obligation to this Province by providing a transmission line through Quebec or by constructing a transmission line along an alternate route across Labrador and to the island and, if necessary and feasible, to the Maritime Provinces. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is entitled to no less under the Constitution of Canada.

The Province unquestionably has the constitutional jurisdiction to manage and provide for the use, sale and distribution of power generated within the Province in order to meet the legitimate needs of its residents.

My Government will take the legislative steps necessary to ensure that the Province regulates the generation, distribution and supply of all electricity in the Province so as to meet the needs of the people of the Province. This can and will be done.

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

No industrial or commercial activity is more important to Newfoundland than fishing. It has been the basis of our economy for nearly 500 years.

We are now faced with a major crisis in our fisheries. It appears certain that there will be further substantial reductions next year in the total allowable catch of northern cod. The potential impact of this on our Province will be enormous by comparison with the impact on other provinces.

My Government has taken and intends to pursue a firm position with the Federal Government. Because of the importance of fisheries to our economy, the quota allocated to plants and fishermen of this Province must have priority over all other allocations. To do otherwise would result in this Province having its economy virtually destroyed while the resources adjacent to its shores are shipped past its idle plants and used to provide job opportunities elsewhere.

My Ministers recognize there will likely still be reductions in the quotas available to this Province and they will work closely with the Federal Government to develop alternative employment opportunities for those people presently engaged in the fishing industry who will be displaced for a period of time due to catch reductions.

My Government will ensure that the Department of Fisheries is recognized as the key industrial division of Government. With increased budgetary resources, we will expand research and development facilities, and develop consolidated marketing programs. Initiatives will be taken to promote acquaculture, develop holding facilities, encourage secondary processing of fish in the Province, and develop in consultation with the Federal Government a catch-failure insurance or assistance program.

The Province must have a greater role in the decision-making process in such fisheries matters as the establishment of the total allowable catch in the waters around our Province, allocation of fishing licenses, and other regulatory controls. My Government's objective is to achieve this by working with the Federal Government to establish a joint Canada-Newfoundland Fisheries Board, similar to the Offshore Petroleum Board, to develop fisheries policy and to manage the fisheries in all of the waters around Newfoundland and Labrador. This would provide effective provincial participation in the management of our basic resource without giving us the additional financial burden that would result from having legislative jurisdiction even if it could

be achieved.

The current crisis in our fishery only serves to emphasize the urgency for the Federal Government to take immediate steps to end foreign over fishing in our waters. Canada must also seek international approval to bring the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks within Canadian fisheries management jurisdiction immediately. My Ministers believe this will require the personal commitment and involvement of the Prime Minister, and they will make every effort to induce that involvement.

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

Newfoundland and Labrador needs the Hibernia Project to provide for a significant increase in the level of economic activity in the Province.

The Statement of Principles signed last July would, if followed through completely, result in an agreement for the development of Hibernia that would see increased economic activity realized in the next five or six years. My Government will do everything within its power to ensure that the Hibernia oil field is developed without delay. At the same time, My Ministers will

endeavour to maximize the benefits and the build up of offshore oil and gas related technology in this Province.

Unfortunately the March 31st, 1989 deadline for completion of the agreements was unduly optimistic and it will be late this Fall, at the earliest, before completion of the agreements can be realized. Following preliminary discussions with Federal Government and industry representatives, My Ministers are confident that all parties remain committed to bring about the development of Hibernia as quickly as possible.

My Ministers are concerned that offshore exploration has ceased at the moment. Steps will be taken to promote at the earliest possible time exploration in the offshore area and to ensure that this Province derives the maximum level of economic benefit from that exploration.

My Ministers will promote and do everything reasonable to provide for the development of the White Rose and Terra Nova oil fields. This will provide jobs for some of the thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the Province without work, and for those who have had to leave in recent years and go to other provinces to find work.

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

An efficient transportation system is one of the most important, but at the same time one of the most costly, services My Government has to provide.

Our economy will only grow and diversify if we have a good and reliable means of transportation. We will stagnate if we do not have a reliable and efficient means of moving goods, services and people from one part of the Province to another and the means to deliver our exports to markets outside the Province.

At the same time, because of our sparse population distributed over 6000 miles of coastline, the cost of providing reliable and efficient transportation services is very high. We must, therefore, ensure that the Federal Government provides to Newfoundland all of the transportation services that it is obligated to provide. This nation was founded on the precept that the Federal Government would provide a national transportation system across every province from coast to coast. The Terms of Union with Newfoundland were negotiated and entered into on the understanding that, in agreeing to take over and relieve Newfoundland of the cost of the railway and steamship services, the Federal Government was simply providing for the new Province of Newfoundland the provincial portion of the national transportation system for which it was responsible in any event.

The Newfoundland Transportation Initiative entered into with the Government of Canada last year has the effect of relieving the Federal Government of all its future obligations to provide, within Newfoundland, the provincial portion of the national transportation system. It also has the effect of terminating the specific obligation of the Federal Government to relieve Newfoundland of the cost of providing the provincial portion of that system. The Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador cannot use its limited financial resources to relieve the Federal Government of what is in reality a federal responsibility.

My Ministers will ensure that steps are taken immediately to re-instate the federal constitutional obligation to provide for the Newfoundland portion of the national transportation system, as the Federal Government provides for the rest of the nation. This means the Federal Government must compensate Newfoundland for the additional highway costs that the Province will have to bear as a result of the downgrading and closure of the Newfoundland railway. These costs include the additional cost of substantially upgrading the Trans Canada Highway to accommodate the increased traffic, as well as the increased operating and maintenance cost associated therewith.

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

In promoting fairness, balance and equality of opportunity for all regions of the Province, My Government would be remiss if it did not pay particular attention to the needs of the people of Labrador. The unacceptable economic and social conditions in the small communities along the coastal area of Labrador will receive priority attention from My Government, as this region truly constitutes one of the areas in the Province of greatest need. All residents of Labrador, irrespective of their origin, race and place of living, will receive fair and balanced treatment.

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

My Government regards defence spending as an important contributor in regional development and job creation. The increase in military operations and training exercises at the Canadian Forces Base in Goose Bay has brought a contribution to the Provincial economy estimated to be in excess of $150 million in 1988 alone, creating over 500 direct civilian jobs at the air base. The potential development of the NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre at the Base

is a massive undertaking, offering significant new industrial, commercial and other economic opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It has been estimated that the construction of the NATO facility will cost approximately $600 million, creating over 4,500 person years of employment during construction and 1,200 permanent civilian jobs with an annual operating budget of about $300 million. My Government supports the existing military

arrangements at Goose Bay as well as the efforts made by the Government of Canada to secure the NATO Centre at the Base.

While anxious to capture these economic benefits, My Government will not ignore the genuine concerns of the native peoples. Further military usage will be conditional upon My Government being satisfied that such development will not preclude the opportunity for our native peoples to live on the land in the manner to which they are accustomed. My Ministers are satisfied that the Federal Government is addressing this concern and will resolve the issue satisfactorily before proceeding with further development.

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

At the outset of my address, I noted that while Newfoundland has recently entered into its fifth decade of Confederation with Canada, we have not yet succeeded in becoming a full participating province of Canada, with public services, quality of life and economic opportunity similar or equal to that of other provinces.

There are a number of reasons for this, some of which we must take responsibility for ourselves. Still others lie largely beyond our control and are primarily the consequence of failures at the national level. Responsibility to correct our own failures clearly lie with us, but My Ministers also acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that efforts are made to cause the Federal Government to take the necessary steps to correct failures at the national level.

My Government is gravely concerned about the ability of Newfoundland and other smaller provinces in Canada to have any real impact on governmental decisions made at the national level. Having little more than two percent of the population of Canada, we have little more than two percent of the voting power in the House of Commons. At the same time, the two most populous provinces, Ontario and Quebec, together have sixty percent of the population and therefore sixty percent of the voting power of the House of Commons. Under these circumstances, it is difficult, if not impossible, for provinces such as Newfoundland to obtain fair and equal treatment as a province in our federal nation. That does not necessarily reflect ill-will or selfishness on the part of the Ontario and Quebec members of the House of Commons. It simply reflects the reality that their primary obligation is to their own constituency, the people of Ontario and Quebec. That is why, in a true federal state, voting power in the national legislature is always balanced so as to ensure that one or two provinces with the majority of the people cannot make decisions contrary to the interests of the majority of the provinces. At the same time the majority of the provinces must not be able to make decisions contrary to the wishes of the majority of the people. That is the essence of a federal system.

If the true federal principle is to be embodied in the Canadian Constitution, it is My Government's strong belief that there must be a chamber of the federal legislature in which each province has an equal say in the exercise of federal legislative power in Canada.

That chamber should be a reformed Senate -- a so called 'Triple E' Senate that is elected, effective and which has equal representation from each province. The exercise of federal legislative power would then have to be acceptable to the two majorities in the federal state -- namely the majority of the people in the country, which would be measured by a vote in the House of Commons, and the majority of the provinces, which would be measured by a vote in the Senate. That is the only means by which provinces with smaller populations, such as ours, can protect their interests in relation to the two provinces with larger populations, and thereby attain their rightful and proper position as full participating provinces of this nation.

My Ministers are convinced that a reformed Senate, combined with a strong and resourceful Federal Government, is the only means by which regional disparities in this country will ever be corrected. Unfortunately, the Meech Lake Accord, as it is at this moment, will make proper reform of the Senate practically impossible because it would change the amending formula to require unanimous approval of the provinces and at the same time would reduce still further the powers of the Federal Government. My Ministers believe therefore that substantial changes must be made in the Meech Lake Accord if this Province is ever to become anything other than a have not province dependent on handouts from the Federal Government. My Ministers also share the concerns of other Provincial Premiers, including concerns about the impact of the Meech Lake Accord on the Charter of Rights and about the creation of a special status for one province. Our primary concern however is with the long term impact of the Accord on the ability of Newfoundland and Labrador to become a full participating province of Canada.

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

In pursuing changes in the Meech Lake Accord, My Government is sensitive to its responsibility to the nation. Toward that end we will accommodate, and reasonably compromise, to protect the greater interests of the nation, but we must never compromise principle or abandon our only means of ever becoming a full participating province of this country. In the decades and centuries ahead, our people must be in a position to enjoy a good quality of life – an equal opportunity as a matter of right and not as a matter of the grace of other provinces. The difficult part is determining just how far these compromises and accommodations should go. The Meech Lake Accord, as it is at this moment, goes well beyond what My Ministers can ever agree to and there is a great body of opinion in this country that it goes well beyond what the Nation as a whole can ever survive. My Ministers share that concern as well.

Having stated this, however, My Government wishes to assure all other parties to the Meech Lake Accord of its willingness to work for constructive change in the Accord, fully recognizing in the first instance the desirability, although not the legal necessity, of achieving the political approbation of the Government and Legislature of Quebec for the constitutional reforms put in place to date. As desirable as achieving that approbation is, My Government is not prepared to have it achieved at the price of losing a fair and secure future for this Province and its people. My Government will be giving this entire matter appropriate attention in the coming months and will initiate constructive dialogue with all other parties in advance of formal consultations at the First Ministers' level.

My Government anticipates that this positive approach and attitude toward constitutional reform offers a reasonable opportunity for success. However, should these efforts fail because of intransigence on the part of other provinces or the Federal Government, My Government will have no alternative but to ask this Honourable House to rescind the Resolution adopting the Meech Lake Accord passed during the last session of the last Legislature. Such a step will not be taken lightly but we must discharge our responsibility to put the greater interests of this Province and its people -- and My Ministers believe the greater interest of the whole nation and its people -- ahead of temporary political accommodation no matter how desirable, in the short term, that may be.

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

I realize that this has been a lengthy address but as this is the first session of the new legislature My Ministers felt it appropriate to set out in some detail their concerns about the public affairs of the Province and the manner in which My Ministers intend to address those concerns.

My Government's agenda is an ambitious one -- one that will require a total commitment by all sectors of our society if the aims and aspirations which we hope to achieve are to be fulfilled. But fulfill them we must – the alternative is simply not acceptable.

At the same time, My Government recognizes that these are difficult issues. It would be naive and misleading, therefore, to suggest that My Government's goals and objectives can be fully achieved in any short time period. Indeed, some of My Government's aims and objectives may not even be able to be achieved during its current mandate.

It may take a decade or more before we are able to bring about nationally a situation where the smaller provinces such as Newfoundland take their rightful position as full participating partners in the federal state of Canada. We must not however fail to take the necessary first steps because the overall process may be lengthy or difficult.

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

The existing financial condition of the Province is not strong, and that will inhibit My Government's ability to take immediate action on all fronts that so desperately require attention.

Recent decisions and actions of the Federal Government have added further difficulties. Federal budgetary decisions involving general tax increases, cutbacks in transfer payments to the provinces, changes to the unemployment insurance system, reductions in funds earmarked for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and reductions in planned expenditures for federal-provincial agreements on economic and regional development, will all impact in a significant and adverse way on the ability of the Province to deal with its many deeply rooted economic and social problems.

Added to this situation are other difficulties related to economic circumstances in general, including the crisis which is developing in the fishery, the pending closure of the phosphorous plant at Long Harbour, and the delay in signing of the Hibernia Agreement.

While the present circumstances and conditions may be intimidating to some, My Government will not shirk from addressing them merely because of their difficulty. They will not deter My Government from taking the necessary first steps toward a better future for our people. Unless and until the first steps are taken, there is no possibility of ever achieving our longer term goals and aspirations. At the same time, My Government recognizes the need to be responsive to the immediate needs of the Province and its people, and will act in a responsible, fair and balanced way in dealing with those needs.

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

In addition to the legislative measures already mentioned, My Ministers will bring before this Honourable House, in this Session, a number of important pieces of legislation.

Legislation will be introduced to provide for the restructuring of the departments of My Government.

Amendments to The Loan and Guarantee Act will be introduced to provide more effective control over the process of issuing loan guarantees.

Legislation will be introduced to consolidate and improve existing legislation relative to the control and management of the Province's forest resources.

Legislation will be introduced to consolidate and improve existing legislation relative to the administration and control of the Province's crown lands.

You will also be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

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

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence your fruitful labours in this First Session of the Forty-First General Assembly.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.