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

I take great pleasure in welcoming you to this Third Session of the Forty-Third General Assembly.

Newfoundland and Labrador is now an oil-producing province. We are moving toward further development of the hydroelectric potential of the Churchill River system. And, we are also moving toward developing the richest nickel deposit in the world at Voisey's Bay.

The value of our fishery, while still held back by the collapse of groundfish stocks, is going up because of increasing shellfish landings. Our forest industries are doing well. Tourism is expanding. Aquaculture is developing. Information and bio- technology industries are advancing. Manufacturing and small enterprises in our rural and urban areas are growing.

A Time for Optimism

We have good reason to be optimistic. As a society, we can look ahead with greater confidence. This is a time to welcome new ideas, accept new challenges and approach old problems with renewed vigour. Managing our resources well and our finances prudently will give us the means to achieve a better life for all our people.

Only when we create wealth and manage the public's finances responsibly do we have the means to care for our fellow citizens: their health, their welfare, their education. A sound financial foundation is the means to our greater social ends.

With it, we can create a society second to none in how we meet the needs of our fellow citizens.

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

Creating a Better Society

Large-scale projects like Hibernia, Terra Nova, Voisey's Bay and those on the Churchill River, are not ends in themselves. They are the means to create employment and economic growth. And they are the means to generate government revenues that we can use to create better opportunities for every individual in our society.

Public attention is captivated by the promise of these megaprojects. It is precisely at this moment when government must show leadership and direct the public agenda to what truly matters. It is precisely at this time when government must turn its attention to our social priorities. Megaprojects will always have powerful people to push them forward, and the voices of the powerful will always be heard. The doors of government, and the doors of this House, must always be open to those less powerful, to listen to the voices of those in need.

That is why My Government will dedicate this Session not to large-scale development projects, but to important social priorities. We must not be swept away by the momentum of megaprojects. We must balance them with progress in education, health care, and social services. The proposals of My Ministers will achieve that balance.

For the moral test of a society is not found in the books of accountants, but in the care of the sick, respect for the elderly, the education of children and the flourishing of the arts. Over these two years, My Government has saved where it could so it could spend where it must. My Ministers will not falter from their duty to protect the taxpayer's dollar, nor will they fail those in our society most in need.

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

Education Reform

My Government has taken swift and decisive action to reform the education system of this province. On September 2, 1997, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador gave a clear, strong mandate in a referendum result almost without precedent in our country's history. It was a mandate to end the separation of our children, end the system of denominational education, and eliminate the old Term 17. It was a mandate to create a single school system where all of our children, regardless of their religious affiliation, can attend the same schools.

The confusion and chaos that plagued our education system for years has ended. For too long, we have focused on the issues of governance, power and control. Now, it is time to concentrate our energies on our children, and their education.

The objective of education reform is to put in place the best school system for our children that we can afford. We will fulfill that commitment. In this Session, My Government will take measures to support our new vision for education. Our children must have the tools with which to learn. They need clean air, good schools, and the right number of teachers to meet their needs.

Social Policy

The energy, commitment and vigour dedicated to education reform must now be directed to reform of our social programs. New ideas and innovative measures are needed to bring meaningful change.

My Government has listened carefully to the people of our province. During the past two years, the Social Policy Advisory Committee held over 100 meetings with 1,500 individuals from 130 communities. These consultations will underlie a new Strategic Social Plan that is moving toward completion. Some measures, consistent with the results of these consultations, are being given effect now.

A key recommendation of the Social Policy Advisory Committee was to adopt an integrated, client-focused approach. To achieve this, My Government is changing the mandates of two departments, effective April 1st. The Department of Health and Community Services will integrate children and family health services through existing regional community health boards. These Boards will undertake new responsibilities, such as Child Welfare, Youth Corrections, and Family and Rehabilitative Services. The Department of Human Resources and Employment will extend its efforts beyond providing needed income support to assisting clients return to the workforce.

In December, 1997, when the federal government cut funding for the seven Women's Centres around the province, My Government announced it would provide core funding. This made it possible for the centres to continue to give daily support and advice to victims of violence in a safe and supportive environment.

Good jobs in our changing economy demand a high level of literacy. My Government's Literacy Strategic Planning Unit will investigate the means to increase literacy in our province, consult publicly, and make recommendations.

It has always been difficult for young people to get their first job. It is especially so today. My Government's Linkages Program assists young people through career-related opportunities with local employers, career planning, and bonuses towards the cost of post-secondary tuition and books.

The Government of Canada is to be commended for its Millennium Scholarship Endowment Fund, which will provide scholarships each year to thousands of low- and moderate-income Canadians attending universities and colleges. These federal scholarships will begin in the year 2000, yet the needs of post-secondary students are pressing today. My Government will address this problem during the course of this Session.

The Select Committee on Children's Interests has provided the impetus for a more integrated and effective approach to dealing with child poverty. Governments, communities, volunteers, and parents must work together. If children of low-income families have first-rate schools and school attendance is properly enforced; if children are well nourished at school; if the community has sound health services, and the physical well-being of children is protected; if there is an opportunity for advanced education for those who qualify regardless of means - then there is the prospect that children of low-income families will break the cruel cycle of dependence and poverty.

The National Child Benefit is an important means toward this end. My Government will work closely with the Government of Canada to reinvest this Benefit in new initiatives, as it has with new Community Action Program for Children projects, and the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. Our focus must be the best interest of the child, supporting families, and shifting from crisis intervention to the prevention of child neglect and the alleviation of child poverty.

Parents must be given the opportunity to provide for their families. Barriers to employment must be removed. The Department of Human Resources and Employment will help people gain skills and find meaningful work. Toward this end, a benefits schedule that is more equitable and effective in reducing poverty will be developed. Service delivery will promote dignity and self-reliance.

Health Care

In May of 1997, My Government hosted the first Provincial Health Forum to identify short-term needs and develop long-term plans to improve the Province's health system. The advice of nurses, doctors, other health care professionals, and members of the public helped guide the initiatives which the Department of Health has taken over the past eight months. My Government will continue to have the benefit of such advice through a permanent Provincial Advisory Committee to the Minister of Health.

My Government demonstrated its commitment to our health system by allocating an additional $20 million to strengthen the financial position of the Regional Health Boards.

My Government has further demonstrated its commitment to our health system by improving physician and medical services in all areas of our province. Within the past eight months, a concerted effort has been made to address the shortage of physicians in this province, providing $2.7 million for emergency room physicians and a further $2.6 million for the recruitment and retention of rural physicians. A Clinical Assessment and Enhancement Program is now being offered at Memorial University's School of Medicine to enhance the skills of family practitioners. To ensure that the province has a balance of appropriate health professionals - such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech language pathologists - a Seat Purchase Program for Newfoundland and Labrador students has been arranged with Dalhousie University.

Strategic investments have been made in community health and health service delivery. Multi-Disciplinary Service and Teaching Unit pilot projects have been established in Port Aux Basques, Twillingate and Goose Bay. A Nurse Practitioner Program was launched in the Fall of 1997, with $5000.00 bursaries made available to those nurses taking part. My Government will continue to offer services to patients closer to their homes through such initiatives as the Renal Dialysis Unit at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls.

In order to further improvements in the site relocation and renovation plans for St. John's hospitals, approval was given to the St. John's Health Care Corporation to borrow an extra $30 million. This is in addition to the previously announced $100 million, for a total of $130 million. This will provide for underground parking facilities for patients and families of the new Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre, improvements to the mechanical, electrical, and ventilation systems at the St. Clare's and General Hospitals, and renovations to the General Hospital for the expansion of the Cardiac Surgery Ward.

While St. John's is an important centre for health care delivery, good quality facilities in other areas of the province are no less important. These, too, need to be addressed. Construction is already underway to provide for new hospital facilites in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Harbour Breton. My Government will take additional steps this year to improve health care facilities in the province.

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

Economic Outlook

None of these goals - in education, health or other social programs - can be accomplished without the financial ability to do so. Reversing economic decline and creating new growth has been the foremost task of My Government.

Two years ago, at the Opening of the First Session of this House, the Throne Speech stated: "1996 and 1997 will be difficult years for our province's economy. They will be difficult years for the provincial government's finances. The outlook for the years that follow is for a much improved economic and fiscal situation."

This forecast proved correct. After several years of decline in GDP, there is good reason for optimism in 1998 and beyond. This optimism is supported by private sector forecasters. In October, the Toronto Dominion Bank forecast that Newfoundland and Labrador would lead all other provinces in both 1998 and 1999. These forecasts are encouraging, but more important are concrete signs that this turnaround has begun.

Employment rose in all but three months of 1997, rising sharply toward year end. Gains in December marked the fifth consecutive month of increasingly stronger employment growth. The level of employment achieved in the last month of the year was higher than in any December since the groundfish moratorium began in 1992. It was also the strongest growth in employment we've seen in the 1990s - nearly double the national level.

At the beginning of 1997, there were 177,100 people employed in Newfoundland and Labrador. At the end of 1997, there were 182,200 people employed. At the beginning of 1997, there were 48,100 people unemployed in Newfoundland and Labrador. At the end of 1997, there were 42,300 people unemployed. This reflected a drop in our unemployment rate of 2.5%. The rate is still far too high, but this is a notable improvement.

Our Fiscal Plan

A return to growth will slowly translate into an increase in government revenues. But, that has not been the case for several years. The cost of government was simply greater than our ability to pay for it. That is why My Government had to make such difficult choices in its first two years, to get government down to the size that we can afford.

My Government did not believe that we should tax more or borrow more. It holds that view today. Indeed, My Government places a high priority on holding down taxes, mindful that taxpayers of the province are already heavily burdened. The introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax on April 1, 1997 saw a reduction in the combined federal-provincial sales taxes from 19.84% to 15%. This tax reduction of about $100 million was the first major tax cut since our province entered Confederation. It increased consumer confidence and resulted last year in the strongest retail sales growth in eight years.

Our people are making new purchases, creating jobs and further stimulating the economy. We should be optimistic, but cautious. These are modest gains. Larger gains in revenues and employment are still a few years away.

While the province will see new jobs and improved economic activity in the next two or three years, the words of the 1996 Throne Speech remain true: "The provincial government's overall revenues will grow more slowly than the economy, in part because equalization payments go down as receipts from taxes and royalties go up."

Therefore, it is vital that we stay the course. We must resist demands for major new expenditures at a time when we cannot afford them. We must put behind us the old cycle of deficit and debt.

Collective Bargaining

My Government has recently negotiated a seven percent pay increase over three years with the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees. This is the maximum that the public's finances can afford at this time. To pay anything beyond this would require either raising taxes or making further cuts to services and public service employees. My Government is unwilling to do either of these.

Public Service Reform

The years of restraint have been difficult for the public service. There were several rounds of major lay-offs. But, effective financial management has led to stability for the future. And, through its Public Service Reform initiative, My Government looks now to the revitalisation of the public service.

This province is fortunate to have professional, competent and non-partisan public servants. They provide essential services that the people of the province need, expect, and rely upon. A career in the public service is an opportunity to make a contribution to the life of our province.

Public servants can look forward to greater stability in their employment. Any required reduction in staff will be managed, to the greatest extent possible, through attrition, and other labour force adjustment strategies. This is the promise My Government made to its employees in the Budget of last year. That promise will be kept.

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

Major Resource Projects

Developments in three major resource areas B petroleum, mining and hydroelectricity B can lead the way in the transformation of our province's economy. We must use these natural resources wisely to provide for the long-term needs of our people.

Petroleum

Our province's oil and gas industry turned an important corner on November 17, 1997, when Hibernia First Oil transformed Newfoundland and Labrador into an oil-producing province in Canada, and an emerging player in the world market. On January 30, 1998, the province received its first royalty payment from Hibernia B a single project which has given our province the skills, the knowledge and the infrastructure to create a thriving industry.

But it is the Terra Nova project, funded entirely by private capital, that demonstrates a new level of confidence in the province's oil and gas industry. In December, 1997, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board approved the Terra Nova Project. On February 17, 1998, the project owners announced "project sanction".

On March 5, 1998, Bull Arm was declared the site for at least 70% of the topsides work for the Terra Nova Floating Production Storage and Offloading Vessel (FPSO). This includes fabrication of two major modules, the flare tower and other topsides components. Bull Arm and its employees competed for this work against similar sites from around the world, and they won.

In 1996, the Throne Speech read: "My Government will ensure that any transshipment facility for offshore oil is built in Newfoundland to serve Hibernia, Terra Nova and other offshore developments (such as Hebron White Rose and Ben Nevis) that will follow." My Government is pleased to report that construction of the Whiffen Head transshipment facility is proceeding on schedule and is expected to be completed in the fall of 1998.

The Generic Royalty Regime for offshore petroleum resources was put in place last year to maximise our share of the revenues from petroleum resources while being sensitive to the costs and risks associated with offshore petroleum activities.

Industry responded with record levels of exploration commitments on the Grand Banks. In December, Mobil, Chevron, Norsk Hydro and Petro-Canada bid $97.8 million on four parcels in the Jeanne d'Arc Basin, in response to the Canada-Newfoundland Offshore Petroleum Board's 1997 Call for Bids. The semi-submersible drilling unit Vinlander will be here for up to five years. Further exploration or seismic testing are underway at the Hebron, Whiterose and Riverhead prospects. Hydrocarbon exploration continues on the west coast. One well was spudded by Inglewood Resources on November 20, 1997, and several more are in the planning stages for 1998. My Government will continue to work in close coop- eration with the petroleum industry to promote further exploration of both our onshore and offshore resources.

Investor confidence in Newfoundland and Labrador's oil and gas industry is further increased by last year's announcement of a new Labour Relations Regime for Offshore Oil Production Platforms. This innovative labour-management framework will guarantee labour stability on offshore production platforms operating within our jurisdiction by providing a mechanism for parties to reach agreements without the threat of a strike or lockout.

Voisey's Bay

Voisey's Bay remains the richest nickel deposit in the world. Its development will contribute greatly to our economy and create high-skill, high-paying jobs for our people.

The position of My Government on the proposed Voisey's Bay development is straightforward and consistent. As was stated in Throne Speech two years ago: "My Government will gain full benefits from the Voisey's Bay mine, including the construction of a smelter and refinery in our province." My Government remains firmly of this view.

Those who would put achieving some benefits now above full and fair benefits later need look no further than the original Upper Churchill power contract. Voisey's Bay, like the Churchill River, is such a rich resource that we must always have the patience to get it right the first time.

Churchill River Hydro Developments

When it is necessary to say "no" to resource proposals that do not fairly benefit our province, we must never hesitate to do so. So, too, we must never fear to say "yes" when we have achieved a proposal for development that is fair and beneficial to Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government believes that the proposals for further hydroelectric development on the Churchill River announced on March 9th are the right proposals for our province. They include the protection of a floor price guarantee, unrestrained by a price ceiling, with 2/3 of the dividends going to our province. For any windfall profits, there is a profit sensitive royalty regime, similar to the Generic Royalty Regime for offshore oil and gas.

The windfall comes to Newfoundland and Labrador. 1000 megawatts will be available for use in this province. And, the development will be subject to the laws of Newfoundland and Labrador, not the laws of Quebec.

This vision for future hydro electric development heralds a new era in Newfoundland and Labrador's relationship with Quebec. It is the result of more than a year of discussions and the work of the best legal, financial and technical minds available. It offers our people significant revenues as the majority partners, long-term stable electricity rates, royalties from the development at Gull Island, greenhouse gas emission credits, and a significant number of jobs.

Rather than suffer cash deficiencies of $300 million, under these proposals Newfoundland and Labrador will gain $2.6 billion from the Upper Churchill River System, and a further $2.6 billion from Gull Island. This could never compensate us for what we have lost in past decades on the Upper Churchill deal. Successive governments have tried and none have been able to rewrite the past. But we can, and we must, rewrite our future. With the participation of the Innu Nation, and with responsible consideration for our environment, we will generate substantial new wealth from the Churchill River.

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

Rural Revitalisation

These major resource projects are important to our economy. No less important are the Strategic Economic Plans being developed in the twenty economic zones throughout our province.

Eighteen of the Regional Economic Development Boards have developed their Plans, and the Cabinet Committee on Rural Revitalisation has met with sixteen of them to determine the top five development priorities in each zone.

From Port-aux-Basques to Carbonear to North West River, My Ministers have listened to local people and supported real opportunities, such as: snowmobile trails on the Northern Peninsula to extend the tourism season; a rural information technology Centre of Excellence in Clarenville; eel aquaculture in Robinson's; pharmaceutical applications for seaweed in Ile-aux-Morts; small manufacturing in Bishop's Falls; technology applications for mining in Labrador West, and; trade opportunities at Gander International Airport.

With local direction through the Regional Economic Development Boards, My Government is moving from planning to action. These opportunities can provide a future for our young people in rural communities. My Government is acting on its commitment to rural revitalisation.

Post TAGS

The federal government has announced that The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy will end in August. The federal government undertook this program because it was responsible for the collapse of groundfish stocks. These stocks have not yet recovered. The need for a replacement program for TAGS is clear. My Government will continue to press the federal government, once again, to accept its responsibility and institute quickly an appropriate replacement program for TAGS.

Components of this replacement program should include: early retirement; license buy-outs to reduce capacity in the harvesting sector; income replacement support; labour market adjustment measures, and; economic diversification.

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

Fisheries and Aquaculture

The traditional sectors of our economy - fishery, forestry, and farming - have sustained us for hundreds of years. We must manage them carefully, to ensure they are conserved for succeeding generations, while maximising the wealth they can generate for our people today.

My Government has placed special emphasis on fisheries diversification, value-added initiatives, aquaculture development and quality assurance. In 1997, the export value of fish products approximated $575 million, driven by a healthy shellfish sector. 10,000 people were employed in processing; another 10,000 worked in harvesting.

In the year ahead, My Government will pursue an aggressive fisheries development and diversification program, and expand quality assurance measures in partnership with industry.

My Government will act on the recommendations of the Task Force on Crab/Fish Price Settlement Mechanisms. For the first time in Newfoundland and Labrador's history, and for the first time in Canada's, a new partnership model will be used to reach agreements on fish prices without the use of strikes or lockouts.

This past year has seen the opening of the inshore-based northern shrimp fishery, a resource which has helped many of our communities severely impacted by the groundfish collapse. My Government has been firm in discussions with the Government of Canada that priority access to any further quota increases of northern shrimp off our coasts must be allocated to adjacent inshore harvesters. This new inshore fishery has the potential to generate in excess of $100 million annually.

Revitalisation of the sealing industry is a major objective of My Government, based on sustainable harvest and full utilization of the animal. Sealing continues to attract private sector investment in new value-added initiatives including the establishment of a modern tannery at Catalina.

The aquaculture industry is positioned to expand significantly over the next several years. Production is projected to increase from 1600 metric tonnes in 1997 to approximately 4000 tonnes in 1998. By the year 2000, aquaculture's export value could reach $40 million and provide employment for 900 people in rural areas of our province. My Government has placed strong emphasis on research and development requirements, working with the private sector on strategic development of the aquaculture industry, and with the banking sector on meeting the industry's working needs.

A more sustainable fishery driven by private investment is emerging. My Government remains firmly committed to the revitalisation of the fishing industry given the critical role it plays in the economy of our province, especially in our rural communities.

Forest Industries

Our forestry sector is a major contributor to our economy, employing 10,000 people directly and indirectly. Last year, the three pulp and paper mills at Corner Brook, Stephenville and Grand Falls produced 741,000 tonnes of newsprint, with an estimated market value of $576 million. This year, production is projected at 750,000 tonnes.

The past 10 years have seen $750 million invested in these mills, with an additional $60 million planned over the next year. These capital investments will further increase their competitive position in the world marketplace.

The sawmill industry is hitting record levels of production and expanding into value-added activity. Only a few years ago there was no export outside this province. Now, our lumber is shipped to mainland Canada, the United States and Europe.

Agriculture

The agrifoods industry has the potential to grow significantly over the next five years, with industry developing domestic and global market opportunities and increasing its value-added capability. Agrifood companies continue to market their product successfully both inside and outside the province. Over this year, My Government will implement an Agriculture Awareness Program to raise the profile of our home-grown products, and the opportunities which agriculture offers to rural communities.

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

Tourism

The groundfish moratorium has taught us that reliance on a single, or even a few, sources of wealth can lead to hardship. We must invest in new areas of growth that can offer our people prosperity.

The Cabot 500 Year was a hallmark for our tourism industry. The Far East of the Western World was cast in the spotlight, as we shared our culture, heritage and hospitality with the world. We demonstrated our ability to host a year-long celebration on a grand scale. My Government is committed to working with operators and industry leaders to translate the large increases in convention and tour activity into permanent, sustained growth for our tourism industry.

My Government will build confidently on the success of the Cabot 500 celebrations. Already, we are planning new events for 1999 and 2000. Soiree >99 is an invitation to our fellow Canadians and the world to celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador's first 50 years in Confederation, and our deep and lasting loyalty to this great country. The Viking 2000 Celebrations will showcase these early settlers to our shores and their settlement at L'Anse Aux Meadows, the only authentic Norse site in North America. And, as the first place in North America to enter the new millennium, we will use this opportunity to promote our province with great vigour.

Information Technologies

Once extracted, our non-renewable resources, like minerals and petroleum, are gone. The talents of our people, however, are inexhaustible. Information technology provides an opportunity to create new wealth limited only by our imagination. Our I.T. industry now accounts for more than half a billion dollars in sales and 6,000 jobs in this province. These companies reflect our spirit of entrepreneurship at its best and brightest. Newfoundland and Labrador companies are providing telecommunications to the Hibernia platform, digital marine charts to the Korean government, and health care technology to American hospitals, to name but a few.

Softworld 98 At the New World will host 750 senior executives and CEOs in St. John's at the information technology sector's premiere event of the year. Our local companies are working in concert to put our best foot forward this September, and My Government is working with them to maximise trade and partnering opportunities with participating companies from around the world.

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

Aboriginal Issues

This past year, My Government has made significant progress in negotiating land claims settlements with the Innu and Inuit of Labrador. On November 5, 1997, a historic agreement was reached on major issues with the Labrador Inuit Association, and negotiators are proceeding well ahead of schedule on an Agreement-In-Principle. This agreement is as good as, if not better than, any other modern land claim agreement in Canada. My Government is also seeking to fast-track land claims negotiations with the Innu. These agreements will provide all parties with clear rules for future developments in Labrador, and give aboriginal communities the tools they need to progress.

Environment

In the coming Session, My Government will ask this House to consider significant reforms to strengthen our province's environmental legislation. A new Environmental Protection Act will be presented to this Honourable House which will provide modern and flexible tools for effective management of our environment. My Government will seek the approval of this House for a Water Resources Act to protect and manage the waters of this province. Finally, changes will be introduced to the Environmental Assessment Act to streamline the process and improve the protection it provides.

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

Other Business

Our province is well served by the volunteers of our Search and Rescue Units. In the coming Session, My Government will give them both the recognition they deserve and the resources they need to carry out their good work.

It is important to have a system of workers' compensation that is responsive, sustainable and provides an adequate level of benefits to injured workers. My Government has demonstrated its commitment to this by increasing benefits for the first 39 weeks of an individual's workers' compensation claim from 75% to 80%, effective January 1, 1998. During the course of this Session, My Government will provide its overall response to the report of the Statutory Review Committee on the Workers' Compensation Act.

Consumer concerns over gasoline prices in this province were heeded, and, in 1997, My Government appointed an independent consumer advocate to investigate. The resulting report, Gasoline Prices and the Public Interest, was released for public comment. My Government will take appropriate action during the course of this Session of the House.

The Select Committee to Review the Property and Casualty Insurance Industry in this province has conducted extensive consultations with industry groups and consumers and will be presenting its report. My Government will provide its response during this Session.

You will be asked in this Session to consider other legislation, with a view to their enactment. These will be tabled for the earliest possible opportunity so that members can properly prepare for the upcoming proceedings.

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

We have been blessed with an abundance of resources. They must be used to secure a measure of decency and comfort to each and every one of our citizens. We must not falter from our duty. We must not be swept along by the momentum of megaprojects. We must catch the driving gale, and set our own course, a course that is fair and just.

The business of this House is the people's business. As Members of this House of Assembly, it is your responsibility to lead by example, and by deed. May you act with charity, mercy, benevolence, and wisdom in support of the common welfare. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are owed the fruits of your industry and the benefit of your judgement. Let them look back on this Session as a time when both of these advanced our good society.

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

Estimates of Expenditure will be laid before you in due course and you will be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

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

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.