|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Terre- Neuve et Labrador | 42e | 1ère  | Discours du Trône | 4 mars 1993 | Frederick Russel | Lieutenant Gouverneur | Liberal |

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

It is my privilege and my pleasant duty to welcome you to this First Session of the Forty-second General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland.

To members who have recently gained re-election to this hon. House, congratulations and welcome back. To those members who are serving as first time members - a special congratulation and I wish you success and personal fulfilment in the pursuit of the people's business. As returning members can clearly attest, the responsibilities of membership to this venerable institution are onerous and demanding, but they are also rewarding and gratifying as you collectively debate and participate in charting a course for the future of the Province.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the Member for Humber West, the hon. Paul Dicks, on his election today as Speaker of the House. The skills of a Speaker in exercising strength, fairness and patience in this Legislative Chamber, and in securing the confidence, co-operation and assistance of all members on both sides of this House, are critical to ensuring that the people's business is carried out in a productive manner. The Speaker also has a duty to ensure that the public esteem in which this important institution is held is appropriately maintained and enhanced. I am confident that he will be able to discharge his parliamentary responsibilities with grace, effectiveness and distinction.

**Mr. Speaker and Members of the hon. House of Assembly:**

On May 3rd of 1993, the people of this Province gave my government a new mandate - a mandate to continue to implement and build upon the reforms and new policy directions initiated over the past four years that are aimed at renewing and revitalizing our society, our economy, and the way in which government itself operates. The goal in this regard is quite clear - to provide a better and more prosperous future for all our people. At the same time, the immediate requirements of the Province and its people must be addressed in a fair, balanced and fiscally responsible manner.

Considerable progress in the pursuit of these goals and objectives has already been achieved on all fronts by my government. The foundations for economic reform have been put in place through the Economic Recovery Commission, through Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador, and more recently through the development of a Strategic Economic Plan for the Province. The building blocks for a revitalized education system are being put in place, and our health care system is being restructured to make it more cost-effective and efficient in serving the needs of our people. Significant reforms to preserve and strengthen parliamentary democracy in the Province, and to ensure that government is held duly accountable in this hon. House for the proper discharge of its responsibilities, have already been implemented. Other areas of importance to the general welfare of the Province have been and are continuing to be addressed by my government.

It is of particular note that these major accomplishments have been achieved during the most difficult and challenging period in our history as a province of Canada. Over the past four years, Newfoundland has faced extremely difficult economic circumstances brought about by the deepest international economic recession in fifty years, the virtual collapse of the northern cod fishery, and the delay and uncertainty over Hibernia. Reductions in federal transfer payments and other federal programs of importance to this Province, combined with our own debt and fiscal problems, added further difficulties - all at a time when the needs of our people have been greatest.

While these circumstances and conditions may have been daunting to some, my ministers did not shirk from addressing them. Difficult choices and decisions had to be made in the face of the realities of the day, and my government rose to the occasion. In particular, strong and decisive action was taken by my government in managing the public finances of the Province as traditional provincial tax sources and federal transfers declined precipitously due to the recession and other external economic factors that negatively impacted the Province. The difficult financial measures my government had to adopt were necessary to maintain national and international confidence in the financial integrity and credit worthiness of the Province. These decisions did not come easy to my ministers, but they had to be taken - there was simply no responsible alternative.

Clearly, the people of this Province, through the mandate given to my government in the recent general election, have confidence in the overall leadership and manner in which my ministers have managed the public affairs of the Province over the past four years, including the new policy directions and reforms they have initiated. The people of this Province have conferred upon my government a mandate and perhaps even an obligation to continue on the path it embarked upon in 1989. My government openly, and with vigour, accepts the burden of this mandate and obligation, and commits to the people of this Province to respond to it responsibly and competently.

It would be unfair and misleading to the people of this Province, however, to suggest that a physically, socially and economically healthy future for the whole of our society can be achieved in any short period of time. A brighter future unquestionably lies ahead, but it will take time to fully realize. There are simply no overnight solutions or "quick fixes" to the challenges that face us. In the meantime, we must confront those challenges with openness and directness, and work together in dealing with them. Most important, we must not fail to act merely because the overall process may be difficult.

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

A key focus for my Government over the next four years will be to continue its emphasis on economic recovery and economic development for the benefit of all our people in all regions of the Province. The Strategic Economic Plan has laid a solid basis to meet the economic development challenge over the long-term and to guide economic recovery as we come out of the current recession. The implementation of the Plan, which is already well underway, will continue as expeditiously as possible. To this end, my Government will attempt to redirect additional financial resources from existing budgetary sources in support of economic development initiatives over the term of its mandate. This is in recognition that expenditures in the economic development field have, over the past decade, been declining in relative terms as a proportion of overall government spending, and that without a sound economic foundation, the ability of my Government to continue to meet the increasing demands for social and other public services will be severely constrained.

My Ministers wish to emphasize, however, that the private sector must be the engine of economic growth. The primary role of government will be to create an economic and social environment that promotes competitiveness and in which the enterprising spirit of the private sector can flourish and stimulate lasting economic wealth and employment. There must, in addition, be a commitment on the part of all segments of our society - governments, business, labour, academia and others - to work together in building a competitive economy. My Government calls upon and challenges all members of society to come together and join with government in a concerted effort to fully develop the economic potential of our Province.

My Government also wishes to stress that the Strategic Economic Plan is intended to be a "living" document, wherein our approach to economic development is flexible enough to accommodate change in the economic environment and to accept the new challenges and opportunities that such change brings.

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

One of the major changes facing my Government during the term of its new mandate will be to manage the adjustment of our economy to the new realities in the fishery. My Government is confident that, with sound joint management, the fishery of the future can provide good and stable jobs, and that it can continue to be the backbone of the economy in many areas of the Province. There is, however, broad public consensus at all levels that changes in the fishery resource itself and in world markets will require fundamental structural changes in the Province's fishing industry if there is to be an economically viable fishery in the future. A viable fishery in this context will be one which is stable and competitive in the absence of continuous government subsidies, where a smaller fisheries workforce can earn an adequate income without excessive dependence on income support, and where the workforce can be professionalized to obtain high productivity levels. Clearly, the character and nature of the "fishery of the future" will be fundamentally different from the "fishery of the past". It is equally clear that acceptable solutions must be found to deal fully and effectively with the consequences of these changes for the thousands of people and hundreds of communities that will be affected.

Recently, My Government released a comprehensive public and industry consultation document on the fishery of the future entitled "Changing Tides". This document outlines the realities we currently face and puts forward a number of alternatives - including My Government's preferred approaches - for managing the new realities and the social and economic adjustments that must accompany necessary new directions. My Government's specific policy and program initiatives in support of the fishery of the future will be guided by public response to this consultation document. My Minister of Fisheries will soon be initiating a series of public meetings around the Province to solicit the views of interested parties.

The fundamental theme that links all of My Government's proposals for the fishery of the future in "Changing Tides" is its long-standing position on joint federal-provincial management of the fishery. Given the critical role the fishing industry plays in shaping the social and economic fabric of our entire Province, and the dramatic transformation which is presently occurring in our most important industry, it is imperative that the people of this Province, through their Government, have a meaningful and effective voice in all fisheries management decisions. The specific proposal put forward by My Ministers for a Canada-Newfoundland Fisheries Management Board is modelled after the joint management regime currently in place for the offshore oil and gas sector, which is operating quite effectively. There is no reason to believe that a similar board focusing on fishery related matters would be any less successful or effective. Not only would such a joint management framework give the Province a meaningful role in resource management decisions, it would also provide an effective structure in which to fully integrate fisheries development policies of both orders of government for the benefit of all those who derive their livelihood from this industry. My government places great priority on this matter and intends to launch a major effort in the months ahead in the pursuit of joint fisheries management with the Government of Canada. It will also strenuously oppose the recently announced fisheries management reform initiative of the Government of Canada, which if implemented will deny this Province any significant role in the management of our adjacent fishery resources. If necessary, my Government will bring this issue directly to the people of Canada as a means of achieving meaningful joint management. Reflective of the importance of joint fisheries management to the future of the people of this Province, my First Minister will take a lead role on this issue.

Efforts by my Government over the past year or so have resulted in widespread support amongst the Canadian people for strong action by the Government of Canada to achieve an immediate end to foreign overfishing on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks. The United Nations Conference on High Seas Fisheries to be held in New York in July represents a critical opportunity to address the inadequacy of international law with respect to the management of straddling stocks on the high seas. My Government will continue its efforts to strengthen the resolve of the Government of Canada to ensure this important conference results in new international arrangements that will provide a lasting and effective solution to foreign overfishing. It remains clear that until excessive foreign harvests outside the 200 mile limit are brought under control, the potential to rebuild key groundfish stocks and to restore the livelihoods of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will be extremely limited.

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

The importance and priority that my Government places on the establishment of a strong economic base in the Province does not mean that social issues will be neglected in the process. Indeed, the two are not mutually exclusive but rather support one another. A strong economy results in the necessary tax revenues to provide essential social programs for our people. Similarly, the availability of a balanced range of progressive and appropriately focused social programs contributes to a productive, healthy and secure citizenry that aids in the creation of a strong and stable economic environment in which the private sector can flourish.

Substantial reforms in the social policy domain have already been implemented by my Government and these will continue. Particular attention will be give early in my Government's new mandate to working co-operatively with all stakeholders involved in the education system to act upon the major findings of the Report of the Royal Commission on the delivery of programs and services in primary, elementary and secondary education. As well, the individual reforms already adopted in specific social policy fields will be placed in their broader context through the development of a comprehensive Strategic Social Plan for the Province. As announced by my Government some months ago, a working committee of deputy ministers from the particular departments concerned, as well as other senior officials, has been put in place to develop the Plan, and efforts are currently underway to formulate a public consultation document along the lines that was prepared for the Strategic Economic Plan process. My ministers believe that an open consultation process in the development of the Strategic Social Plan will ensure that the Plan ultimately produced will meet the full social needs of the people of this Province.

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

My Government is committed to the sound management of the financial affairs of the Province such that the financial integrity and credit worthiness of the Province are maintained. It is absolutely imperative that my ministers take all steps necessary to accomplish this objective - not for its own sake - but to protect and enhance our ability to provide health, education and other essential public services in the future and to support economic development in the Province.

It will be particularly important to ensure that there is a solid financial foundation upon which to grow and prosper as the recession ends and economic growth returns in the months ahead. Indeed, signs are present that the recession is coming to an end. If we do not put the financial affairs of the Province in proper order, and maintain them thereafter, we will place in serious jeopardy our ability to take advantage of the many economic opportunities which will be available to us. The result of our failure to do so may well be that the economic recovery which is currently underway could suffer a setback, with an attendant degradation of our standard of living.

While the recent election provided my Government with a general mandate to continue its policy of managing the financial affairs of the Province in a responsible manner, it also gave my Government a specific mandate to implement its announced budgetary plan to reduce this year's overall level of public sector compensation by approximately $70 million. While my ministers intend to implement a budget for the current fiscal year consistent with that specific mandate given to it by the electorate, they must also remain sensitive to the impact such action may have on those who receive their income from the public purse and on members of their families. My Government therefore wishes to reassure those who have given loyal service to the public of the Province over the years that it will be fair to all concerned as it moves to implement the necessary measures to bring the Province's financial affairs into balance. My ministers have been working diligently to achieve this with the full co-operation of the various public sector unions through the collective bargaining process.

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

The key message my Government wishes to convey to our people at this time is that, with the reforms and positive new directions charted by my ministers over the past four years, combined with their determination to continue on the solid path already identified, the essential building blocks to establishing a strong future for all the people of our Province are now in place. What is required to fulfil these aims and aspirations is hard work, sacrifice, prudence in the management of public finances, and a co-operative approach involving a total commitment by all sectors of our society. My Government is confident that this can be achieved and will aggressively pursue it over the duration of its mandate.

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

The Spring sitting of this Session will deal primarily with the need to finalize the provincial Budget and grant supply to Her Majesty for the 1993-94 fiscal year, and to address some legislative proposals which time did not permit full consideration to be given in the last General Assembly. This will include new legislation to formally create the new Department of Industry, Trade and Technology and the new Department of Tourism and Culture. Legislation will also be introduced to protect the public from the health hazards of second-hand smoke. As well, legislative changes clarifying the relationship between the Auditor-General and Memorial University will be tabled before the House for consideration.

The main legislative sitting of this Session will be in the Fall, and an indication of My Government's legislative agenda will be made public in a timely manner so that all Honourable Members of the House can prepare for the conduct of the people's business.

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

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

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.

In our Sovereign's name, I thank you. God bless the Queen of Canada.